

December 2005

Our reference: 21527

Dr Caroline Lucas MEP
House of Commons
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From The Minister of State

Dear Caroline

Thank you for your letter to the Foreign Secretary about the use of British supplied equipment in Papua. I am replying as Duty Minister.

We have sought confirmation from the Indonesian authorities of reports that Tactica water cannon vehicles have been used in Papua. We understand that the water cannon were used in Jayapura to break up a violent demonstration aimed at an office of the Indonesian Electoral Commission. Two local NGOs have indicated to British Embassy staff that they considered this a reasonable level of force for the police to use, and a more appropriate response to public disorder than some of the methods employed by the police in the past.

We consider that the use by a government within its own borders of proportionate force to maintain law and order, subject to appropriate controls, is legitimate and does not constitute internal repression or a human rights abuse.

KIM HOWELLS