

NSS01

Memorandum from the Cabinet Office

INTRODUCTION - (purpose of the note)

The Joint Committee requested a written memorandum to provide a brief overview of the National Security Strategy and its implementation.

BACKGROUND

The first National Security Strategy was published in March 2008 and was followed by a comprehensive update in June 2009.

The purpose of the Strategy is to ensure that the government is prepared to address the broad range of security challenges we face from terrorism, organised crime, to civil emergencies and global instability and conflict; and to ensure that the public is informed about the nature of the threats we face and engaged as far as possible to help to counter those threats. The Strategy is a public document with a clear citizen focus. The focus of our national security effort is no longer just the protection of the state, but the protection of individuals and their freedom to go about their daily lives freely and with confidence.

The 2009 update to the Strategy set out the fundamental UK interests that need protecting, and examined the potential causes of threats, or "drivers", and tried to identify all areas of threat. The strategy also examined how and where threats manifested themselves - whether by land, sea or air, through economic warfare or cyber attacks, or through public opinion and the information domain. All of these aspects are now included within the national security framework.

STRUCTURES FOR DELIVERY

Immediately on taking office, the Prime Minister established NSID (The National Security, International Relations and Development sub-Committee of Cabinet) to enable key ministers, the Chief of the Defence Staff, agency heads, the Chairman of the Joint Intelligence Committee, and other relevant parties to consider issues of national security collectively. There are a number of sub-committees which sit beneath this structure, which are Chaired by lead departments, these include:

NSID(EU): Europe (Chaired by FCO)

NSID(NS): Nuclear Security (Chaired by the PM, alternate Chair FCO)

NSID(OD): Overseas and Defence (Chaired by the PM, alternate Chair FCO)

NSID(OD)(A): Africa (Chaired by DFID)

NSID(A&P): Afghanistan and Pakistan (Chaired by the PM, alternate Chair FCO)

NSID(OD)(T): Trade (Chaired by DFID)

NSID(PSR): Protective Security and Resilience (Chaired by HO)

NSID(E): Tackling Extremism (Chaired by the PM)

NSID(I): Intelligence (Chaired by the PM)

A National Security Secretariat was established in the Cabinet Office in September 2008 to develop the strategy to provide secretariat for NSID and coordination and oversight of national security policy across government.

The first Strategy recognised that national security is a matter for the public and parliament, and proposed establishment of this Joint Committee to improve accountability to parliament across the full range of national security issues.

We are committed to dialogue with experts and to building a shared understanding of the security challenges we face. For this reason, the Prime Minister established the National Security Forum in March 2009 to provide expert and independent advice to the Government. The Forum has met seven times since March 2009. It has provided advice to Ministers on a range of subjects: including the national security implications of the economic downturn, which contributed to the government's official assessment made in the 2009 Update of the Strategy.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS SINCE THE 2009 UPDATE

1. CYBER SECURITY

Following publication of the UK's first Cyber Security Strategy in June 2009, alongside the NSS update, the Office of Cyber Security was set up at the beginning of September 2009; it has responsibility for the delivery of the Strategy by providing cross-Government strategic leadership and coherence on all cyber security matters through a single coherent framework to address threats and realise opportunities in the cyber domain. The Cyber Security Operations Centre was also established in September and is a multi-agency unit set up to monitor developments in cyberspace and to act as a single source of expertise; it is already providing advice on a range of cyber security threats to government and industry.

2. COUNTER-TERRORISM

The National Security Strategy identifies international terrorism as the most significant and direct security threat to the UK. The NSS provides an overarching framework for CONTEST, the UK's Strategy for Countering International Terrorism. In March 2009, this was completely revised and an updated strategy was published. CONTEST is one of the most comprehensive and wide-ranging counter-terrorism strategies anywhere in the world, universally respected by our international partners.

For the first time in an unclassified document, CONTEST sets out a detailed account of the history of the threat, the impact that this has had on the UK, our understanding of its causes and our view of its likely direction. It also sets out the principles that govern our response to the threat, particularly our commitment to human rights and the rule of law; and our intention to address not only the immediate threats from terrorism but also its causes.

Finally, it explains who does what in counter-terrorism, sets out what we have achieved to date and outlines comprehensive future programmes of action here and overseas. The Home office will shortly publish the CONTEST Annual Report, the first of its kind, which aims summarise progress made over the last year against the programmes set out in CONTEST and identifies priorities for the future.

3. AFGHANISTAN AND PAKISTAN

Of the six major sources of threat set out in the first NS Strategy, four of them were relevant to Afghanistan and Pakistan: terrorism, conflict, trans-national crime and weapons of mass destruction. The Prime Minister published a strategy for Afghanistan and Pakistan in April 2009, recognising that, although they were two very different countries, a successful strategy there needed complimentary policies. Al Qa'ida remains the most significant security threat to the UK. There continues to be significant terrorist activity in and directed against the UK, linked to AQ, to associated groups or to groups inspired by AQ. We remain in Afghanistan to support the Afghan people in rebuilding their country, to ensure that it can not be retaken by the Taleban and again become a secure base for AQ. If the Taleban took over again in Afghanistan as a whole, or in a large part of it, we judge that AQ would follow them, either with the Taleban's encouragement, or at least by not preventing it.

4. TRANS-NATIONAL ORGANISED CRIME

The NS Strategy recognised Trans-National Organised Crime as one of the key threats to the UK. This acknowledgement has ensured engagement from across Government and strengthened our response to ensure that we continue to make the UK a hostile environment for organised criminals.

In July 2009, the Government published a new strategy for tackling organised crime ('Extending Our Reach') which reflects the approach set out in the NS Strategy. Since then, a Strategic Unit has been established in the Home Office to drive delivery across Government to tackle Organised Crime. This has enabled us to take a more targeted approach to international strategy and operations to tackle organised crime at its 'roots', and increasing opportunities for collaboration with EU and international partners. This has enabled the UK to be an even more hostile environment for organised criminals and strengthens our response to tackle serious organised crime overseas before it impacts on the UK.

5. MARITIME SECURITY

Over the past year, the terrorist attacks in Mumbai and the increase in piracy related incidents particularly off the Horn of Africa, have increased international focus on the challenges this poses both for the maritime sector and more broadly for international security. In the 2009 Strategy Update, the Government outlined its intention to address national security challenges in the maritime domain to prioritise our aims, assess our current capabilities and identify ways to fill any key gaps in capability. Since then the Cabinet Office has been leading a cross-Government project on maritime security to strengthen our response to potential threats arising in this domain.

6. NUCLEAR ISSUES

The NS Strategy 2009 update also provided an updated assessment of the risk posed to UK national security by nuclear weapons and other Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD). In July 2009, the Government published a supporting white paper, the "Road to 2010", which sets out in detail the steps the Government is taking to address the full suite of nuclear issues (disarmament, non-proliferation, expansion of civil nuclear power, and nuclear security) in the run up to President Obama's April Nuclear Security Summit and the May 2010 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Renewal Conference.

We are also establishing a new National Nuclear Centre of Excellence. The Centre will bring to bear the efforts of

government, industry and allies to help develop cost-effective options for a proliferation resistant nuclear fuel cycle; the aim being to make it much harder for terrorists and states with hostile intent to divert nuclear material for use in weapons programmes.

6. FAILING AND FRAGILE STATES

The National Security Strategy and 2009 update outlined the threat that instability and violence overseas can pose to UK national security.

In July 2009, the Department for International Development published a White Paper, 'Building our Common Future', which outlines a new integrated cross-government approach with state-building and peace building at the centre of its work in fragile states.

In February 2010, the Prime Minister formally announced the establishment of the Civilian Stabilisation Group. This group of 1,150 skilled and experienced civilians will assist with reconstruction in fragile and conflict afflicted states. Up to 200 can be deployed at any one time, and there are currently over 100 civilians are working in Afghanistan, Sudan, Kosovo, the Democratic Republic of Congo and elsewhere. The Stabilisation Group deployed a team, within 12 hours of receiving a request from the UN to help reconstruction efforts by the Haitian Government.

7. DEFENCE GREEN PAPER

The NS Strategy identifies the Armed Forces as a key national security capability. The Strategy outlines that our view of security must consider the wide range of security challenges and the drivers of instability. This approach is reinforced in the recent Defence Green Paper, published on 3 February 2010. The Paper recognises that the use of the Armed Forces must be rooted in the NS Strategy framework. Defence recognises that the use of force is becoming more complicated and that it must adapt to the challenges presented in the domains of cyber and space as well as the role of the media in shaping public opinion. The Defence contribution should be coordinated with the full range of instruments which the Government can bring to bear at home or overseas.

The Strategic Defence Review in the next parliament will consider how the Government should respond to a complex future, how we can make the armed forces more adaptable and responsive to change, and options for further integrating our forces with key allies and international partners.

8. COMPETITION FOR ENERGY AND OTHER RESOURCES

Ensuring the security of energy supply has been a long standing objective for Government and it continues to be a key priority within policy making, including within the recent Renewable Energy Strategy (RES) and the Low Carbon Transition Plan (LCTP), both published in July 2009. The latter document was principally aimed at setting out the policies and proposals required for the UK to meet its legally binding Carbon Budgets (out to 2022), but a key factor was ensuring security of energy supply as part of the transition.

In August 2009, Malcolm Wicks, the PM's special representative on international energy issues, published 'Energy Security: a national challenge in a changing world' which outlined a number of recommendations to secure the UK's energy supply alongside our transition to a low carbon economy. The Government will publish its response to this report in the coming weeks.

We agree broadly with Malcolm Wicks that we need to ensure that our energy policies need to aim at ensuring continuing energy security, and the need to diversify our energy use, during the transition to a low carbon economy. Additionally, we will shortly publish a gas security of supply policy statement.

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17 March 2010