

Joint action plan by the UK and France on combating illegal migration involving small boats in the English Channel

Aims

1. The UK and France have a long-standing programme of cooperation to manage illegal migration in Northern France. In January 2018 the parties agreed the Treaty of Sandhurst. This puts in place reinforced measures and resources to tackle illegal migration, in northern France and also in transit and source countries, as part of a whole-of-route approach.
2. Due to the success of the measures already taken to secure the principal ports and means of embarkation on the French coast, illegal migrants and their criminal facilitators have recently resorted to attempting to cross the Channel in small boats completely unsuited for the purpose, without navigational aids or proper clothing.
3. First and foremost, this is an exceptionally risky undertaking which endangers the lives of the migrants, as well as those who come to their assistance.
4. Furthermore it gives rise to serious criminal behaviour, disorder and the financial exploitation of vulnerable migrants.
5. It also risks attracting illegal migrants in greater numbers to France and the French coast if no action is taken.
6. And it threatens the integrity of the border control systems of the UK and France, which are vital in the fight against crime and terrorism.

For these reasons, we are determined to stop this trend of illegal migrants seeking to cross the Channel in small boats.

Current Actions

7. Action has already been taken and begun to have an impact:
 - a. In France, a comprehensive regional action plan has been developed. This mobilises the respective agencies with regard to criminal investigations, security measures to safeguard and monitor the ports and points of departure, and community engagement to promote awareness of the problem and its criminal aspects. This plan is coordinated with the French maritime authorities, who ensure a permanent and reinforced presence at sea to ensure interceptions of illegal crossings.
 - b. On the British side, the UK Border Force has increased its patrols in the English Channel and the National Crime Agency is disrupting and dismantling the criminal elements behind this threat.

8. We share the same objectives and analysis of the problem. The UK recognises the efforts made by France and wants to support them in all ways possible. Above all both Governments want to avoid loss of life, by stopping the crossings.

New actions

9. To this end, we as the Ministers responsible for border security, will act jointly to tackle illegal migration by small boats in the following ways:

I. Coordination of action on land and at sea

10. We are coordinating our efforts on land and at sea to prevent crossings.

Where migrant crossings or attempted crossings are detected at sea or on land by the assets of one country, the relevant information will be relayed promptly to the appropriate point in the other country, so that coordinated action can be taken. This will include physical disruption and criminal prosecutions, in accordance with relevant legal procedures. Surveillance in maritime areas by air and maritime means will be reinforced. On land, the number of patrols could be increased in Calais and Boulogne-sur-Mer harbours.

- a. **On land, the CCIC (Centre Conjoint d'Information et de Coordination), based on the joint UK-France declaration signed in July 2018, is staffed by law enforcement officers from a range of British and French law enforcement agencies. It supports the fight against smugglers, human traffickers and related criminal networks in the North and Pas-de-Calais, thanks to close cooperation between the relevant policing agencies. It will contribute to an effective response to incidents and maintain an agreed picture of the threat.**

- (i) The CCIC fosters the exchange of information between law enforcement agencies of both countries on the deployment of law enforcement resources to prevent irregular migrants from attempting to cross the Channel. The CCIC contributes to better analysing and understanding organised crime activity.

- (ii) The CCIC will also oversee wider port security measures at the juxtaposed ports in northern France, and at Boulogne, to ensure continued port security and that legitimate traffic and trade can pass unhindered through the relevant ports. Its capability in this regard will be enhanced through the CCTV inputs from security cameras positioned at ports and strategic embarkation points, in accordance with applicable law on data protection.

- (iii) The CCIC will contribute to the production of a regular joint assessment of the migration and related organised crime threat to inform CCIC tactical activity and in support of law enforcement partners engaged in wider upstream disruption activity.

- b. **At sea, the National Maritime Information Centre in the UK and the Prefet Maritime in Cherbourg are already working closely together**

and share the same maritime threat assessment and concept of operations at sea. They are coordinating maritime patrols and forward planning, while respecting territorial sea and normal chains of command. The mission of our respective maritime assets is to prevent the loss of life at sea and to deter illegal migration and the organised criminals that enable it, so as to prevent undetected migrant arrivals. They will be supported by air reconnaissance.

- c. **Migrants rescued at sea will be taken to a port of safety in accordance with international maritime law.** The respective maritime authorities will liaise with each other about rescue operations to provide mutual assistance as necessary at sea, and to determine the appropriate port of safety for a rescued migrant.

II. Funds for new security equipment

11. **The Treaty of Sandhurst provides funding from the UK to France in support of the objectives of the Treaty.** Noting the success of the French authorities in preventing attempted departures in French ports and beaches – 44 successful disruptions covering 267 individuals since January 2018 - we have agreed to pledge up to seven million euros from the Sandhurst funds, of which €3.6m is new funding, towards the cost of reinforced preventive security measures, notably to support the French regional action plan. This includes equipment and measures to tackle illegal migration by small boats, such as CCTV, night goggles and number plate recognition capability.
12. The UK and France recognise the need for ongoing investment to tackle illegal migration at the French/UK border, and will continue cooperation in this regard within the spirit of the Sandhurst Treaty framework.

III. Communications

13. Building on the ongoing work under the Sandhurst Treaty, we will expand a **strategic communication campaign** designed to inform migrants of the risks of illegal migration to deter them from trying to use this route.

IV. Returns of migrants

14. **We also give notice to migrants that we shall use all lawful avenues open to us to manage the migration process. Within this framework, the return of migrants** from the UK to France, or from France to the UK, will be carried out expeditiously in accordance with our international obligations and national law. This will include use of the Dublin Regulation and joint return flights to countries of origin.

Conclusion

15. Migrants who are contemplating illegally crossing the Channel in a small boat should be in no doubt that France and UK are determined to prevent such crossings. **We will actively manage our migration processes, including returns.** We will not allow illegal migration and its facilitators to flourish.
16. At the same time, France and the UK will continue to uphold their proud tradition of offering asylum to people in need of international protection.
17. We shall keep these measures under review and adapt them as necessary to ensure we meet our objectives.

Agreed in London on 24 January 2019 by:

Christophe Castaner, Minister for the Interior
Rt Hon Sajid Javid MP, Home Secretary