



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

020 7219 4198

Rt. Hon Bob Ainsworth MP  
Secretary of State for Defence  
Ministry of Defence  
Floor 5, Zone B, Main Building  
Whitehall, London  
SW1A 2HB

17 August 2009

Dear Mr Ainsworth,

On 29 April 2009, in his statement on Afghanistan and Pakistan, the Prime Minister said:

“...as the US moves in, we will over time shift the balance of our operations away from front-line combat and towards an enhanced contribution to training both the army in Afghanistan and its police.” (29 Apr 2009 : Column 870)

This was also mentioned in the Government's *UK Policy in Afghanistan and Pakistan: the way forward* (page 19) published on the same day.

Since then members of my team and I have been trying to get more details regarding this matter. I raised the matter during the *Defence in the World Debate* on 4 June 2009 (4 Jun 2009 : Column 442) and although my point was not addressed by your benches you told the House during your wind up that you would write to those Honourable Members whose questions had not been answered (4 Jun 2009 : Column 486). To date I have not received a letter on this issue from your office.

During the Westminster Hall Debate on 8 July 2009 my colleague, the Honourable Member for Aldershot (Gerald Howarth) raised the same issue again and reminded the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence (Mr. Kevan Jones) that we were expecting a letter, as promised during your wind up on 4 June, outlining the details of what the Prime Minister said on 29 April 2009 (8 July 2009 : Column 297WH).

In light of what you said yesterday on the Andrew Marr show that British troops will eventually begin undertaking a training and mentoring role to the Afghan National Army, and on top of the several enquires made by my team



and me regarding the future role of British forces as mentioned in the Prime Minister's statement on 29 April, could you now use this opportunity to expand on your comments and those of the Prime Minister.

On a separate matter, I'm sure you appreciate that during parliamentary recess my ability to ask written questions is limited. Consequently, I was wondering if you would tell me how many members of the Armed Forces are trained to drive Mastiff and Ridgback vehicles as of 17 August 2009? How long it takes to train a driver for each? Finally, if the training for Ridgback is shorter for those who have already been qualified to drive Mastiffs?

I look forward to your response.

Yours Sincerely,  
PP Luke Callaghan

*(Approved by the Shadow Secretary of State  
and signed in his absence)*

**Dr Liam Fox MP**  
**Shadow Secretary of State for Defence**