

### **Meeting between Secretary of State and First Minister: 11 January 2011**

- First Minister raised the question of timescales for the basing decisions, highlighting that there were Scottish Government elections occurring in May and that the purdah period would begin on 22 March. He asked whether there would be an announcement before this point.
- Secretary of State said that he had no timescale, and would make announcements when he was ready to. He confirmed that the RAF had made recommendations to him and the Army would be making their recommendations, including the requirements of the return to the UK of forces in Germany.
- Secretary of State is keen to see an army presence in Scotland.
- Secretary of State confirmed that the 'Scottish question' would be dealt with separately if possible, understanding the sensitivities surrounding the two RAF bases in Moray. He would offer a solution, as early as is possible.
- First Minister asked how this would affect the other RAF bases involved in the decision. The Secretary of State answered by stating that it would depend how the different options would fit together.
- Secretary of State asked for the First Minister's help in locating possible land in (central) Scotland to be used by the army as training ground. The First Minister agreed that officials will look into this once they have details of the requirements of this land. The First Minister recognised the attractions of having a "mobile brigade" in Scotland. He confirmed that any request for help identifying training areas would be kept confidential.
- First Minister asked if the army training land could be used for another purpose. Secretary of State answered by stating that it would depend on the accessibility and purpose of the land.
- First Minister emphasised that losing a third of the airbase capacity in Scotland was unfortunate and losing two thirds of the bases would be extraordinary. Secretary of State confirmed that no assumption was being made that there would only be one base in Scotland and he wished to keep the maximum military footprint. He would make decisions based on what was best from the armed forces perspective.
- Surrounding the uncertainty of the Moray bases, the Secretary of State aimed to have a resolution by the end of February. He reiterated that the Ministry of Defence wanted to have a good decision, not a quick decision.
- The First Minister asked whether the economic impact of the decisions was a matter for the Treasury or whether the Ministry of Defence could accept responsibility. Secretary of State said that it was a matter for the Treasury and for the Scotland Office; the Ministry of Defence does not have the funds to deal with social aspects of decisions.
- First Minister also raised the question of whether the return of forces from Germany would involve the restoration of the land (Länder money), comparing this to the military bases in Scotland. Secretary of State said that it would depend on the legal constraints.

- First Minister asked whether they could have access to RAF Kinloss or whether the intention was to maintain it as a military base. The Secretary of State stated that he was not in a position to say whether all or some of RAF Kinloss would be maintained by the Ministry of Defence.
- Secretary of State confirmed his awareness of the unique situation in Moray, where there are two RAF bases with question marks over their future use. He again confirmed that if this could be dealt with in isolation then this would be top of his list of things to do, referring to the emotional linkage to the Armed Forces and the aim to keep a military footprint in Scotland.