



UK Representation to the EU Brussels

Juan Fernando LÓPEZ AGUILAR

The Chairman

Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs
European Parliament

**The Permanent Representative
Sir Jon Cunliffe CB**

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1 October 2013

Dear Mr. Lopez Aguilar,

Thank you for your letter of 26 September to Sir Iain Lobban, inviting him to attend your Committee's hearing on 3 October.

The United Kingdom's Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ) is one of the United Kingdom's three Intelligence Agencies, which are a vital tool in the protection of the UK's national security. National security is the sole responsibility of Member States. The activities of intelligence services are equally the sole responsibility of each Member State and fall outside the competences of the Union. For that reason, and with respect, the UK must decline your invitation for the Director of GCHQ to attend your Hearing. Further, it is my Government's consistent policy not to comment on intelligence matters.

The activities of GCHQ, and indeed the UK's other Intelligence Agencies, are governed by one of the world's most robust legal framework and oversight arrangements that ensures that UK intelligence activity adheres to strict principles of necessity, proportionality and legality. All UK security and intelligence agencies practise and uphold the law at all times, including when dealing with information from outside the UK. The UK's legislation is fully

compatible with the right to privacy, as set out in Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights.

For information, the relevant UK law is: the Security Service Act 1989; the Intelligence Services Act 1994; and the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000. The legislation is available at www.legislation.gov.uk. Independent oversight is conducted by the Interception of Communications Commissioner and the Intelligence Services Commissioner. Details of their work and the independent reports they produce can be found at: www.intelligencecommissioners.com and www.iocco-uk.info.

Yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Cunliffe', with a stylized flourish at the end.

JON CUNLIFFE