

*From the Chair*



**OFFICE OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON BUSINESS APPOINTMENTS**

G/7 Ground Floor, 1 Horse Guards Road SW1A 2HQ

Telephone: 020 7271 0839

Email: [acoba@acoba.gov.uk](mailto:acoba@acoba.gov.uk)

Website: <http://www.gov.uk/acoba>

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**BUSINESS APPOINTMENT APPLICATION: Lord Darren Mott OBE, former Government Whip in the House of Lords. Paid appointment with Securitaq Limited.**

1. You approached the Advisory Committee on Business Appointments the Committee) under the government's Business Appointment Rules for Former Ministers (the Rules) seeking advice on taking up a paid role as a Non-Executive Director (NED) of Securitaq Limited (Securitaq).
2. The purpose of the Rules is to protect the integrity of the government. The Committee has considered the risks associated with the actions and decisions made during your time in office, alongside the information and influence you may offer Securitaq. The material information taken into consideration by the Committee is set out in the annex.
3. The Committee's advice is not an endorsement of the appointment – it imposes a number of conditions to mitigate the potential risks to the government associated with the appointment under the Rules.
4. The Ministerial Code sets out that ministers must abide by the Committee's advice. It is an applicant's personal responsibility to manage the propriety of any appointment. Former ministers of the Crown, and Members of Parliament, are expected to uphold the highest standards of propriety and act in accordance with the 7 Principles of Public Life.

The Committee's consideration of the risks presented

5. Securitaq provides services in sovereign cloud,<sup>1</sup> AI and cybersecurity. In your role as a NED, you said you will provide creative contribution to the board by providing independent oversight, constructive challenge to the executive directors & support the CEO in developing growth initiatives nationally and internationally.
6. You did not meet with Securitaq while in office, nor did you make any decisions that were specific to the company. The Committee<sup>2</sup> considered the risk that you were offered this role as a reward for decisions made or actions taken in office was low.
7. As a former minister, there are inherent risks associated with your general access to privileged information, contacts, and influence within government. The risks are limited given there is no direct overlap between your responsibilities in government and your proposed role. It is also relevant that you have been out of office for 12 months, providing a gap between your access to information and you taking up this role.
8. The Committee considered there is a significant risk you could offer an unfair advantage to an organisation which seeks to influence governments, particularly in light of the lobbying ban that applies to all former ministers for two years on leaving office. It is relevant in mitigating this risk that Securitaq has confirmed your description of this role as having no involvement in lobbying.
9. You told the Committee that your role will focus on growing the business. There is a risk that you could offer an unfair advantage to Securitaq by drawing on your contacts in external organisations gained in your ministerial role. You confirmed you will not make use/be asked to make use of such contacts in your proposed role.

#### The Committee's advice

10. The Committee did not consider this appointment raises any particular concerns under the government's Rules. The conditions below appropriately mitigate the risks associated with drawing on privileged information and making improper use of contacts and influence within government to the unfair advantage of Securitaq as well as the undue influence.

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<sup>1</sup> A sovereign cloud is a cloud computing environment that stores data within a specific country's borders, in compliance with the country's laws and regulations. Sovereign clouds are also known as government clouds or national clouds.

<sup>2</sup> This application for advice was considered by Andrew Cumpsty; Hedley Finn OBE; Sarah de Gay; Dawid Konotey-Ahulu CBE DL; The Rt Hon Lord Eric Pickles; Michael Prescott; and Mike Weir. Isabel Doverty was unavailable.

11. When considering the risks in this case, the Committee considered it significant that Securitaq confirmed there will be no lobbying of the government in this role, in line with the expectations set out in the Rules.
12. Additionally, the Committee imposed a restriction on lobbying contacts you made during your time in office in other governments and organisations outside of the UK government for the purpose of securing business for Securitaq.
13. In accordance with the government's Business Appointment Rules, the Committee advises this appointment with **Securitaq Limited** be subject to the following conditions:
- you should not draw on (disclose or use for the benefit of yourself or the persons or organisations to which this advice refers) any privileged information available to you from your time in ministerial office;
  - for two years from your last day in ministerial office, you should not become personally involved in lobbying the UK government or its arm's length bodies on behalf of Securitaq Limited (including parent companies, subsidiaries, partners and clients); nor should you make use, directly or indirectly, of your contacts in the government and/or ministerial office to influence policy, secure business/funding or otherwise unfairly advantage Securitaq Limited (including parent companies, subsidiaries, partners and clients);
  - for two years from your last day in ministerial office you should not undertake any work with Securitaq Limited (including parent companies, subsidiaries, partners and clients) that involves providing advice on the terms of, or with regard to the subject matter of a bid with, or contract relating directly to the work of, the UK government or its arm's length bodies; and
  - for two years from your last day in ministerial office, you should not become personally involved in lobbying contacts you developed during your time in office in other governments and organisations for the purpose of securing business for Securitaq Limited.
14. The advice and the conditions under the government's Business Appointment Rules relate to your previous role in government only; they are separate from rules administered by other bodies such as the Office of the Registrar of Consultant Lobbyists, the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards and the Registrar of Lords' Interests.<sup>3</sup> You are reminded that as a Member of the

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<sup>3</sup> All Peers and Members of Parliament are prevented from paid lobbying under the the House of Commons Code of Conduct and the Code of Conduct for Members of the House of Lords. Advice on

House of Lords you are prevented from any paid lobbying under the House of Lords Code of Conduct. It is an applicant's personal responsibility to understand any other rules and regulations they may be subject to in parallel with this Committee's advice.

15. By 'privileged information' we mean official information to which a minister or Crown servant has had access as a consequence of his or her office or employment and which has not been made publicly available. Applicants are also reminded that they may be subject to other duties of confidentiality, whether under the Official Secrets Act, the Ministerial Code or otherwise.
16. The Business Appointment Rules explain that the restriction on lobbying means that you "should not engage in communication with government (ministers, civil servants, including special advisers, and other relevant officials/public office holders) – wherever it takes place – with a view to influencing a government decision, policy or contract award/grant in relation to their own interests or the interests of the organisation by which they are employed, or to whom they are contracted or with which they hold office".
17. You must inform us as soon as you take up employment with this organisation, or if it is announced that you will do so. Please inform us if you propose to extend or otherwise change the nature of your role as, depending on the circumstances, it may be necessary for you to make a fresh application.
18. Once the appointment has been publicly announced or taken up, we will publish this letter on the Committee's website, and where appropriate, refer to it in the relevant annual report.

## **The Rt Hon Lord Pickles**

### **Annex - Material Information**

#### The role

1. Securitaq is a sovereign cloud, AI and cybersecurity firm.
  - Securitaq operates in all sectors but with a stronger presence in financial services and insurance sectors. It has a growing presence in sectors operating in Critical National Infrastructure and defence. It currently operates solely in the UK, but is looking to expand overseas.

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your obligations under the Code can be sought from the Parliamentary Commissioners for Standards, in the case of MPs, or the Registrar of Lords' Interests, in the case of peers.

- It is the holding company for [AISOC](#) and [METCLOUD](#).
  - METCLOUD provides cybersecurity and digital transformation consultancy services.
  - METCLOUD provides a UK CyberSec Cloud platform supported by UK British Nationals with government (SC) cleared personnel. The primary strategy is to sell its secure cloud services to government, defence, financial services and insurance plus companies operating in Critical National Infrastructure.
  - METCLOUD provides data security and sovereignty for the UK Defence Sector. Vetted by NCSC Agencies and supported by UK Government Security Cleared (SC) personnel. METCLOUD's secure cloud services provide government and supply chain companies optimum security and digital resilience.
2. In your (paid) role as NED, you stated your role is to provide a creative contribution to the board by providing independent oversight and constructive challenge to the executive directors & support the CEO in developing growth initiatives nationally and internationally.
  3. You confirmed your role will not involve contact with or lobbying of government.
  4. The Committee contacted Securitaq which confirmed your role will not involve lobbying government. It stated: '*...Lord Darren Mott and role of Non-Exec Director at Securitaq Limited and its group of companies will not require any form of lobbying.*'

#### Dealings in office

5. You advised the Committee that you did not meet with Securitaq whilst in office. You said you did not have any involvement in policy, regulatory or commercial decisions that would have been specific to the company.

#### Departmental assessment

6. The Cabinet Office confirmed the details you provided and recommended the standard conditions as well as a ban on lobbying contacts gained in office in external governments and organisations for the purpose of securing business for Securitaq.