



MINISTER OF STATE FOR
THE ARMED FORCES

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE
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Telephone: 020 7218 9000 (Switchboard)

Our ref: D/Min(AF)/BR MC05825/2009

14 December 2009

Dear Caroline

I have seen a copy of the letter that you have sent on 16 November to Commissioner Dimas in which you suggest that the MOD and UK authorities are failing to uphold their responsibilities under the Habitats Directive in the Moray Firth.

You may not be surprised to hear that I strongly reject any suggestion that the MOD does not pay sufficient attention to protected species. We have invested heavily to ensure that we are able to plan and operate within both the letter and the spirit of the Habitats Regulations. In terms of operation in the marine environment our mitigation measures are the best available and are widely considered to be amongst the most comprehensive of any Navy and, indeed, reflect the guidance of the UK's statutory conservation body, The Joint Nature Conservation Committee.

I should also point out that Environmental risk Assessments are undertaken by the MOD before each use of sonar and that your claims that military sonar is responsible for the deaths of thousands of marine mammals are entirely at odds with any reliable published science literature on the issue. In addition, the Royal Navy are in regular contact with representatives of the relevant NGOs in the field including the Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society, in order to ensure that their operating procedures take into account the best possible objective advice on how best to safeguard marine mammals.

More specifically, notwithstanding your assertion regarding the recent exercise to which you refer, we did not nor had ever planned to include Anti Submarine Warfare activity within the Moray Firth or its special area of conservation.

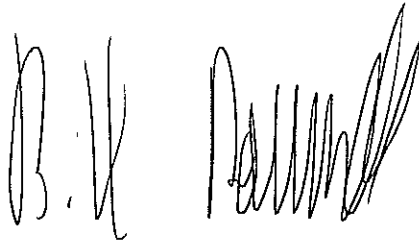
I hope this clarifies the situation and I am copying this letter to Commissioner Dimas.

Dr Caroline Lucas MEP
Suite 58
The Hop Exchange
24 Southwark Street
London
SE1 1TY

Copy to:

Commissioner Dimas
DG Environment
The European Commission
200 Rue de la Loi
B1049 Brussels
Belgium

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'B. Rammell', written in a cursive style.

Bill Rammell MP