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Minister for Europe

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Josep Borrell
President
European Parliament
Rue Wiertz
1047 Brussels
Belgium

24~~th~~ October 2006

Dear Josep,

I am sorry to have to write this letter to express my disappointment about a recent meeting with one of the European Parliament's temporary committees.

As a former MEP, I believe in the importance of engagement and co-operation with the European Parliament. As a result, I agreed to meet and give evidence to the Parliament's Temporary Committee on the alleged use of European countries by the CIA for the transport and illegal detention of prisoners on 5 October 2005.

According to the Parliament's decision to set up the Committee, its mandate is to collect and analyse information to find out whether EU governments have been involved in unlawful acts of rendition. The Committee appears not to be carrying out its remit in the way stipulated by the Parliament's decision. Baroness Ludford prejudged the outcome of the meeting publicly in a FT article, by accusing the UK Government of complicity in the unlawful act of rendition. I attach this article for reference.

During my meeting with the Temporary Committee, I pressed Baroness Ludford on this point but she refused to retract her comments and passed them off as 'shorthand'. Furthermore, after I gave full answers on behalf of the UK Government to all of the Committee's questions, Baroness Ludford accused me in the press the next day of being uncooperative.

Having read carefully the terms of reference of the Committee's remit, it appears inappropriate to use media contacts both prior to and in follow up to the meeting.

I have always been and remain open to co-operation with the European Parliament. However, I wanted to express my profound disappointment in this instance. It is difficult therefore to encourage my colleagues to increase their



engagement with the European Parliament, if they are at risk of being subject to the same treatment.

If the Temporary Committee have any other questions before they publish their final report, I am happy to provide answers from the UK Government on the understanding that the Committee works within the remit provided by the Parliament's decision.

Yours sincerely
Geoff

GEOFF HOON

Ministers pressed on 'rendition'

By Jimmy Burns

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The government is under renewed pressure over its alleged complicity in the transport, secret detention and mistreatment by the US of terrorist suspects.

A European parliament committee investigating the CIA's alleged use of European countries for what is known as rendition arrives in London today for meetings with MPs, alleged victims and their lawyers and organisations that are campaigning for a public inquiry.

The MEPs have secured a meeting tomorrow with Geoff Hoon, minister for Europe and former defence secretary, at which Ministry of Defence, Home Office and Department for Transport officials will be present.

Baroness Ludford, head of the delegation, said ministers and officials would be pressed on the arrangements for the use of UK airports by the CIA, and the extent to which intelligence and security personnel had been involved in the transport and interrogation of terrorist suspects in possible violation of the UK's human rights obligations.

"We want to find out more about UK co-operation or complicity in the unlawful act of rendition. Terrorist suspects should be subject to a proper trial and criminal prosecution under existing European laws. They should not be dealt with in a grey legal zone," said Ms Ludford, a justice and the home affairs spokeswoman for the Liberal Democrats in the European parliament.

Baroness Ludford told the Financial Times she believed the "united wall of denial" among EU members states over rendition had begun to unravel after President George W. Bush's public acknowledgement that the CIA had been holding and interrogating "high-value" al-Qaeda suspects in secret detention facilities.

The Foreign Office has told MPs that after "an extensive review" of records from May 1997, it could confirm four cases in 1998 - during Bill Clinton's administration - when the US requested permission to "render" detainees through the UK or British overseas territories. According to the Foreign Office, the government granted the US request in only two cases, and these were of detainees transferred via the UK to stand trial.

MPs campaigning for greater transparency have accused ministers of not coming clean on some of the more controversial aspects of the counterterrorism relationship with the US, including complicity in the mistreatment of prisoners some of whom continue to be detained in Guantánamo.

The Commons intelligence and security committee, the only parliamentary group allowed to take evidence from serving members of the intelligence community, is preparing a report on renditions. Meanwhile, Andrew Tyrie, Tory MP and head of the all-party Parliamentary Group on Rendition, yesterday wrote to Foreign Office ministers urging them to give more details about UK involvement in the cross-border transfer of prisoners.

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