

PRIME MINISTER

Written Ministerial Statement

Friday 13 July 2012

Reports of the Chief Surveillance, Interception of Communications, and Intelligence Services Commissioners

I have today laid before both Houses the annual reports of: the Interception of Communications Commissioner, the Rt. Hon. Sir Paul Kennedy (HC 496); the Intelligence Services Commissioner, the Rt. Hon. Sir Mark Waller (HC 497); and, the Chief Surveillance Commissioner, the Rt. Hon. Sir Christopher Rose (HC 498).

The responsibility of the Commissioners is to provide independent oversight of the use of the investigative powers contained in the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000, Regulation of Investigatory Powers (Scotland) Act 2000, the Intelligence Services Act 1994, and the Police Act 1997.

The Commissioners play a vital role in ensuring that public authorities make use of these powers in a way which is necessary, for a legitimate aim and which is proportionate to what is sought to be achieved. They are required under the provisions of the legislation to provide an annual report to the Prime Minister in respect of carrying-out their functions.

All Commissioners have concluded that these powers are on the whole being used properly and appropriately, in accordance with the requirements set out in statute.

They have also concluded that respective Secretaries of State and the various members of the intelligence services, police and law enforcement authorities and other public authorities are properly complying with their duties as set out in the legislation. The Commissioners provide a vital service in giving Ministers, Parliament and the public assurance in this area.

There have, regrettably, been breaches and errors in the use of these powers. While these have been few in number relative to the overall number of applications, the Government is not complacent; the causes of these breaches and errors will need to be addressed. The Commissioners also highlight the value of the use of these powers and provide a number of case studies to show the benefits they provide, particularly in terms of preventing and detecting serious crime and tackling threats to our national security.

I am grateful to Sir Paul, Sir Mark and Sir Christopher, and to the inspectors and staff which support them, for their work on these reports. The Government is further strengthening oversight of the Agencies through the introduction of the Justice and Security Bill which, among other provisions, will give a statutory basis for the Intelligence Services Commissioner to be directed to review any function of the Agencies.