



Foreign & Commonwealth Office

Crisis Management Department
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1 September 2015

Dear Mr Halpin,

Thank you for your email of 14 August to Mr Tobias Ellwood MP regarding the repatriation of deceased British Nationals following the recent terrorist attack in Tunisia. I am responding as Head of Crisis Management Department in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, having also overseen the consular crisis team's response to the attack.

The Sousse attack saw the greatest loss of British life in a terrorist incident overseas since the Bali bombings in 2002. The Government therefore decided that Exceptional Assistance Measures should be applied. As indicated in Minister Ellwood's letter of 28th July, by assuming responsibility for the repatriation of our 30 deceased nationals from Tunisia, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office hoped to lessen the burden on families at what was a very distressing time for them.

Rather than pursue a commercial or ad hoc option, we chose to accept the Ministry of Defence's offer and use a C17 and RAF Brize Norton for the repatriation. This allowed us to run an organised, respectful, and swift operation in which all 30 victims were returned to the UK by Saturday the 4th July. On return, the bodies were removed immediately from RAF Brize Norton and taken to the West London Coroner's office where appropriate facilities exist in accordance with the Coronial process.

Given the military components of this repatriation, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office rightly sought advice from the Ministry of Defence. The use of both the C17 and RAF Brize Norton did necessitate military involvement in the repatriation and ceremony. However, overall the ceremony was designed to meet the needs of the families rather than to adhere to military protocol.

As the Ministry of Defence has yet to submit a claim to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, I am unable to provide you with details of the costs associated with the repatriation or indicate when they will be available. However in due course the costs will be published and you will be able to access them yourself on the following website <http://data.gov.uk/dataset/financial-transactions-data-fco> .

In the meantime I hope that my response, alongside that of Minister Ellwood, answers the general questions you have about the repatriation process.

However, if you are unsatisfied with the Foreign and Commonwealth's response to your correspondence, you should ask your MP to write to the Parliamentary and Health services Ombudsman (PHSO) on your behalf. The PHSO normally deals with cases of maladministration in the department.

The PHSO can be contacted at:

Millbank Tower
Millbank
London SW1P 4QP

Email: phso.enquiries@ombudsman.org.uk

Yours sincerely

Simon Wood

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