



AFGHANISTAN & PAKISTAN DEBATE

Alan Simpson (Nottingham, South) (Lab): I welcome the list of initiatives that the Prime Minister mentioned in relation to development, democracy and diplomacy in both Afghanistan and Pakistan. Does he accept, however, that the line that cannot be crossed would be one that saw any involvement of UK troops, either conventional or special forces, in Pakistan? Does he agree that that would inevitably lead to a civil war in Pakistan, and to wider hostility to the presence of western forces in the region as a whole? Will he assure the House that under no circumstances will UK forces be given a remit to cross that frontier?

The Prime Minister: I think that my hon. Friend is finding difficulties where they do not exist. The issue is not that but how we can support and back up both the Afghan and Pakistan army and police forces, and we will continue to do that. If we are to fight terrorism, co-operation will be necessary. As the former Foreign Secretary, the right hon. and learned Member for Kensington and Chelsea (Sir Malcolm Rifkind) mentioned, Afghanistan and Pakistan must learn to work together to deal with their common problems. We can assist in that, but I believe that there is a will from Presidents Karzai and Zardari for that co-operation to happen.