



Second Report
from the
Foreign Affairs Committee
British–US relations

Session 2001–2002

Response of the Secretary of State for
Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs

*Presented to Parliament
by the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs
By Command of Her Majesty
February 2002*

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SECOND REPORT FROM THE FOREIGN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

BRITISH-US RELATIONS

SESSION 2001-2002

RESPONSE OF THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Introduction

1. Her Majesty's Government welcome the report of the Foreign Affairs Committee inquiry into British-US Relations. In particular, the Government welcomes the Committee's examination of some of the key multilateral issues in which the United Kingdom and the United States are deeply involved. The Government agrees that the British relationship with the US is based on shared roots and common cause, and that the need for it to remain a forward-looking relationship is just as important in the 21st century. The US remains vital to our own security. It will remain the world's single most important economy, with all that means for UK trade and investment. We welcome the Committee's recognition that there can be no more important relationship for the United Kingdom and that this importance is reflected in the staffing levels of British posts and organisations in the United States.

2. The Government welcomes the Committee's endorsement of United Kingdom objectives in the United States. The closeness of the relationship, renewed by the events of 11 September 2001, increases the government's confidence that the United States will remain willing to listen to the United Kingdom's point of view, as the Government seeks to achieve these objectives. The US and UK have a close and probably unique relationship where we are able to engage constructively on all areas of foreign policy. There are few areas where US thinking does not influence both the formulation and the implementation of our own foreign policy. This reality does not mean that we are always in agreement, but it does allow us as mature friends and allies to engage with each other in a frank and positive manner.

Committee Conclusions and Recommendations

3. The Government thanks the Committee for their strong endorsement of the relationship, summarised in the Conclusions and Recommendations. These are re-stated in the paragraphs following, along with the Government's response in italics.

- (1) We conclude that the establishment of the Counter-Terrorism Committee of the UN Security Council is an important development in the work of the United Nations and in the war against terrorism. We recommend that the Government ensure that the Counter-Terrorism Committee receives whatever support it may require in order for it to be effective in its work of holding states to account for their compliance with the terms of UN Security Council Resolutions on terrorism.**

The Government agrees that the establishment of the Counter-Terrorism Committee (CTC) is an important development in the work of the United Nations and in the war against terrorism. The UK Permanent Representative to the United Nations in New York, Sir Jeremy Greenstock, chairs the Committee. An interdepartmental committee has been established in Whitehall to ensure that the CTC receives all the support it requires in holding states to account for their compliance with Security Council Resolution 1373. We have also suggested to the UN Secretary General that he establishes a Trust Fund to provide technical assistance to countries wishing to implement SCR 1373. We are willing to make a significant contribution to such a fund once it is established.

- (2) We note with satisfaction the deservedly very high reputation of the United Kingdom Mission to the United Nations and its excellent working relationship with the Missions of other countries, notably that of the United States. We recommend that the Government ensure that the provision of human, financial and other resources appropriate to the vital role of the Mission continues to be given the highest priority.**

The Government keeps the level of human, financial and other resources at the UK Mission to the UN under constant review to ensure the Mission is properly equipped to maintain the UK's high standing at the UN and to deliver an effective service.

- (3) We were presented with a strong case for the emerging US proposals on missile defence. We recommend that these proposals are most carefully considered by the Government and that it should have due regard for the concerns expressed in the United Kingdom and among our European partners before coming to a final decision on any definitive proposals.**
- (4) While it is certainly possible that China may expand its nuclear capability in any event, we recommend that the Government use its influence with the US to ensure that the effects of any missile defence programme on China and on other nuclear powers are carefully assessed.**

Missile Defence raises complex issues with wide ranging potential implications. The Government follows closely and discusses with others developing opinion and reactions on issues related to missile defence in the UK, Europe, Russia, China and more widely.

We will continue to consider and assess carefully US missile defence proposals and their possible implications around the world. We remain closely engaged with the US on all aspects of these issues, including the potential impact of its policies on China, which has expressed concern over US Missile Defence plans. The US is seeking to engage constructively with them on the issue - President Bush has made clear his intention to reach out to China on missile defence.

- (5) We recommend that the Government seek to ensure that if either party to the ABM Treaty exercises its right to withdraw, the United States and Russia establish an alternative mutually satisfactory and legally binding agreement on the development of missile defence systems, which might include other states.**

On 13 December, the US gave Russia six months notice of its intention to exercise its right to withdraw from the ABM Treaty. President Bush underlined that he and President Putin have agreed that the US decision to withdraw from the treaty will not in any way undermine the new relationship between the US and Russia. Both Presidents have made clear that they are committed to working together to develop that new co-operative relationship.

As one element of this, the Government welcomes in particular the commitment by both President Bush and President Putin to make significant reductions in their operationally deployed nuclear forces. The US is committed to working closely with Russia to formalise arrangements on offensive forces, including appropriate verification and transparency measures.

Since January 2002, US and Russian officials have continued their discussions as they seek a formal way to express their new strategic relationship, working together on a broad range of political, economic and security issues. We keep in close touch with the US and Russia on these issues. We welcome continuing serious engagement between them and encourage early progress in their discussions.

- (6) We note the importance of ensuring a comprehensive ban on nuclear testing, and believe that unilateral cuts in the US nuclear arsenal do not substitute for the establishment and maintenance of global non-proliferation agreements. We recommend that the Government renew its efforts to press the United States to ratify the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty.**

The government works actively in support of global non-proliferation agreements such as the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT). Moves such as the bilateral US and Russian parallel cuts in their nuclear arsenals are a welcome

adjunct to such agreements. We support the universalisation of the CTBT . We have consistently urged all states which have not yet done so to sign and ratify the Treaty. The Foreign Secretary reiterated this message at the Conference on Facilitating the Entry into Force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty on 11 November 2001. The UK supported an EU demarche to the US to encourage ratification of the CTBT in May 2001. We also raised the issue of the funding of the CTBT Organisation on several occasions in 2001 and are pleased to see that the US has remained a supporter of the International Monitoring System.

- (7) The Committee supports the Government in its determination to review the Treaty on Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. The Treaty is currently ‘leaking’, and we recommend that the Government works in the closest conjunction with the US Administration to devise further specific and effective measures to enforce this crucial arms control agreement. The Committee expects to receive from the Government details of such measures.**

The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) provides for a Review Conference every five years, with Preparatory Committees held in advance. There will be Preparatory Committees in 2002, 2003 and 2004 followed by a Review Conference in 2005. The Government supports the NPT and is not looking to review the NPT independently of this process. However, recent experience with Iraq and North Korea has demonstrated that certain countries may attempt to pursue a nuclear weapons programme under cover of Treaty membership. This underlines the need for all parties to the Treaty to accept intrusive IAEA inspection and monitoring. To this end, we and the US are pressing all Treaty members to adopt the IAEA’s Additional Protocol.

- (9) We conclude that the only way to establish whether states are developing biological and toxin weapons is to establish a mandatory, on the ground challenge inspection system to verify compliance to the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention. We recommend that the Government work with the US and other allies to agree such a verification regime, by which states’ compliance with the BTWC can be established.**

The Government is continuing to work with the United States and all other States Parties to the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention in order to seek agreement on means to strengthen the Convention. We recognise the difficulty of this task given the decision by the United States in 2001 that the draft Protocol to the Convention did not meet their requirements. The UK remains committed to giving teeth to the Convention by a range of measures that include effective investigations of suspect activity. The Government will shortly be publishing a detailed paper setting out its views on countering the threat from biological weapons.

- (10) In view of the US Administration’s proposal to cut the Department of Energy’s funding for Co-operative Threat Reduction programmes, we recommend that the Government continues to stress to the US the utmost importance it attaches to such programmes and reports to the Committee on progress to establish an international financing plan for them.**

The Government has continued to stress the importance it attaches to US Co-operative Threat Reduction and non-proliferation assistance programmes. It notes with satisfaction the results of the US Government’s Review of Non-Proliferation Assistance to Russia. In this Review, the US repeated its commitment to such projects, and increased the overall amount of funding available. As most of the programmes are bilateral, international financing plans are not required. We have made it clear that we remain eager to take forward work on plutonium disposition with the US, Russia and other interested parties. The UK has maintained a close dialogue with US colleagues, particularly in respect of the Plutonium disposition programme and non-proliferation initiatives in Russia’s Closed Nuclear Cities. The UK has recently signed a framework agreement with Russia which will enable up to £12M of assistance to be used in high priority chemical demilitarisation over the next three years. The bulk of this will go towards projects at the US funded destruction facility at Shchuch’ye. We welcome the recently renewed US commitment to this project.

(11) We recommend that the FCO continues to maintain close scrutiny of the arms control implications of the militarisation of outer space.

The FCO continues to monitor developments in the use of outer space and their international implications.

(12) We conclude that the argument that UN efforts to control small arms have been influenced by those seeking to change US domestic gun policy is unconvincing. We recommend that the Government urge the US to support fully the UN Programme of Action on preventing the flow of small arms to developing countries. We fully support the Government's efforts to tighten the supply of arms to non-state parties.

The Government will continue to work to reduce the impact on human lives of the uncontrolled spread and misuse of Small Arms, including through implementing the UN Programme of Action, supporting others to do so and working closely with other governments and civil society partners. This includes the US Government, which has recently expressed strong interest in working with the EU on this issue. The Government will also continue to engage the US on those issues that cause them difficulty, some of which fall outside the scope of the Programme of Action.

(13) We recommend that the Government work with the United States for a responsible approach to strengthening the police and security forces of Central and South Asian states affected by the campaign against terrorism.

The FCO has been working closely with the Cabinet Office, the MOD and other agencies to develop joint strategies with the US to build up Counter Terrorism expertise in various regions of the world, including those directly affected by the campaign against terrorism. The FCO has funds available for Counter Terrorism assistance, including the provision of training and equipment. South Asia and South-East Asia are priority areas for this assistance in the next financial year. We are working with the US to address the urgent need for future security structures in Afghanistan. The Foreign Secretary had discussions on this with Colin Powell and Condoleeza Rice on 31 January, and we plan working level meetings in the near future.

(14) We recommend that the Government continue in its efforts to encourage the United States to ratify the Ottawa Convention, and to phase out the use of anti-personnel land mines before 2006.

While recognising the reasons underlying the different position taken by the US regarding the Ottawa Convention, the Government will continue to work with the US authorities in an effort to persuade them of the benefits of accession and of phasing out the use of Anti Personnel Land Mines.

(15) We recommend that the Government highlight to the US Government the value and importance of securing legally-binding multilateral agreements to control the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. We welcome efforts made by the Government to curb the flow of small arms to developing countries through the UN system, and to ban the use of anti-personnel land mines, and endorse its efforts to persuade the US to support such initiatives.

The Government recognises the very important part that legally binding multilateral agreements play in controlling the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. It continues to press this case with other governments, including the United States. It also continues to push forward the small arms agenda in partnership with other governments, including the United States, and with civil society.

(16) We recommend that the Government continue its dialogue with the US Administration on the Treaty establishing the International Criminal Court.

The Government will continue its dialogue with the US on the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, both bilaterally and with EU partners in support of the EU Common Position on the ICC, established in June 2001.

- (17) We recognise the value that NATO has provided to British security as both a military and political institution over the past fifty years. We support the Government's efforts to work with the US and Russia to ensure that the Alliance evolves to reflect the new security environment. We recommend that the Government ensure, in its policies towards NATO, that the Alliance's cohesion and effectiveness as a military organisation with full US engagement is maintained.**

NATO is fundamental to our security. The United Kingdom continues to work with the US and others to adapt the Alliance to face a rapidly changing world and unpredictable threats. Following an initiative by the Prime Minister, NATO and Russia are working on transforming their relationship, with the potential of huge benefits for transatlantic security. More generally, the NATO Summit in Prague in November 2002 will be an opportunity for the Alliance to move forward in key areas. In particular, we look forward to invitations being issued to aspirants who are ready to assume the responsibilities of membership, and to agreement on the further modernisation which will be needed if an enlarged Alliance is to remain effective. In all this, we continue to work very closely with the US, as we do with other NATO Allies.

- (18) We recommend that during the ongoing war against terrorism, the Government act to avoid any loss of momentum for reconstruction in the Balkans, by working for the continued full involvement and active participation of the United States in the region.**

Active US involvement has been a key element in the success we have so far achieved in the Balkans. US involvement in SFOR and KFOR in particular has been and remains essential to the success of those two missions. The Government, together with its NATO Allies and EU partners, will encourage continuing US commitment to resolve remaining sources of conflict and help the region integrate into Euro-Atlantic structures.

- (19) We recommend that the Government lend its full support to renewed efforts by the United States to achieve success in the Middle East peace process on the basis of the Mitchell Committee proposals, by bringing pressure to bear on the Israeli Government and the Palestinian Authority and by standing ready to contribute towards such diplomatic, practical and economic assistance as may be required.**

The Government agrees that concerted action by the international community is vital to move the Middle East Peace Process forward. We will continue to work closely with the US and our EU partners to bring pressure to bear on both parties, on the basis of the Mitchell Committee proposals.

- (20) We conclude that the Government's and European Union's policies of constructive engagement with Iran deserve full support. We recommend that the Government should continue to be bold in developing these contacts, extending them as appropriate to other countries in the Middle East, in the interests of long-term peace and stability in the region, and that it should seek to persuade the United States of their value. At the same time, the problems and pressures faced by countries with which the United Kingdom and the United States already have friendly relations must not be downplayed or underestimated.**

The government welcomes the FAC's support for United Kingdom policy on Iran, which we intend to continue to pursue both bilaterally and in co-operation with the EU. While deepening our relations with certain states that have until recently been internationally isolated, we will however maintain a robust dialogue on those issues of concern to both HMG and our allies. The United States is interested in our policy of engagement, which we will continue to discuss with appropriate interlocutors.

- (21) We recommend that the Government ensure that the United States is fully seized of the importance of achieving a solution to the Kashmir problem, and of the need for it to use its influence to help bring about such a solution.**

The Government has discussed India/Pakistan relations frequently with the US Administration at various levels, particularly since November 2001. We have ensured that our approach to the problems of the region are closely co-ordinated. Colin Powell and his colleagues have been in regular contact with counterparts in the region. He visited India and Pakistan in mid-January.

(22) We recommend that BBC World Service consider broadcasting to the United States in languages other than English, especially in Spanish and Arabic.

All 43 of the languages in which the BBC World Service broadcasts can be heard in the US on the BBC website. Some local FM and AM stations in the US already rebroadcast the World Service's Spanish and some other language services. Further languages are expected to be added soon. Spanish is also being launched on satellite radio and will be available nationwide during 2002. Consideration is being given to targeted distribution of several language services, including Arabic, to ethnic stations.

(23) We recommend that the Government, with the United States Government, do all it can to resolve outstanding trade issues between our countries, and to encourage US citizens not to be deterred from travelling to the United Kingdom for their vacations.

The EU/US trading relationship is the largest and most successful in the world. While some differences are bound to occur in a relationship of this size, we recognise that it is in our mutual interest to resolve them as quickly and harmoniously as possible. The Government, the European Commission and other EU Member States work hard with the United States to resolve existing problems and seek to settle differences before they become formal disputes.

One of the underlying themes of the promotional public diplomacy tools we produce for use by our overseas posts and by departments at home is the attractiveness of the United Kingdom as a place to visit, whether as a student, businessman or tourist. These tools include: services for the international press (e.g. visits, briefings, articles and photos); TV and radio news, features and documentaries; publications, posters and displays; and web publishing.

The FCO will continue to work closely, both at home and overseas, with the British Tourist Authority, the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (responsible for tourism issues), the British Council and the Britain Abroad Task Force to ensure a co-ordinated approach, involving both the private and public sectors.

(24) We recommend that, when assessing the value of the diplomatic estate to United Kingdom taxpayers, the FCO and Treasury ensure that the 'diplomatic balance sheet' of the contribution made by properties to promoting the United Kingdom's interests is regarded as being no less important than the financial balance sheet.

The FCO accepts the Committee's recommendation that a property's contribution to promoting the UK's interests should be considered alongside financial matters when assessing its suitability as part of our overseas estate. We monitor the existing estate, and assess the suitability of properties we may acquire, with both aspects in mind. We shall continue to do so as this is what we mean by value for money.

(25) We commend the performance of the British Embassy in Washington, and express our appreciation of the excellent work done by its staff at every level.

(26) We congratulate the entire staff of the Consulate General and other posts in New York for their exemplary action on behalf of British victims of the attack on the World Trade Center, and on the consistently high standard of their representation of British interests.

The Government shares the appreciation of the Committee for the excellent work done by the Embassy in Washington and by the staff of the posts in New York, particularly following the attack on the World Trade Centre. The Committee's appreciation has been passed to and welcomed by staff in these posts.

- (27) We sensed in New York and Washington, if we did not know it already, that now is an extraordinary time in British-US relations. The United Kingdom and the United States are working as closely together as they have ever done. Indeed, on 11 September the immediate outpouring of sympathy by the British people and the immediate expressions of solidarity and practical co-operation by the British Government had a remarkable and positive effect on US public and official opinion. Neither side pretends that there are no differences between them, but both sides know that the relationship is sufficiently mature and enduring to accommodate them. The foundations of British-US relations are broad, deep and substantial.**
- (28) This country's status as a leading member of the European Union adds to rather than detracts from its role as the premier ally of the United States. The United Kingdom is in a position to represent the United States to Europe, and Europe to the United States. Because of its historical experience, and particularly through its Commonwealth links, it offers the United States a depth of knowledge of parts of the globe where America has not traditionally met with understanding. The excellent working relationship at the United Nations is evidence, if needed, of the two countries' closeness.**
- (29) The response of the British Government to September 11 has demonstrated once again that the relationship between the United Kingdom and the United States remains special. It is the firm view of the Foreign Affairs Committee that it is in the interests of both countries that it remains so.**

The Government entirely accepts the Committee's premise that the foundations of British-US relations are broad, deep and substantial; and that it is in the interests of both countries that the unique and special characteristics of this relationship should be conserved and strengthened.

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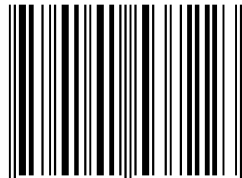
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