



INTELLIGENCE AND SECURITY COMMITTEE OF PARLIAMENT

Chairman: The Rt Hon. The Lord Beamish PC
Deputy Chairman: The Rt Hon. Sir Jeremy Wright KC MP



The Rt Hon. Sir Keir Starmer KCB KC MP
10 Downing Street
London
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ISC 4.20/078

5 February 2026

Dear Prime Minister,

We are writing to you following the Humble Address agreed by the House of Commons yesterday, to confirm the Intelligence and Security Committee's understanding and expectations.

The Humble Address stated that the Government is required to lay before the House all papers relating to Lord Mandelson's appointment as His Majesty's Ambassador to the United States of America, electronic communications and minutes of all meetings between Lord Mandelson and ministers, Government officials and special advisers during his time as Ambassador, and details of any payments made to Lord Mandelson on his departure as Ambassador and from the Civil Service except papers prejudicial to UK national security or international relations which shall instead be referred to the Intelligence and Security Committee of Parliament.

It is our clear understanding that it is for the Government to determine which of the documents in scope of the motion should not be publicly disclosed because, in the Government's view, their disclosure would prejudice national security or international relations. We understand that the Cabinet Secretary will be asked to carry out that role on the Government's behalf. The motion, as amended, neither envisages nor permits a role for the ISC in that part of the process.

The ISC therefore expects that the Government will, very shortly, be laying before the House all such papers, except for the limited number where it is assessed that some material within them cannot be published without prejudicing UK national security or international relations.

Expectations

In relation to that limited number of papers, the Government is required to provide those papers to the ISC. The ISC's role will be to consider material to which the Cabinet Secretary believes either exemption should apply and to reach its own view separately and subsequently on whether or not either exemption should indeed properly apply to it. In doing so the ISC will act, as it always does, entirely independently of Government and we reserve the right to determine how to deal with the material shown to us (including whether or not a report is necessary) when we have considered it. That must be a matter for the Committee alone - and it is clearly not possible for the Committee to determine this until it sees the papers, or indeed to commit to any timetable until we know the size of the task at hand.

The Committee has this morning agreed its clear expectations as to how this subset of papers should be provided to the Committee:

- we believe the motion is clear that those papers which the Government is required to provide to the ISC must be disclosed, unredacted, to the ISC. The Government may not decline to disclose any in scope material altogether;
- each paper should clearly show precisely those words, phrases or sentences within the paper which the Government considers would be prejudicial to UK national security or international relations (from experience it is rarely whole documents that need to be withheld); and
- in relation to each such word, phrase or sentence, the Government should provide a clear and logical rationale as to how exactly the Government considers it would be prejudicial to UK national security or international relations.

The Committee also has requirements as to the format in which the papers will need to be received by the Committee and these can be obtained from our Office separately.

Next Steps

For the avoidance of doubt, the ISC is now awaiting receipt of these papers from the Government, in accordance with the above.

In the meantime the Committee would be grateful to, now, be told the date on which we will receive those papers such that we are able to plan the resourcing requirements accordingly and to make arrangements for the provision of the additional resources the Committee may require to properly carry out scrutiny of the material supplied to it, and which the Government agreed to provide in the debate yesterday.

We have considered it prudent to write in these terms to ensure that there is no misunderstanding about the role of the ISC in dealing with the material which the House of Commons has determined we should see. We are profoundly conscious of the gravity of this matter and the need for absolute clarity on how it is to be taken forward. We have therefore copied this letter to the Cabinet Secretary, to Mr Speaker, the Lord Speaker and to Party Leaders in the House of Commons. We will also be placing it on the Committee's website.

Beamish P.C.

Jeremy Wright

THE RT HON. THE LORD BEAMISH PC THE RT HON. SIR JEREMY WRIGHT KC MP