



SECRETARY OF STATE

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE
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MST 3/5C

7 October 2004

Dear Kristin,

I understand that, following the European Union Defence Ministers' meeting in Noordwijk, you have spoken in public about your desire to see a Norwegian contribution to a Nordic Battlegroup as part of the European Union's Battlegroup initiative. I would very much welcome such a contribution.

The Battlegroup project is of vital importance in taking forward the development and transformation of European military capabilities. Successful implementation will significantly improve the range of high readiness forces across Europe available for use by both the European Union and the NATO Alliance. It will have considerable transformation and interoperability benefits and, in this context, has been acknowledged by NATO Allies to be strongly mutually reinforcing with the NATO Response Force.

While the EU has not yet decided in detail how to address the question of participation by non-EU countries in battlegroups, the United Kingdom strongly supports an inclusive approach and would very much hope that Norway would take part. Norway's support and participation would send a very clear message to all Member States and NATO Allies about the importance of this concept. In addition to developing a way for Norway to participate actively in future EU operations, it would also be a tangible example of how NATO and the

Her Excellency Mrs Kristin Krohn Devold
Minister of Defence
Norway



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European Union can work together in a very concrete fashion to improve our collective capacity to respond to crises.

The United Kingdom welcomes its strong bilateral relationship with Norway on defence and as such is willing to offer the United Kingdom's Permanent Joint Headquarters as a fully nationalised Operational HQ, providing Parent HQ support for a Nordic EU Battlegroup operation. I hope that you find this offer helpful as you look to develop a Nordic Battlegroup commitment.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Geoff', with a stylized flourish extending to the right.

GEOFFREY HOON