

Question for written answer E-003161/2021

to the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy

Rule 138

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Subject: Italian aircraft blocked in the United Arab Emirates

On Tuesday 8 June 2021, an Italian air force aircraft, a Boeing 767, was suddenly and unexpectedly stopped in Dammam for at least three hours, just after the UAE Government refused to grant permission for it to traverse its controlled airspace.

The departure of this military aircraft from Pratica di Mare for Herat, Afghanistan, was of great symbolic value: the passengers were flying there to attend the flag-lowering ceremony, which nicely represented the withdrawal of Italian troops from Afghan soil after a long and tiring presence in the Middle East.

After this three-hour forced stop, the Boeing left Damman Airport for Herat. Onboard there were not only troops, but also several journalists.

The Italian Foreign Ministry immediately gave the order to summon the UAE Ambassador, Omar al-Shamsi, to provide an explanation for this incident.

What measures will the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy take to make sure that this disappointing and unjustified stance does not go unnoticed?