



House of Commons
Defence Committee

**The Comprehensive
Approach: the point of
war is not just to win but
to make a better peace:
Government response to
the Committee's Seventh
Report of Session 2009–10**

First Special Report of Session 2010–11

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The Defence Committee

The Defence Committee is appointed by the House of Commons to examine the expenditure, administration, and policy of the Ministry of Defence and its associated public bodies.

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First Special Report

The Defence Committee published its Seventh Report of Session 2009–10 on *The Comprehensive Approach: the point of war is not just to win but to make a better peace* on 18 March 2010, as House of Commons Paper HC 224. The Government's response to this Report was received on 18 June 2010. This is appended.

Government response

Introduction

Her Majesty's Government (HMG) welcomes the opportunity to respond to the then Committee's report 'The Comprehensive Approach: the point of war is not just to win but to make a better peace' given our manifesto commitment to a more integrated approach to post-conflict reconstruction where the British military are involved. The three primary Departments involved, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), Ministry of Defence (MoD) and the Department for International Development (DFID), are pleased to have an opportunity to review and set in place improvements on the work done by previous Governments, as well as to acknowledge the hard work done and successes achieved. The early visit to Afghanistan by the three Secretaries of State demonstrated the importance this Government places on a coherent approach to defence, diplomacy and development.

The Government has already established a National Security Council (NSC) to ensure that decisions about foreign policy, security, defence and development are brought together in a strategic fashion, as well as improve the integration of our activities into wider Government objectives through more effective partnership working, such as the Comprehensive Approach. The NSC has already met on several occasions to discuss UK efforts in Afghanistan and Pakistan and a Whole of Government approach to these issues.

We recognise that Departments are already working closely together; and that previous Governments have taken steps to implement some of the recommendations in the report. But we intend to further embed this practice through these new structures.

The Government agrees that a co-ordinated diplomatic, developmental and military effort in response to crises is critical. The UK has been at the forefront of the development and use of the Comprehensive Approach and the highly praised Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) in Helmand is a prime example of the outstanding work already being done. The UK was the first country to set up a joint civilian-military headquarters in Afghanistan to lead on stabilisation, doubling our deployed civilian experts since 2008.

The Government also recognises that much work has been done to increase the effectiveness of post-conflict planning including support to the PRT in Helmand by the Stabilisation Unit that also manages the creation of the 1000-strong Civilian Stabilisation Group (CSG). The Government intends to build on this capability and provide a more integrated approach to post-conflict reconstruction where the British military is involved—creating a new Stabilisation and Reconstruction Force (SRF) to reinforce activity that bridges the gap between the military and the reconstruction effort, as laid out in the coalition agreement.

The NSC will be leading work on updating the National Security Strategy and the Strategic Defence and Security Review (SDSR), both of which will include the Comprehensive Approach. It will concentrate on reducing the need for military intervention by building a capacity for preventative action, including a greater role for diplomacy led by the FCO and

for contributions from across Government. The review will also examine how we can maximise our contribution to stabilisation and reconstruction.

The importance of communication with the public in order to build consensus for our actions is also acknowledged. Some work has already been done to improve this: a cross-Government Afghanistan Communications Team has been set up to co-ordinate the communication of our objectives and the progress of that campaign. We will seek to build further on this.

Response to the Committee's Conclusions and Recommendations

1. (Recommendation 1) The MoD and the Armed Forces, the FCO and DFID all recognise that engagement in future conflicts is likely to require the use of the Comprehensive Approach. It is, therefore essential that a shared understanding exists across Government and, in particular, within the MoD, the FCO and DFID about what the Comprehensive Approach is. This must be underpinned by joint policy and doctrine. (Paragraph 175)

The Government recognises the importance of an integrated approach to policy and decision making on matters of national security. That is why the Prime Minister has created the National Security Council which will ensure that all Government departments can share their expertise to develop strategic policy and enable innovative delivery. The Comprehensive Approach is neither a prescribed way of doing things nor is it about creating homogeneity across Government Departments and systems. It aims to bring together HMG Departments and other stakeholders in international crisis management to:

- a) promote a shared understanding of the situation and, where possible, common aims and objectives that will govern HMG efforts in pre and post conflict situations;
- b) develop structures and processes to help align planning and implementation in pre and post conflict situations; and,
- c) establish relationships and cultural understanding through common training, exercising, analysis and planning.

The NSC will draw up the National Security Strategy, oversee the SDSR as well as the UK contribution to current and future operations involving the UK military. Whilst there is no single Cross-Government policy on, or definition of, the Comprehensive Approach, as the HCDC report acknowledged there are a number of publications that civilians and the military use to support joint working and effective planning in conflict environments. These have offered a balance of information and detail that avoids narrowing the scope of the Comprehensive Approach and thus becoming too prescriptive. The Government will review the adequacy of existing doctrine and guidance as the civilian and military stabilisation capacity develops.

2. (Recommendation 1) In recent years, the UK has always operated in coalition with allies and international organisations making a common understanding of methods and desired outcomes and of the Comprehensive Approach crucial. The UK has been at the forefront of thinking on and the development of the Comprehensive Approach, and

it must continue to work with allies to embed its use in the major international organisations—the UN, NATO and the EU. (Paragraph 175)

While the Comprehensive Approach remains a work in progress, the UK has led the way internationally on integrated working and planning initiatives. The new Government has undertaken to continue to support the work of major international organisations towards improving international cooperation and pushing for reform of global institutions to ensure they reflect the modern world.

The new National Security Strategy and the NSC will highlight the key role that the UK plays in international institutions especially through membership of the UN, NATO and the EU.

3. (Recommendation 2) The forthcoming Strategic Defence Review should form part of a wider and more comprehensive security review looking at the UK's desire and ability to participate in operations requiring the use of the Comprehensive Approach. The Review presents an opportunity to ensure that the Comprehensive Approach is embedded in future Government policy and that the Armed Forces are designed, trained and equipped to perform their role in such operations. (Paragraph 176)

The Government has already instructed the NSC to commence the SDSR. The Comprehensive Approach will be an important element. The review will establish a cross-Government policy baseline following consultation across Government. This will set out the Government's foreign policy priorities, the national interests, the threats we face, and help establish the broad implications for Defence.

Further work will be undertaken on current and projected capabilities, structures and processes against this baseline. It will bring forward recommendations for investment or disinvestment. The final SDSR product will reconcile and synthesise these decisions—balancing requirements against the appropriate cost envelopes, assessing overall affordability, and testing the resulting force against a range of scenarios that will again involve relevant Government Departments.

4. (Recommendation 3) It is crucial that, in all situations requiring the Comprehensive Approach, certain elements should be agreed at the very earliest stage based on a thorough and all embracing assessment of the situation. These elements include leadership, objectives, a defined end state, strategy, tactics and the nature of personnel required. This assessment may need to be amended in response to changing threats and other circumstances but this should not prevent an early assessment taking place which reflects the needs and expectations of local nationals. Communication is a key component of any strategy and needs to include plans for conveying the strategic intent of the mission to local nationals and also to the British public in an informative but fair and balanced way. (Paragraph 177)

The Government agrees that all Departments should be committed to developing planning and assessment at the earliest stages. The NSC has been established to manage crises affecting national security and will provide the necessary leadership and oversight of operations. A planning process in which a common strategic aim or end state is determined at the earliest stage is essential to success. Any initial assessment should establish leadership of a strategic planning team, strategy and tactics, and the nature of

personnel required. It is important to acknowledge that stabilisation planning is an ongoing process and any plan will have to adapt to changing circumstances.

This Government agrees that communication is a critical component of strategy and believes that it should include local nationals and the British public. The strategy should be incorporated into the plan at the earliest stage. Lessons learned from Iraq and Afghanistan have highlighted the importance of developing a single narrative, agreed with the host nation government and other actors, to promote public support. The introduction of a cross-Government military strategic communications officer has improved the consistency of Whitehall communications and ensured they are aligned with the International Security Assistance Force key messages.

5. (Recommendation 4) There is evidence that the Comprehensive Approach is beginning to work in Afghanistan and elsewhere but there is still much to develop especially in Whitehall and in working multi-nationally with allies and international organisations. We have heard a lot said about the importance of the Approach but if it is to continue to work in Afghanistan and in future areas of conflict, then the policy must be given the leadership, political clout and resources it needs. In responding to this Report, the MoD must set out how the Comprehensive Approach is being addressed in the Strategic Defence Review. (Paragraph 178)

The Government acknowledges that an interconnected world demands comprehensive responses; therefore the ability to wield the full range of Government power effectively demands stronger relationships between those Government Departments that contribute to security. The NSC will provide the mechanism for this, bringing together the relevant Government Departments, under the leadership of the Prime Minister, to enable a coherent policy to be rapidly developed and then delivered effectively. The SDSR will look at how further to improve how the UK Government—and key multilateral organisations—join up their various capabilities in particular on conflict prevention, stabilisation operations and peacebuilding. This will include improving the effectiveness of funding mechanisms; joining up civilian and military education, training and exercises; and finding ways to make a career in Comprehensive Approach activity sufficiently attractive and rewarding.

Development of the Comprehensive Approach.

6. (Recommendation 5) The Comprehensive Approach is widely accepted as valid in most situations where military force is required and in other situations such as those requiring post-conflict reconstruction and stabilisation. The National Security Strategy re-iterated the need for a cross-government approach drawing upon the capabilities of the Armed Forces, the FCO, DFID and others. We recommend that the MoD, the FCO and DFID, working together with the Stabilisation Unit, produce a Comprehensive Approach policy and doctrine. Many of the ingredients for such a policy and doctrine already exist but are not brought together in one place. The doctrine should take account of our recommendations in the remainder of this Report. The MoD should incorporate the Comprehensive Approach policy into its Strategic Defence Review. (Paragraph 30)

In line with the Government's response to Recommendation 1, we agree that a number of publications already exist, and we will continue to review our approach to doctrine and guidance as the civilian and military stabilisation capacity develops. The NSC will draw up a new National Security Strategy which will include identification of cross-Departmental issues and the improvement of cross-Government planning processes. We are conducting a SDSR, working with Other Government Departments (OGDs) including the Foreign, Development and Home Secretaries as part of the new NSC.

Strategic intent and planning

7. (Recommendation 6) It is evident that the need for a clear strategy and vision has been recognised for Afghanistan. It is important that all parties share an understanding of the context and nature of the challenges faced. In future situations where the Comprehensive Approach is adopted all relevant government departments and the Armed Forces should agree a clear set of objectives with appropriate measures of achievement and with a clearly defined end state set in the context of the nature of the challenges faced. The need for post-conflict reconstruction and stabilisation should be recognised and incorporated into the planning at the earliest stages. These objectives may need to adapt and evolve but it is essential that the agencies pursuing the Comprehensive Approach have an agreed and feasible end state in mind at every appropriate juncture. (Paragraph 41)

In line with the Government's response to Recommendation 4, all Departments are committed to a planning process in which a common strategic aim or end state is determined at the earliest stage by a stabilisation planning team comprised of representatives from all Departments. There is clear agreement that joint planning is at the heart of effective post-conflict reconstruction and stabilisation. The revised National Security Strategy will identify how cross-Government planning processes can be applied to different situations to optimise different Departmental capabilities.

Who is in charge?

8. (Recommendation 7) We understand why, for major situations such as those in Iraq and Afghanistan, it is inevitable that the Prime Minister should take overall responsibility for the use of the Comprehensive Approach. We note there has been a debate about whether this is necessary, whether it provides effective leadership and clarity for all missions and whether it might be appropriate for the Prime Minister to appoint a lead Minister. We consider that at the start of each operation using the Comprehensive Approach, the Government should formally decide and announce what the appropriate governance arrangements should be. Certainly as missions evolve these matters should be kept under review. (Paragraph 47)

The Government welcomes the Committee's recommendations on governance arrangements. The foundation of a successful Comprehensive Approach is the willingness of individuals, units, Departments, and organisations to collaborate with others. That is why the Government has established the NSC that will oversee and discuss each operation regularly. The membership of the NSC, which the Prime Minister chairs, will ensure that it provides effective leadership for all stages of an operation.

9. (Recommendation 8) As part of its role in facilitating cross-departmental assessment and planning, the Stabilisation Unit should support the relevant Minister and Whitehall committees in the operation of the Comprehensive Approach. The Government should consider whether the Unit should be placed within the Cabinet Office to ensure it has sufficient political clout with other departments. Likewise, leadership focus and effectiveness in some missions might be enhanced by appointing a special envoy or representative. This person should have direct access to the Prime Minister. (Paragraph 48)

This Government acknowledges that Ministerial oversight of the Stabilisation Unit has been exercised through the Cabinet Office committee structure. Ministers and senior officials from all three Departments are closely engaged with the Unit's work. This tripartite approach has worked well and, through the Stabilisation Unit Board, has allowed the Unit access to resources and support from the three Departments and the Cabinet Office. Whilst governance relationships are kept under review, experience so far suggests that a continuing equal and direct relationship with the three parent Departments and the Cabinet Office is producing results both in Afghanistan and other countries. The Government has already committed to building on the existing Stabilisation Unit to develop a SRF which will combine military capability and civilian expertise to maximise what we can achieve when the fighting stops and development begins.

Changing departmental cultures

10. (Recommendation 9) The relevant cabinet committee (NSID) only meets “probably every couple of months”. Lord Malloch-Brown also told us that “the tripartite meeting is really the principal vehicle for overseeing in the case of Afghanistan”, but this only meets monthly, is not a formal subcommittee of the Cabinet and lacks a Cabinet Office secretariat. Lord Malloch-Brown felt that this system was “on probation” and they still need to “show it works”. The Government should consider whether there is any benefit in putting this on a more formal basis. (Paragraph 49)

The NSID met more regularly than ‘every couple of months’ but the Government decided that more formal oversight of Afghanistan was required. The Prime Minister chaired the first meeting of the new NSC on 13 May 2010. The NSC coordinates responses to the dangers we face, integrating at the highest level the work of the Foreign, Defence, Home, Energy and International Development Departments, and all other arms of Government contributing to national security.

Permanent members are the Deputy Prime Minister, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, the Home Secretary, the Secretary of State for Defence, the Secretary of State for International Development, and the Security Minister.

Other Cabinet Ministers, including the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change, attend as required. The Chief of the Defence Staff, Heads of Intelligence Agencies and other Senior Officials also attend as required.

The NSC sits weekly and regularly considers the Afghanistan and Pakistan strategy. Additionally the three permanent member Secretaries of State have already conducted a joint visit to Afghanistan and will consider other visits as appropriate and possible.

11. (Recommendation 10) We recognise and welcome the progress that has been made in making the Comprehensive Approach a reality. The MoD, the FCO and DFID have all made efforts to reduce cultural and operational differences but all acknowledge more needs to be done. We call upon the Departments to identify what changes, particularly in respect of departmental cultures and working practices, still need to be made. For example, we expect, as a minimum, to see that any review should consider the involvement of high level officials, the enhancement of promotion prospects for those involved in Comprehensive Approach activities and a financial commitment to co-ordination of the Approach. The three Departments should, in response to this Report, provide us with the results of the review into the changes needed to working practices and how they intend to plan and manage the necessary changes. (Paragraph 54)

The Government welcomes the Committee's recommendations on how Departments could improve the acceptance of the Comprehensive Approach. There has been some progress in reducing cultural and operational differences, and efforts will continue in this area. Cross-Departmentally, joint training and exercising are recognised as being critical to operations. Military exercises and courses are not complete without a substantial civilian presence allowing each party to learn from the others along the way. For example, the Joint Venture and Joint Focus series of exercises focus on the Comprehensive Approach and include cross-Governmental planning from the outset, ensuring cross-Whitehall structures are included in the scenarios. Key personnel from FCO, DFID and the Stabilisation Unit are also heavily involved in the execution phase; DFID, FCO, Stabilisation Unit and MoD have jointly developed the cross-Departmental conflict foundation course and are currently piloting a follow-on conflict practitioner's course. DFID, FCO and the Stabilisation Unit take up places on the Joint Operations Planning course run by Permanent Joint Headquarters (PJHQ); the Defence Academy provides places for DFID, FCO and Stabilisation Unit on many of its courses and, in turn, they provide speakers; job shadowing and secondment opportunities are becoming available—FCO and Stabilisation Unit have already piloted short term secondments and all Departments are looking at widening the scheme.

The Committee identified the lack of a Comprehensive Approach career stream in either the Civil Service or the military. Certainly, in the past, a position in stabilisation was neither seen as rewarding or career enhancing nor did it have sufficient 'critical mass' to constitute a career stream in itself. The Government is determined to make it more attractive and has committed to establishing a SRF building on the existing Stabilisation Unit.

12. (Recommendation 11) Whilst we note that DFID believes that the International Development Act allows it to participate fully in reconstruction and stabilisation operations and in conflict prevention, we believe a review of whether the Act creates a culture within DFID which adversely impacts on its participation would merit the further attention of post-legislative scrutiny. (Paragraph 60)

The International Development Act sets poverty reduction as DFID's overarching mission and creates well established foundations for DFID development assistance. DFID is particularly well placed to deliver this distinct role, and it is not a barrier to its participation in reconstruction, stabilisation and conflict prevention activities. Addressing these issues in developing countries is vital to achieving the Millennium Development Goals as conflict and insecurity hit the poorest the hardest. The Conflict Pool allows DFID to participate jointly with OGDs across a range of conflict and stabilisation activities. The majority of these are Official Development Assistance eligible. Recently, DFID has reorganised its structure and appointed a Western Asia and Stabilisation Director with responsibility for Afghanistan, Pakistan and stabilisation. This has been done to allow DFID to work more closely with colleagues in the MoD and the FCO, and allocate more senior time to these high priority areas.

Structure and funding

13. (Recommendation 12) It is only right that the Armed Forces should be funded from the Reserve for operations such as those in Iraq and Afghanistan. However, as situations change and conflicts move away from war fighting to reconstruction and stabilisation, resources may need to be reprioritised or redistributed. The balance of investment decisions become crucial. The Government, therefore, should clarify the mechanism which funds other government departments for conflict. (Paragraph 65)

The Government acknowledges the apparent disparity in funding arrangements for Departments operating in reconstruction and stabilisation. The Government will conduct a Comprehensive Spending Review later this year that will examine funding mechanisms for MoD, DFID and FCO for conflict prevention, stabilisation and peacekeeping.

The Stabilisation Unit

14. (Recommendation 13) The work of the Stabilisation Unit in developing and maintaining a cadre of deployable civilians and civil servants has been significant in the UK's capacity to implement the Comprehensive Approach. The Stabilisation Unit should be provided with sufficient resources to continue maintaining this capacity and the training of appropriate individuals. (Paragraph 76)

The Government welcomes the Committee's recognition of the role of the Stabilisation Unit and the Civilian Stabilisation Group (CSG) in increasing the UK's capacity to implement the Comprehensive Approach. We have undertaken to provide a more integrated approach to post-conflict reconstruction where the British military is involved—building on the Stabilisation Unit in Whitehall and creating a new SRF to bridge the gap between the military and the reconstruction effort. The Stabilisation Unit Board will continue to analyse and assess the resources required to maintain the capacity and training of the CSG with the support of its three parent Departments.

15. (Recommendation 14) We look forward to seeing the results of the Association of Chief Police Officers' work on the deployment of serving police officers. The Home Office and the devolved administrations should resolve the issues inhibiting serving police officers from volunteering to serve in areas of need as quickly as possible. The Home Office and the devolved administrations should promote the use of serving

police officers to train local police forces in areas of need. The MoD should also set out the role for the MoD Police in contributing to stabilisation operations. (Paragraph 77)

The Government acknowledges the importance of harnessing all the resources of Government in support of an intervention overseas or security policy at home. The ACPO-led International Police Assistance Board (IPAB) brings together senior representatives from Whitehall Departments, the devolved administrations and the UK Police Service to coordinate delivery of international police assistance activity. Further work in improving UK effectiveness in conflict related policing needs to be incorporated into wider strategic work on the UK's approach to conflict.

The Home Office and the devolved administrations recognise that UK police officers have done, and continue to do, very valuable work in this area and fully support HMG work on civilian police assistance to Peace Support Operations. The Home Office and the devolved administrations have always been ready to consider, in close consultation with the Police Service, FCO requests to deploy serving police officers to overseas missions, and the role of IPAB includes promoting the benefits that international policing opportunities provide to both Chief Constables and individual officers.

Officers have not been discouraged from volunteering. The International Secondments Team in the Stabilisation Unit recruit and manage a substantial pool of officers who have been selected to fill forthcoming secondment vacancies. Response to international secondment opportunities has always been positive, with the most recent senior officer recruitment process attracting three times as many applicants as anticipated vacancies in overseas missions.

The Ministry of Defence Police (MDP) remains a significant part of the UK's policing contribution. Its officers form part of the UK mix of serving police officers deployed overseas or on major exercises such as Joint Venture. MDP is a civilian police force of sworn constables, who have a constabulary background and capability, like other Home Office forces, as well as experience of the military. They can be deployed by the MoD to train, assist and advise on policing doctrine, concept and application in the field. Their numbers and detailed role remain dependent upon the operational task and the contribution of other, UK or allied, police forces.

Learning Lessons

16. (Recommendation 15) We acknowledge that the evolution of the work of the Stabilisation Unit will progressively ensure that cross-institutional knowledge and skills gained during deployments in Iraq and Afghanistan will be retained and built on. How to maximise improved capability for the Comprehensive Approach from 'lessons learned' should be addressed in the Strategic Defence Review. (Paragraph 81)

The Government welcomes the Committee's findings and reiterates its commitment to ensuring that the cross-institutional knowledge and skills gained from deployments in Afghanistan and Iraq are retained and disseminated. The Stabilisation Unit houses the cross-Whitehall conflict lessons learning facility that is a starting point to ensure that MoD, FCO and DFID build on their experience in conflict affected countries, so as to develop a dynamic 'lessons learned' culture. The SDSR will examine force structures and the

capabilities required for conflict prevention and stabilisation activity. This will be informed by both lessons from recent operations and the changing character of conflict.

17. (Recommendation 16) We note that the three Departments are looking further at the process of learning lessons. The Stabilisation Unit working with the three Government Departments should make it a priority to encourage those involved in the Comprehensive Approach to learn lessons from each situation and to disseminate the lessons as appropriate. In particular, the Stabilisation Unit should work closely with the Permanent Joint Headquarters of the Armed Forces drawing on its thorough and comprehensive lessons learned process. The Stabilisation Unit should institute a transparent and regular process of such dissemination and should run regular seminars for relevant staff in the three principal Departments and in other departments involved and for staff on its database of deployable personnel. The Unit should be given sufficient resources to carry out this essential function. (Paragraph 82)

The Government is determined to improve the method of capturing cross-Government lessons. The Stabilisation Unit is leading work to house a cross-Whitehall conflict lessons learning facility, which will capture, analyse and disseminate ‘inter-Departmental conflict lessons’. As part of its lesson learning role, the Stabilisation Unit is developing an intra-Government website to ensure the dissemination of ‘inter-Departmental conflict lessons’. This site will link individual Departmental lessons archives and catalogue a searchable database of conflict lessons available to all three Departments. The Stabilisation Unit welcomes the Committee’s recommendation to work closely with PJHQ and has initiated discussions with them to draw on their lessons learning process. It also intends to build on its existing relationship with the Development, Concepts and Doctrine Centre (DCDC), a MoD think-tank co-located with the Defence Academy, by feeding in cross-Whitehall lessons where appropriate. The Stabilisation Unit will hold a series of formal and informal events for staff in the three principal Departments and members of the Civilian Stabilisation Group, ensuring that lessons are widely disseminated.

Making the case in the UK

18. (Recommendation 17) Communication is a key component of maintaining support amongst the British public for the use of military and civilian forces in unstable areas. As part of the planning process for the use of the Comprehensive Approach, a communications strategy should be developed for each deployment and then be implemented to ensure that Government policy is fully described and communicated to the British public. This strategy should be part of a wider strategic communications plan linking in with communication to all parties including allies, international organisations and, importantly, to local nationals. (Paragraph 85)

The Government welcomes the opportunity to improve strategic communications. Until recently, public communication has been treated as a supporting activity rather than as a decisive factor; and as a unilateral activity that fails to take full account of adversaries’ communications aims and activities. Engagement with the media and the public has been increased to better inform them of the role Defence plays across the world. But more can be done, including better use of formats such as social networking sites and blogs, and understanding what aspects of the media better resonate with the public. Strategic communications must also be coordinated with international partners and not restricted to

the British public. The UK-led Helmand PRT is working with Afghan counterparts and international partners to communicate progress to Afghans. There will be occasions when the need for operational security will override the case for openness but that should not be used routinely to avoid transparency.

Personnel

19. (Recommendation 18) We recommend that DFID, the Stabilisation Unit and the FCO should reconsider whether they can delegate to the MoD the responsibility for maintaining the security of their personnel, to ensure that there is sufficient flexibility to take account of temporary security arrangements created by the Armed Forces in a way that meets the Departments' duty of care. (Paragraph 90)

In Afghanistan, all Government civilians currently deployed by the Stabilisation Unit, FCO and DFID operate under the FCO duty of care. The Stabilisation Unit Board keeps this under constant review.

20. (Recommendation 19) Recognising the development of the Military Stabilisation Support Group (MSSG), the MoD should determine under what circumstances this Group will work with the Stabilisation Unit and whether it needs to strengthen its capability in reconstruction and post-conflict stabilisation (and consequently its training and recruitment). It should report to us on the results of this assessment and confirm that this issue will be dealt with in the context of the Strategic Defence Review. (Paragraph 95)

The Government is committed to better integration between civilian and military, Government and non-Government. These need to encompass security, political and development efforts that we believe are essential to help stabilise conflict-affected countries. The MSSG works closely with the Stabilisation Unit and is able to deploy personnel to areas which are not secure enough for civilians to operate in alone. The Stabilisation Unit and MSSG operate and train closely together; members of the CSG participate in military training courses and exercises and members of the MSSG attend Stabilisation Unit organised courses. In Helmand province it is right that the Government is taking an integrated approach, where the MSSG and civilians work together to deliver stabilisation. A 'Stabilisation Task Matrix' outlining the activities appropriate to be carried out by military and civilians is currently being updated by the Stabilisation Unit with assistance from the MSSG. The Government will build on the model of the Stabilisation Unit and create a new SRF to bridge the gap between the military and the reconstruction effort.

21. (Recommendation 20) There is a need for more cross-departmental working with secondments between the three Departments to enhance the skill sets of relevant staff and to increase the mutual understanding of the different cultures in each Department. There may also be the need to recruit staff with additional skill sets in each of the Departments. DFID is already looking to do this. The FCO and the MoD should review whether they need to modify or expand the skills sets of the people they wish to recruit. (Paragraph 96)

The Government recognises that Service personnel currently have no career incentives to move between Government Departments or to focus on areas that are not seen as military

“core business”. In addition, the Defence Diplomacy side of military operations has suffered from being less glamorous than the traditional military career path. Stabilisation or similar areas have been viewed, at best, as a sideways move. Civilians on the other hand are encouraged to develop generalist skills and focussing on one function such as stabilisation can be career limiting. The Stabilisation Unit is a strong example of where secondments deliver a cross-Departmental experience, enhancing cultural understanding. Both MoD and the FCO have acknowledged that conflict prevention, stabilisation, capacity building and Defence Diplomacy are important areas and are looking at what options are available for attracting Service and civilian personnel to these career streams. The FCO is developing skills frameworks around these areas to attract more personnel but for organisations such as FCO and DFID recruitment must be based on wider competences and promotion must be made on merit and ability to demonstrate a range of competences. Working in conflict environments does, however, provide an environment in which staff can develop core competences, in a way that might take longer in more conventional postings, therefore putting officers who choose this area of work in a strong position for promotion/progression.

22. (Recommendation 21) Joint training is an important element in the integration of civilian and military staff and in the successful use of the Comprehensive Approach. There should be a greater sharing of training and education within the three principal Departments. At the minimum, civilians being posted to conflict areas such as Afghanistan should participate in pre-deployment training with the military about to be sent to such areas. This should be in addition to the training provided by the Stabilisation Unit to civilians in preparation for deployment into conflict areas. We also expect to see continuing participation in joint exercises such as Joint Venture and Arrcade Fusion. The Departments should pursue appropriate means to ensure the knowledge gained by individuals is consolidated. (Paragraph 103)

The Government agrees that joint training is vital across the parent Departments if we are to develop better processes for utilising a Comprehensive Approach. The MoD Joint Collective Training and Exercises Committee have produced a Defence Exercise Priority List (DEPL) which allows OGD support to military exercises to be shaped appropriately.

MoD also provides the single point of focus for OGD requests, in particular for requests for military assistance with their training. A comprehensive online Defence Exercise Programme is under development to include OGD support requirements and Defence educational activity. The success of ARRCade Fusion and Joint Venture was due in large part to much enhanced cross-Government participation from the earliest stages; representatives came from DFID, the FCO and the Stabilisation Unit. The Government wants to see further improvement in this area and the creation of a SRF will ensure greater cooperation.

Civilian participation on Operation Herrick training has increased over the last year as a result of the Stabilisation Unit, FCO, DFID and the military working closely together. Mission specific pre-deployment training is vital to ensure that staff can operate effectively and safely in mission and this includes joint civilian/military training. Planning and advisory teams of serving UK police officers have made an important contribution to the last two Joint Venture exercises and, where possible, will continue to participate in joint exercises. The FCO has created a volunteer database of staff interested in participating in

exercises and keen to improve their conflict skills. Departments need to work closely together from the initial planning stages to ensure effective civilian participation in exercises.

23. (Recommendation 22) The FCO and DFID should seek to increase the number of their staff attending the courses at the Defence Academy, and the role of the Academy should be reviewed, as part of the Strategic Defence Review, with a view to its becoming the focus for Government-wide education and training on the Comprehensive Approach. (Paragraph 104)

The Government is already working towards this: the modularisation of the Advanced Command and Staff Course gives opportunities to OGD staff to attend short, more focussed courses and there is OGD representation on the Higher Command and Staff Course (HCSC). The Defence Academy will be examined as part of the SDSR to identify new opportunities for cross-Government training.

Departmental IT and Information Management Systems

24. (Recommendation 23) As the ability to communicate and share data is key to the further development of the Comprehensive Approach, the FCO, DFID and the MoD should provide us with an action plan for how they intend to remedy the deficiencies in communication, information systems and data sharing between their Departments. The plan should include details of who will be responsible for delivering the plan and its constituent parts as well as the timetable for implementation. (Paragraph 106)

The Government is determined to provide better, more interactive and easily accessible, information across Government. The new cross-Government collaboration tool, Civil Pages, developed by DFID, FCO and the National Archives, provides partner Departments with a collaborative working space that can be used for sharing information up to restricted level. The MoD's Network Enabled Capability (NEC) Programme Office is already exploring the tool to collaborate with OGDs and has provided a page and links so they can access details of the NEC programme. MoD, FCO and DFID are also exploring options for better collaboration and communication between Departments, including at higher levels of security and we will continue to use opportunities arising from exercises to develop and try out new structures and technology. The Government will give the highest priority to ensuring better communications and develop more effective ways of sharing information in Afghanistan.

Working on the Ground

25. (Recommendation 24) The UK is at the forefront of the development and use of the Comprehensive Approach and has worked well with international organisations and other member states to further the development of the Approach internationally. However, more needs to be done. We, therefore, recommend that the MoD, the FCO and DFID should continue to work with the UN, NATO and the EU to promote the effective use of the Comprehensive Approach within these organisations so that future complex emergencies requiring a multilateral approach can operate more effectively. We consider such work to be essential to addressing the perception and reality of uneven burden-sharing amongst member states. (Paragraph 127)

The Government acknowledges the important steps made by the UN, NATO and the EU in developing their own Comprehensive Approach policies. NATO is looking to increase co-operation with other actors, including other international organisations (especially the UN and the EU) and NGOs. The new Comprehensive Strategic Political Military Plan for Afghanistan, agreed by Foreign Ministers in April 2010, embodies this approach. In 2008, NATO agreed a pragmatic Action Plan to bring together all civilian and military resources at their disposal to deal with the problems facing us.

At the operational/tactical interface, the UK's NATO-assigned Headquarters Allied Rapid Reaction Corps has pioneered civil-military integration in its recent crisis management exercise and is influencing both how the UK and our partner nations develop their thinking on the Comprehensive Approach. The Helmand PRT has developed the civilian-military model for delivering stabilisation over the past three years. Staff are drawn from the FCO, DFID, US State Department, USAID, US Department for Agriculture, the Danish Foreign Ministry, the Estonian civil service, the UK, US and Danish military and the Stabilisation Unit's CSG. This level of civ-mil co-operation is now the model of delivery that is being adopted in other PRTs in Afghanistan.

The EU has practised a Comprehensive Approach in many theatres of operation for example European Union military operation in the Republic of Chad and in the Central African Republic (Operation EUFOR Tchad/RCA) and EU anti-piracy operation in the Horn of Africa, Op ATALANTA. These experiences, and those of Member States operating in other conflicts and crises, have led the EU to investigate where and how the various instruments and actors need to cooperate and collaborate in order to support a common purpose.

26. (Recommendation 25) We note the positive examples of the use of the Comprehensive Approach in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Sierra Leone, and recently, in Afghanistan. These success stories should be brought together to inform the development of a strengthened Comprehensive Approach doctrine. Positive outcomes in Afghanistan should also be used to inform the public debate about the success of operations there. (Paragraph 142)

In line with the Government's response to Recommendations 1 and 6, we will develop the Comprehensive Approach through the new NSC and build on the positive examples quoted to demonstrate the success that can be achieved when this flexible, collaborative approach is adopted.

In Afghanistan, British military and civilians are working together to collate evidence and examples to demonstrate progress, including Task Force Helmand, the PRT, the British Embassy including DFID in Kabul and Stabilisation Advisors working on the ground. These examples are disseminated to the UK public through a variety of channels including websites, print and broadcast media. There is also an extensive media embedding programme that allows British and other journalists first-hand access to Helmand to see the progress for themselves. Greater efforts to promote 'good news' stories continue; a number of positive defence based documentaries have been well received in the first half of this year. A more proactive media strategy was adopted for the recent Operation Moshtarak, which included outlining campaign objectives to local nationals as well as the British public.

Working with Non-Governmental Organisations

27. (Recommendation 26) The MoD, DFID and the FCO recognise the importance of the independence of NGOs and that care should be exercised when coordinating activities with them. Nonetheless, NGOs are an important component in the use of the Comprehensive Approach and have much to offer, not only in terms of humanitarian aid work but in their knowledge and understanding of the region and the needs of local people. The three Departments should expand their work with NGOs to identify better ways to draw on their expertise and to ensure that each side is aware of the other's activities without compromising the safety of aid workers on the ground. (Paragraph 152)

The Government recognises the valuable work conducted by civilian agencies. The MoD, DFID and the FCO welcome the specialist knowledge and commitment of the NGO community and respect the added value of their independent status. The Stabilisation Unit maintains a close and open relationship with a network of NGOs and think-tanks interested in conflict and stabilisation, while the Departments take part in a NGO Military Contact Group (NMCG). The NMCG will work on identifying how greater interaction might lead to improved working practices in theatre, how to promote greater NGO involvement in military exercises, and will identify other areas where we can increase our work together. Additionally, DFID, through its Conflict, Humanitarian and Security Fund, provides funding to civil society organisations specialising in conflict prevention or resolution, security and justice, and humanitarian affairs.

Working with Local Nationals

28. (Recommendation 27) We consider the ability to communicate directly with local nationals to be important. We recognise that there has been additional language training for deployment to Afghanistan since 2003 but progress, particularly within DFID and the FCO, has been unimpressive. The three Departments should give the matter higher priority both in current and future operations. (Paragraph 158)

The Government acknowledges that it is critical to consult and work in partnership with local populations. The cross-Governmental committee on languages, UKIDSCOL (UK Inter-Departmental Committee on languages), is actively investigating, in conjunction with the Higher Education sector, enhancing the quality, efficiency and cost-effectiveness of language services in the participating organisations including MoD, DFID and the FCO. The FCO will conduct a review focussing on strategically important languages in consultation with geographical directorates. The MoD will shortly publish its 'Vision for Language & Cultural Capability' that seeks to take a collaborative cross-Government approach to operational demands.

The MoD has increased cultural awareness training and language skills to improve interaction with local nationals. OGDs, currently FCO, DFID and SU have also trained personnel, and shared best practice, at the Defence Cultural Specialist Unit. In addition, DFID Country Offices are staffed with a mix of Home Civil Servants and Staff Appointed in Country.

29. (Recommendation 28) The MoD, the FCO and DFID together with the Stabilisation Unit should provide training and education on the culture, history and politics of areas where their staff will be deployed on the Comprehensive Approach. For instance, training could draw upon the knowledge and expertise of personnel, including those of other countries and in particular the USA, who have served in Afghanistan, in some cases on more than one occasion. This training should be in addition to appropriate language training. (Paragraph 167)

The Government recognises the importance of training and education and the value of capitalising on the experience of personnel returning from theatre. Given their different priorities, Government Departments necessarily have different approaches and dedicated resources to ensure language and cultural training as part of their personnel deployment.

Each Department conducts its own pre-deployment training which varies according to the theatre and role in which personnel will be employed. The three Departments are engaged in rationalising the delivery of current stabilisation training courses. Culture and language training have yet to be incorporated but it is recognised that the existing training could benefit from being included; OGDs have taken part in some of the military pre-deployment training cultural elements delivered by the Defence Cultural Specialist Unit and Operational Training and Advisory Group.

30. (Recommendation 29) We endorse the Government's intentions with regard to the support of women, in line with UNSCR 1325, within the Comprehensive Approach and expect to see explicit reference to this in the Comprehensive Approach policy and doctrine that we call for earlier in this Report. (Paragraph 174)

The UK Government actively supports UNSCR 1325 and related resolutions regarding women peace and security. The Government is in the process of up-dating its National Action Plan, a cross-Government document detailing how FCO, DFID and MoD will work to help protect and empower women in conflict situations.

One notable success in Afghanistan has been MoD Police work in Gender development for Afghan national police, which has made positive advances in the recruitment, correct training and equipping of female officers as well as their inclusion in police operations.