



10 DOWNING STREET
LONDON SW1A 2AA

THE PRIME MINISTER

31 August 2023

Dear Ben,

You have served our country with distinction. Your strategic foresight and clarity has been invaluable to our country and the security of our continent. You saw, before others did, what Vladimir Putin's true intentions in Ukraine were. Your determination to get Kiev weaponry before the Russians attacked had a material effect on the ability of the Ukrainians to thwart the invasion.

I am proud of how this country has led in responding to the Russian invasion of Ukraine. You have played an absolutely vital role in rallying support for Ukraine at home and abroad. You have eloquently made the case that this is not simply an attack on a proud and sovereign nation, it is an attack on our values, European security and the open international order on which stability and prosperity have depended for three quarters of a century.

You have been a vigorous advocate for the defence of the realm and you have offered leadership to our armed forces who sacrifice so much to keep our country safe. You have thought long and hard about how to keep our country safe and dedicated yourself to that cause. I am glad that over the years we have worked together to put the defence budget on a stable footing and ensure that the military will have the resources it needs in the years to come. As the integrated review refresh make clear we will move away from the baseline commitment of spending at least 2 per cent of GDP on defence to a new aspiration to reach 2.5 per cent.

In the most difficult of situations, you have displayed exceptional judgement. You were instrumental in the evacuation of over 15,000 people from Afghanistan during Operation Pitting. Your anticipation and leadership of one of the largest evacuations of modern times was central to its success. You were also the driving force in the design and implementation of the Afghanistan Relocations and Assistance Policy that has enabled us to bring to the UK those to whom we owe a debt of gratitude.

The UK carrier strike group's seven month deployment on your watch was a demonstration of this country's global reach, and the depth of our alliances. Your work on AUKUS will help keep the democratic world safe for decades to come. It is hugely exciting to think that there will be inter-operable submarine fleets patrolling the Atlantic and the Pacific in the years to come, and your role in making this happen has been invaluable.

The dedication and skill with which you have discharged your responsibilities as Secretary of State for Defence has been typical of your belief in public service and deep commitment to the armed forces and security of the UK. You leave the Ministry of Defence and the Armed forces well placed to face the future.

You have served our country in three of the most demanding posts in government: defence secretary, security minister and Northern Ireland minister. In each of those jobs, you have offered tireless service. As security minister, you dealt not only with the 2017 terrorist attack but a chemical weapon attack on our soil. I will always be personally grateful to you for your loyalty and advice since I became Prime Minister.

I fully understand your desire to step down after eight years of exacting ministerial duties. As you say, the jobs you have done have required you to be available on a continuous basis. But I know you have more to offer public life both here and internationally. You leave office with my thanks and respect.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Rishi". The signature is stylized with a large, sweeping initial 'R'.