

Digest of information FOI ref 0481-15

DA DOHA ANNUAL REPORT 2010/11 ANNEX A TO DA/171/11. Dated 17 July 2011

Executive Summary

1. Qatar continues to prove itself to be an enduringly reliable ally to UK defence and security interests with operational access, basing and over-flight running smoothly and an **[redacted]**. Coordination of UK/Qatar military strategy and activity as partners **[redacted]** has been made easier thanks to the personal relationships developed in this reporting period between senior political and military figures. **[redacted]**.

Defence Relations

2. The past year has been a good one for UK/Qatar defence relations seeing them develop from what was already good to positively warm. This is due in large part, after a late start once the new government had formed, to the subsequently well paced top level engagement of UK political and military leadership in both capitals. Her Majesty's hosting of H.H. the Amir on a State Visit in October, including a military serial at RMA Sandhurst, was very successful and very well received. The timely follow up visit to Doha by the Prime Minister in February confirmed the UK's commitment to building closer ties with Qatar. The momentum of these two key events has been maintained by inward visits to Doha of the Secretary of State for Defence, Under Secretaries of State, Lord Astor and Gerald Howarth, CDS, DCDS (Ops), CAS and CINC (Air). Equally, the Qatari COS has been an invited guest of, separately, the Secretary of State and CDS in London. **[redacted]**.

3. In addition to the engagement above, the establishment of the Defence Senior Advisor Middle East (DSAME) post has added a very effective element of continuity, frequency and intimacy of engagement that has been very much appreciated **[redacted]** most particularly during a period when Qatari forces have been operating **[redacted]**. Moving forward it would be advisable to pursue an increased depth of relationship between the key 3 (of Secretary of State, CDS and DSAME) **[redacted]** rather than increased breadth. Moreover, for this year's successes in relationship building to endure, it is now essential that top level engagement continues to translate, wherever capacity exists, into positive responses to Qatari requests for exercise and training. **[redacted]**.

Al Udeid

4. The primary objective of the Defence Section in Doha **[redacted]** the majority of bi-lateral defence activity is conducted with that in mind and the re-invigorated top level engagement over the past year, as described above, has ensured that the UK remains welcome guests from a top down perspective. From the coal face perspective, the past

year has seen some tightening up of the enforcement of customs and immigration regulations by the Qataris, but nothing more restrictive than already agreed to in the Defence Cooperation Arrangement (DCA) – merely applied more correctly (MoD contractors requiring ‘work’ rather than ‘visit’ or ‘business’ visas, fuller documentation for imported goods etc). There is nothing significant to report with respect to utilisation of Al Udeid, and this is a good thing.

Jurisdiction

5. The principal of jurisdiction over UK forces personnel is being tested. **[redacted]**.

Qatar’s Military Involvement in Libya

6. The Qatari military are focussed almost completely on Libya. **[redacted]**. The Qatari contribution to the patrolling of the No Fly Zone is well reported; however, the Qatari C17s have been operating continuously from the outset bringing in field hospitals, medical supplies and other equipment as well as taking out the displaced and injured to neighbouring countries (Greece and Egypt) and Doha for treatment.

8. The commitment of Qatari Armed Forces in support of the Libyan opposition has revealed some interesting insights, shortfalls and strengths. **[redacted]**.

10. Where the Qatari military do add significant value is in their being accepted and trusted by the Libyan opposition, their wide infiltration and understanding of the various tribal groups, **[redacted]**. The best weapon in the Qatari military armoury at the moment is their good top level relationships with the Libyan opposition **[redacted]**.

11. Looking forward, Libya is likely to remain the key focus for Qatar/UK cooperation in the next reporting period **[redacted]**. Qatar will remain engaged to the end. Our objective should be to maintain current close collaboration and broaden where necessary. The pace of high level engagement should be maintained in order to cement the foundations laid to good effect this year.

Wg Cdr, RAF
Defence Attaché, Doha

Executive Summary

1. This reporting period spans the tail end of Qatari military involvement in Libya to the building of tensions both in Syria and potentially in our policies towards Syria [redacted]. Events have proved the value and returns that can be reaped from long-view defence diplomacy and put into useful context the 'housekeeping' level of issues [redacted].

Defence Engagement

2. UK defence engagement at Heir Apparent, COS/*de facto* Defence Minister and service chiefs level has been regular, well paced and at an appropriate spectrum of seniority. Inward (sometimes multiple) visits have included [redacted] a strong UK presence at the Doha International Maritime Defence Exhibition (DIMDEX) and Middle East Naval Commanders Conference [redacted] In return, CDS hosted an official visit of the Qatari COS [redacted] and CAS hosted Commander QEAF [redacted].

3. At the working level, STTTs (Short Term Training Teams) have deployed and delivered well received courses for junior joint staff and infantry platoon commanders and [redacted] Ahmed bin Mohammed Military College continue to maintain and develop the partnership with Sandhurst. Looking forward, the Qataris have begun [redacted] their Joint Staff College project towards [redacted] engagement with the Defence Academy in order to articulate their vision and requirements. The project, [redacted] would provide a valuable and enduring opportunity to thicken the defence relationship. In a similar vein, an opportunity has arisen for the UK to provide a senior military consultant to the Qatari COS; a candidate has already been interviewed and an appointment looks [redacted].

11. Ninety-four percent of the indigenous Qatari population is employed in the public sector (a growing figure rather than the diminishing figure they aspire to) and last December the public sector workers received a 60% pay rise, with the military receiving 120%. [redacted]. The 120% is designed to repair years of relative decline and bring them back into line with other sectors [redacted].

13. Officially, the Qataris have committed to replacing their one squadron of Mirages with 36 Fast Jets (Typhoon, Rafale and F18 the main contenders) [redacted].

Wg Cdr, RAF
Defence Attaché, Doha