

EXPLANATORY MEMORANDUM ON THE AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND AND THE GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF UZBEKISTAN CONCERNING THE PROCEDURE FOR THE GROUND TRANSIT OF CARGO FROM THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF AFGHANISTAN THROUGH THE TERRITORY OF THE REPUBLIC OF UZBEKISTAN IN CONNECTION WITH THE PARTICIPATION OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND IN EFFORTS TO ENSURE THE SECURITY, STABILISATION AND RECONSTRUCTION OF THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF AFGHANISTAN WITH MANDATORY INVOLVEMENT OF THE STATE JOINT-STOCK RAILWAY COMPANY "UZBEKISTON TEMIR YULLARI"

Title of the Agreement

Agreement between the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the Government of the Republic of Uzbekistan concerning the procedure for the ground transit of cargo from the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan through the territory of the Republic of Uzbekistan in connection with the participation of the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in efforts to ensure the Security, Stabilisation and Reconstruction of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan with mandatory involvement of the State joint-stock railway company "Uzbekiston Temir Yullari".

Command Paper No:

Cm 8522.

Subject matter

This Agreement sets out the procedures agreed for UK equipment to transit the territory of the Republic of Uzbekistan by rail, in relation to the recovery of UK equipment from Afghanistan.

Policy considerations

The combat mission of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan is due to complete by the end of 2014. The Ministry of Defence has already begun to plan and execute the progressive recovery of its equipment and personnel. The drawdown operation will be complex: Afghanistan's remote location, the difficult terrain and the potentially volatile regional security conditions all present significant challenges, which could be exacerbated by capacity constraints as other ISAF nations seek to recover their equipment and personnel at the same time.

Currently, the only route for recovery of UK equipment is surface and air transit via Pakistan. The surface routes through Pakistan were closed for much of 2012. Although, now re-opened, concerns remain about the routes' condition, fragility and physical

security, as well as their susceptibility to future no-notice denial or closure. As a national strategic priority, therefore, the UK has been seeking to extend the number of potential recovery options by agreeing surface and air reverse transit routes through Central Asia and Russia.

A primary northern recovery route will be through Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Russia to the Baltic port of Riga (Latvia). This route is currently operational for the supply of equipment into Afghanistan but separate permissions are required to enable this route for the reverse transit and recovery of equipment. This Agreement provides the permissions required for UK equipment to be recovered from Afghanistan by rail through the territory of the Republic of Uzbekistan.

Ministerial responsibility

The Secretary of State for Defence is responsible for the recovery in good order of UK equipment and personnel deployed in support of the ISAF mission in Afghanistan. The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs is responsible for political relations with the Government of the Republic of Uzbekistan.

Financial

This Agreement in itself does not commit the UK to any expenditure. The establishment of these transit permissions provides options and resilience for the recovery of equipment and personnel from Afghanistan.

Implementation

No specific legislation is needed to implement the Agreement, which shall enter into force on the date of receipt of the later of the two written notifications by which the Parties shall notify each other, through diplomatic channels, of the completion of respective internal and legal procedures required for entry into force of the Agreement. The Uzbekistan Government has already completed its procedures.

Consultations

Relevant Government Departments and Agencies were consulted during negotiations and gave their approval to the final draft of the Agreement. Further consultations will be ongoing with relevant parties on the detailed implementing arrangements.



ANDREW ROBATHAN

MINISTER OF STATE FOR THE ARMED FORCES