



Home Office

Home Secretary

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DEPARTMENTAL MINUTE CONCERNING THE GIFT OF HELICOPTERS TO THE PAKISTAN ANTI-NARCOTICS FORCE

It is normal practice when a Government Department proposes to make a gift of a value exceeding £250,000, for the Department concerned to present to the House of Commons a Minute giving particulars of the gift and explaining the circumstances; and to refrain from making the gift until fourteen days (exclusive of Saturdays and Sundays) after the issue of the Minute, except in cases of special urgency.

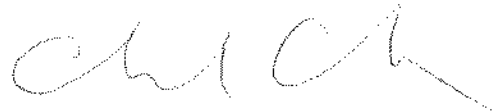
Ministers have agreed to donate two MI17 helicopters and a spares package to the value of up to £6 million to the Pakistan Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) to be used for counter narcotics activity on the Pakistan/Afghan border. Funding for the gift has been made available from Home Office capital budget for this Financial Year (ending 31 March 2006). This gift will have a direct impact on HMG's counter narcotics objectives in reducing drugs harms to the UK. Pakistan is critical to HMG's global CN work. More than half of the heroin imported to the UK transits Pakistan. Our main partner in Pakistan is the ANF, which is small, under-funded, but well-led and relatively uncorrupt.

The helicopters will provide the ANF with much needed independent air capacity to help them conduct both operational and eradication related tasks. We have previously gifted MI17 helicopters to the Pakistan ANF in 1995. Both are out of service: one unfortunately crashed during the autumn 2005 earthquake, and the other is awaiting a major airframe overhaul. Without air assets, the ANF's ability to deploy effectively, and in a timely way, is compromised. They struggle to interdict the heroin and other opiates being smuggled out of Afghanistan or to arrest the traffickers involved. Their ability to survey and then eradicate the poppy cultivation in Pakistan is also undermined.

The gifting of the helicopters is an excellent opportunity to strengthen the counter-narcotics capacity of the Pakistan authorities and to enhance our goodwill with the Pakistan Government and engage with them more effectively on other aspects of counter-narcotics work. In particular the ANF's efforts on the Pakistan/Afghan border will have a direct effect on the UK's CN efforts in Afghanistan in terms of timely interdiction of drugs and traffickers in the

remote border regions. The helicopters also contribute to our regional co-operation support for effective integrated border management.

The Treasury has approved the proposal in principle. If during the period of 14 days (exclusive of Saturdays and Sundays) beginning on the date on which this Minute was laid before the House of Commons, a Member signifies an objection by giving notice of a Parliamentary Question or of a Motion relating to the Minute, or by otherwise raising the matter in the House, final approval of the gift will be withheld, pending an examination of the objection.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'CHICK', written in a cursive style.

8 March 2006

CHARLES CLARKE