

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

HOUSE OF COMMONS
OFFICIAL REPORT

First Delegated Legislation Committee

DRAFT INTERNATIONAL HEADQUARTERS AND
DEFENCE ORGANISATIONS (DESIGNATION AND
PRIVILEGES) ORDER 2017

Monday 20 November 2017

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Friday 24 November 2017

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The Committee consisted of the following Members:

Chair: PHIL WILSON

† Baron, Mr John (*Basildon and Billericay*) (Con)
Coffey, Ann (*Stockport*) (Lab)
Flint, Caroline (*Don Valley*) (Lab)
† Hayes, Helen (*Dulwich and West Norwood*) (Lab)
† Jones, Mr David (*Clwyd West*) (Con)
† Jones, Gerald (*Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney*) (Lab)
† Lancaster, Mark (*Minister for the Armed Forces*)
† Lopresti, Jack (*Filton and Bradley Stoke*) (Con)
† Mackinlay, Craig (*South Thanet*) (Con)
† Monaghan, Carol (*Glasgow North West*) (SNP)
† Murray, Mrs Sheryll (*South East Cornwall*) (Con)

Onasanya, Fiona (*Peterborough*) (Lab)
† Smith, Jeff (*Manchester, Withington*) (Lab)
† Spellar, John (*Warley*) (Lab)
† Stuart, Graham (*Beverley and Holderness*) (Con)
† Trevelyan, Mrs Anne-Marie (*Berwick-upon-Tweed*)
(Con)
† Warburton, David (*Somerton and Frome*) (Con)

Adam Evans, *Committee Clerk*

† **attended the Committee**

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[PHIL WILSON *in the Chair*]

Draft International Headquarters and Defence Organisations (Designation and Privileges) Order 2017

4.30 pm

The Minister for the Armed Forces (Mark Lancaster): I beg to move,

That the Committee has considered the draft International Headquarters and Defence Organisations (Designation and Privileges) Order 2017.

The draft order relates to NATO headquarters and units in the United Kingdom. The UK follows a dualist approach to international law. Therefore, when we make international commitments to our NATO partners, we may need mechanisms in our domestic law to honour those commitments. The mechanism in this case is the International Headquarters and Defence Organisations Act 1964, the purpose of which is to recognise that headquarters have certain legal capacities and immunities such as the inviolability of their archives; to recognise the status of military and civilian personnel working in those headquarters, and the jurisdiction arrangements that apply to them; and to make provision for coroners' arrangements.

The scope of the draft order is narrow. It amends the application of the 1964 Act, which covers NATO's headquarters and other international headquarters in the UK. The amendment is required because some of their titles have changed over time. We are simply taking this opportunity to ensure that the list of headquarters is up to date. I refer the Committee to part 2 of the schedule. The names of the Allied Maritime Command—MARCOM—and the NATO Intelligence Fusion Centre have changed, and there are two new units based in the UK: the NATO Centralised Targeting Capacity and the 1st NATO Signal Battalion, which has moved back from Germany.

4.31 pm

Gerald Jones (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney) (Lab): As the Minister said, this is a straightforward piece of legislation that merely updates the list of international headquarters and defence organisations in the 1964 Act to reflect name changes and additions. However, while the Minister is here, I would like to press him on two of the headquarters named in the draft order: Headquarters United Kingdom-Netherlands Amphibious Force and Headquarters United Kingdom-Netherlands Landing Force.

As the Minister will be aware, the UK-Netherlands Amphibious Force is seen as a prime example in NATO of what can be achieved through military integration and co-operation. Bilateral partnerships with countries such as the Netherlands and our role in international organisations could be diminished if our amphibious capabilities are reduced—namely, if HMS Bulwark and HMS Albion are scrapped as part of the national security capability review. The Minister may say that no decisions have yet been made about that review, but will he tell us whether there have been any discussions with the Dutch and with other allies and institutions?

In June, when signing a joint vision statement with the Netherlands, the former Secretary of State for Defence, the right hon. Member for Sevenoaks (Sir Michael Fallon), said:

“The UK is stepping forward not back from the global stage and will continue to defend our continent”—

The Chair: Order. The hon. Gentleman is getting a little out of the scope of the motion before the Committee.

Gerald Jones: I thought I would take the opportunity to ask the Minister about that subject while he was here, but in closing I will just ask him whether he will update us in his response.

4.33 pm

Mark Lancaster: We were gently straying from the scope of the motion. The most helpful thing I can do is probably to refer the hon. Gentleman to the debate about that subject tomorrow in Westminster Hall. I am sure that it will be discussed at length then.

Question put and agreed to.

4.34 pm

Committee rose.