



House of Commons
Defence Committee

**Russia: Implications
for UK defence and
security: Government
Response to the
Committee's First
Report of Session
2016–17**

Fourth Special Report of Session 2016–17

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The Defence Committee

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Contacts

All correspondence should be addressed to the Clerk of the Defence Committee, House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA. The telephone number for general enquiries is 020 7219 5857; the Committee's email address is defcom@parliament.uk. Media inquiries should be addressed to Alex Paterson on 020 7219 1589.

Fourth Special Report

The Defence Committee published its First Report of Session 2016–17, entitled *Russia: Implications for UK defence and security* on 5 July 2016. The Government's response was received on 6 September 2016 and is appended to this report.

Appendix: Government Response

The Government welcomes the House of Commons Defence Committee's inquiry 'Russia: Implications for UK Defence and Security' and the findings set out in the Committee's report (HC 107), published on 5 July 2016.

Our formal response to the Committee's recommendations and conclusions is set out below. The Committee's headings and findings are highlighted in bold and italics (when required), with the Government's response set out in plain text. For ease of reference, paragraph numbering in brackets refers to the order in which they are presented in the Committee's report.

At the beginning of the Committee's inquiry, the Government provided written evidence, noting the outcome of the Strategic Defence and Security Review (SDSR) and UK defence priorities relating to Russia. The Government also highlighted the work delivered under UK leadership at the NATO Summit in Wales which provided a strong and unified response to Russian behaviour in Ukraine. We have continued to build on this work and since the Committee published its report the NATO Summit in Warsaw has taken place, delivering a further message of Alliance unity, strength, solidarity and cohesion.

Russian Military Today

1. Whilst Russia cites self-defence against NATO expansion as a reason for its increased military spending, its rapid militarisation can, alternatively, be viewed as mobilisation against not only external threats but also internal dissent. Recent Russian actions and statements by senior figures imply that Russia is reinforcing itself for the prospect of future conflict with the West. If the West does not respond appropriately to such actions, it will be poorly equipped to deter such a conflict or successfully resist if one breaks out. *The MoD must set out its plans, as part of its broader strategy towards Russia, to acknowledge the rapid militarisation of the Russian state and develop measures to counter it, including the fulfilment of its promise in the SDSR to lead a renewed focus in NATO on deterrence. The Warsaw Summit is the opportunity to do so.* (Paragraph 18)

2. The expansion of the Russian military machine and recent Russian military engagements have been well-documented. Such actions are likely to be motivated—at least in part—in pursuit of greater recognition and respect for Russia as a world power. NATO's response to Russia's military expansion must therefore be nuanced. A hesitant response will be perceived by Russia as a weakness, while facing Russia down may exacerbate antagonism between the two. A robust, clearly communicated response is required by the UK and NATO. (Paragraph 25)

The UK has played a leading role in NATO's modern approach to deterrence. In response to Russia's actions in Crimea, NATO implemented two key initiatives to increase readiness and show that the Alliance is determined to deal with the challenges it faces:

- Assurance Measures. As an immediate response to Russian actions in Ukraine, NATO Allies delivered an increased military presence and activity for assurance and deterrence in the eastern part of the Alliance. This is continuing with activities such as exercises and Baltic Air Policing.
- Adaptation Measures. In order to enhance the Alliance's long-term military posture and capabilities and to enable forces to respond more quickly to emergencies wherever they arise, NATO Allies agreed the Readiness Action Plan (RAP) at Wales.

The UK is playing a leading role in NATO's Assurance Measures and the Readiness Action Plan (RAP): as part of the RAP we will lead NATO's quick-reaction "Spearhead Force", the VJTF Land Brigade in 2017, having also contributed a Battlegroup to the Spanish led force this year. We will also provide a Battlegroup to the Polish led force in 2020, making the UK one of the biggest contributors to the VJTF; in terms of Assurance our Typhoons are conducting Baltic Air Policing missions from Estonia; and our ships are making a significant contribution to NATO's naval forces, with HMS IRON DUKE deployed to the Baltic Sea for six months of this year.

Steps agreed at the Warsaw Summit will deliver a strong and unified Alliance that is capable of protecting our citizens, defending Europe, and projecting stability beyond our borders against the threats of the 21 Century. The work undertaken reflects highly capable conventional forces; a clear nuclear posture; an increased ability to detect and attribute hybrid and ambiguous incursions; and a renewed focus by all Allies on individual resilience to better prepare countries against possible attack. Warsaw builds on the progress that we made at Wales by delivering an enhanced forward presence in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland. The UK is taking a leading role, providing the framework battalion in Estonia from 2017. Work is underway to deliver our contribution. It will be a defensive, but combat capable force, composed of up to two UK companies, enablers, and a Headquarters element. Separately, we will be providing a Company Group deployment to Poland.

The UK is also a major contributor to NATO exercises. About 150 NATO and Allied exercises have been scheduled for 2016. The largest—Exercise Anakonda 2016—took place in June in Poland. 800 British troops took part in an exercise involving 31,000 troops, 12 ships and over a hundred aircraft from 24 countries. Also in July, Exercise Swift Response in Germany and Poland saw UK forces taking part in the largest parachute drop since the end of the Cold War. The UK expects to contribute over 4000 Armed Forces personnel to NATO's Assurance Measures this year, matching our commitment in 2015.

Completion of the measures announced at Wales and NATO's renewed deterrence posture gives the Alliance the tools to proactively deter and defend against Russian belligerence. Engagement with Russia is also important. NATO's approach is based on balancing strong defence with dialogue. It is right that NATO is open to dialogue on difficult issues where it is in our interests to promote transparency and build understanding in order to reduce risks.

3. Russia's strategy for its nuclear arsenal is an integrated component of its stated military doctrine. The UK and NATO must review their own nuclear doctrine, in the light of the Russian position, to ensure that it maintains the ability to deter Russian nuclear threats. We recommend that the UK Government set out its timetable for the parliamentary debate and decision on the Successor programme in response to this Report and without further delay. (Paragraph 32)

The Government remains committed to maintaining our Continuous At Sea Deterrent and replacing our four ballistic missile submarines. This was endorsed by Parliament on 18 July 2016, with a significant cross party majority that sends a strong signal to our international allies that we remain engaged and fully committed to international security.

4. It is alarming if Russia is in breach of the terms of the 1987 INF Treaty which is crucial to Euro-Atlantic security and stability. The UK and US governments, in conjunction with other NATO members at the Warsaw Summit, should determine a course of action either on how to repair the Treaty, or whether an alternative strategic settlement is required to maintain stability in the Euro-Atlantic area. (Paragraph 36)

We believe that full adherence to the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty between the US and Russia is in the interests of all countries. The INF Treaty is fundamental part of the Euro-Atlantic security architecture and it strengthens the security of all, including Russia. Any breach of the Treaty, or withdrawal from it, has the potential to damage the stability and confidence that has been established under this and other such Treaties. As noted in the Warsaw Communiqué:

Allies therefore continue to call on Russia to preserve the viability of the INF Treaty through ensuring full and verifiable compliance.

The US has said that Russia is not complying with its INF Treaty obligations “not to possess, produce, or flight-test” a ground-launched cruise missile with a range of 500 to 5,500 kilometres or “to possess or produce launchers of such missiles.” These concerns have been raised in a number of meetings with Russia in recent years. We call on Russia to meet its responsibilities under the treaty.

5. A recurring theme in Russian military strategy is the ability to combine various tools seamlessly, to give a fully integrated, comprehensive approach. The Russian attitude to cyber as a tool of warfare is no different, with a full-spectrum approach integral to the strategy of the Russian Government. (Paragraph 48)

The Government agrees with the Committee's acknowledgement that a key theme of Russian strategy is to combine the various tools at its disposal to give a fully comprehensive approach, commonly known as hybrid warfare. The Alliance has a range of mechanisms to deter and counter these measures; these were discussed at the Warsaw Summit and more detail is provided in the Government's response to Recommendations 10 and 18 of this report. In the 2015 Strategic Security and Defence Review the Government recognised the growing importance of cyber security, committing funding to protect the UK from cyber-attack and develop our sovereign capabilities in cyber space.

Russian Military Actions

6. Russian actions in Ukraine have created a deep instability within Europe of a type not witnessed since the end of the Cold War. This is a problem for Europe in general and for the NATO alliance in particular. While Ukraine is not a member of NATO and therefore not subject to Article 5 guarantees, it was guaranteed by the Budapest Agreement. Russian military action there thus raises questions over the security of neighbouring countries which fall within Russia's military reach and which Russia would like to bring in its sphere of influence. (Paragraph 59)

7. Russia's actions in Ukraine demonstrated the ruthlessness with which it will assert its plans and its willingness to ignore international law, treaties and agreements. They also demonstrated the speed and agility with which Russia could mobilise its Armed Forces, as well as the effective Russian use of proxy forces, information warfare and plausible deniability. *To the extent that the West was taken by surprise, the forthcoming NATO Summit in Warsaw should reassess NATO's doctrine and capability to respond to both the speed of Russian deployment, and the implications of Russia's ability to keep the West in the dark until it is ready to initiate military action.* (Paragraph 67)

Since the events of 2014 in Ukraine, Allies and NATO have responded quickly to the fundamental challenge posed by Russia's aggressive actions. NATO's deterrence and defence posture has been enhanced, including by a forward presence in the eastern part of the Alliance. This will be boosted further with the establishment of enhanced forward presence. The Warsaw Summit built on the success of the RAP mentioned above, adopting a broad approach to deterrence and defence which draws upon all of the tools at NATO's disposal. This will further enhance NATO's ability to react quickly to any act of aggression in concert with host nation forces and underpinned by rapid reinforcement. As noted in the Warsaw Communiqué:

We will further improve our strategic anticipation by enhancing our situational awareness, particularly in the east and south and in the North Atlantic. Our ability to understand, track and, ultimately, anticipate, the actions of potential adversaries through Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR) capabilities and comprehensive intelligence arrangements is increasingly important. These are essential to enable timely and informed political and military decisions. We have established the capabilities necessary to ensure our responsiveness is commensurate with our highest readiness forces.

At the Chicago Summit in 2012 NATO launched the Joint Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (JISR) initiative with initial operational capability declared in February 2016. This is enhancing the situational awareness of the NATO Response Force through heightened proficiency in collecting and exchanging information and intelligence. These achievements will be sustained and future NATO Response Force rotations supported with the necessary JISR capabilities. NATO will also expand the scope of the JISR initiative, making the most effective use of Allies' complementary JISR contributions to enhance both strategic anticipation and awareness.

8. Russia's military intervention in Syria has reduced the likelihood of Assad being overthrown—long a Western objective—but increased the prospect of cooperation with Russia in combating Islamist terrorism. Such cooperation depends upon both the coalition and Russia deciding to make it a shared objective. *The UK should assess what it can realistically do to engage with Russia, to test the practicability of working together against DAESH and other extreme groups. In principle, it is perfectly possible to confront and constrain an adversary in a region where our interests clash, whilst cooperating with him, to some degree, in a region where they coincide.* (Paragraph 76)

We agree that despite our significant differences with Russia, we must find ways of working with it on issues that matter to the UK; the Iran nuclear talks proved that such cooperation can produce meaningful results. International terrorism is clearly an issue in which our interests coincide, although we do not necessarily agree on how best to tackle it. Since the Metrojet tragedy, on 31 October 2015, we have held a series of high-level discussions, including at the level of Prime Minister and President Putin, to share assessments of the cause of this terrible incident and coordinate responses. The Vice Chief of Defence Staff and the Director General for Security Policy in the Ministry of Defence both visited Russia in December 2015 to discuss issues of mutual security interest. We will continue to pursue dialogue about counter-terrorism approaches and explore the scope for increased cooperation on aviation security.

Working cooperatively with Russia in Syria is more challenging. It is true that the UK and Russia have a shared interest in Syria's security and stability, and to that end we have sought to engage constructively with Russia both bilaterally and through international fora, including the UN Security Council and the International Syria Support Group. However, Russia's actions to date have shown that its primary goal is to shore up the Assad regime, rather than to tackle Daesh and other terrorist groups. So while we remain open to discussing the potential for closer coordination, this will not be possible in practice unless Russia aligns its goals and approach more closely with those of the international coalition. If Russia is genuinely willing to work cooperatively with the international coalition and UN to secure a peaceful future for Syria, it must deliver on its commitment to bring an end to the Assad regime's indiscriminate bombing of civilians and moderate opposition.

9. Russia's military expansion has included extensive reinforcements in Kaliningrad. While Russia has stated that this was a defensive measure to counter the threat of NATO, the further militarisation of Kaliningrad—which lies between Poland and Lithuania—could equally be considered a threat to the Baltic States. (Paragraph 82)

10. As members of NATO, the Baltic States are covered by Article 5, meaning that NATO would be compelled to respond to an armed attack. However, recent Russian activity demonstrates that it can threaten and destabilise countries without actually engaging in an explicit and open armed attack. *NATO must ensure it fully comprehends the nature and extent of threats designed not to trigger Article 5 and develops its strategies to counter multi-dimensional warfare in order to defend the Baltic States from such threats.* (Paragraph 83)

The threat of activity designed specifically to introduce ambiguity and uncertainty in order to be perceived as below any Article 5 threshold is well understood by NATO and individual Allies. The lessons of Ukraine have been learned and whilst the next use of hybrid tactics is unlikely to look the same, the agility and responsiveness required to effectively deter and respond has been developed. As noted in the Warsaw Communiqué:

We have taken steps to ensure our ability to effectively address the challenges posed by hybrid warfare, where a broad, complex, and adaptive combination of conventional and non-conventional means, and overt and covert military, paramilitary, and civilian measures, are employed in a highly integrated design by state and non-state actors to achieve their objectives. Responding to this challenge, we have adopted a strategy and actionable implementation plans on NATO's role in countering hybrid warfare. The primary responsibility to respond to hybrid threats or attacks rests with the targeted nation. NATO is prepared to assist an Ally at any stage of a hybrid campaign. The Alliance and Allies will be prepared to counter hybrid warfare as part of collective defence. The Council could decide to invoke Article 5 of the Washington Treaty. The Alliance is committed to effective cooperation and coordination with partners and relevant international organisations, in particular the EU, as agreed, in efforts to counter hybrid warfare.

Building resilience and hardening the target are key components of the wider deterrence effort against hybrid threats. Whilst primary responsibility for national resilience sits with Allies, NATO has an important role to play in supporting Allies whilst ensuring its own resilience. The commitments made at the Summit on resilience represent an important undertaking by Allies to further develop individual and collective preparedness. The Warsaw Communiqué notes:

Today we have made a commitment to continue to enhance our resilience and to maintain and further develop our individual and collective capacity to resist any form of armed attack. Civil preparedness is a central pillar of Allies' resilience and a critical enabler for Alliance collective defence. While this remains a national responsibility, NATO can support Allies in assessing and, upon request, enhancing their civil preparedness. We will improve civil preparedness by achieving the NATO Baseline Requirements for National Resilience, which focus on continuity of government, continuity of essential services, security of critical civilian infrastructure, and support to military forces with civilian means. In this context, we welcome the Resilience Guidelines approved by Defence Ministers in June 2016.

As the Committee notes in Recommendation 23 of its report, Article 5 of the Washington Treaty remains suitable for the challenges NATO currently faces and may face in the foreseeable future. The Wales Summit clarified that the impact of a cyber-attack could be as harmful to modern societies as a conventional attack and that a cyber-attack against an Ally could result in the invocation of Article 5 if it reached a certain threshold. The consequences of an attack rather than the nature of its conduct would again influence the response to hybrid attack.

11. At present, the Arctic is not a militarised zone, but increasing tensions leave the future uncertain. Given the increasing Russian military presence in the Arctic, we shall return to this region in a separate inquiry later this year. We request that the Government provides us with its assessment of the implications for UK security of developments in the Arctic when responding to this Report. (Paragraph 87)

Some 30% of Russia's territory, land and sea, is within the Arctic. It has recently increased its military presence in the region. We assess that for a variety of reasons, both economic and military, Russia will protect its Arctic assets and influence strongly. It has developed a new Arctic Command and increased exercise activity levels. Russian military activity in Arctic territory has so far been both legal and reasonable. However, future tensions over Arctic resources and freedom of navigation in newly opened sea routes could create tension in the region and we will continue to monitor the situation carefully.

Russia currently acts within existing frameworks, engaging with the Arctic Council and respecting the rulings of UN Convention of the Law of the Sea in regards to territory. Part of the UK Strategy towards Russia is to engage on global security issues and in key areas of shared interest; and to promote our values, including the rules based international system and human rights. In the future, the Arctic may offer scope to engage Russia on these objectives through the Arctic Council and UN.

Whilst Russian activity in the Arctic region may not have a direct impact upon UK territory, the seven other Arctic nations are either NATO allies or strong bilateral partners. As such the UK is ready to provide support as needed from across our Armed Forces, from Air and Maritime assets to Royal Marines specially trained in Arctic warfare. The provision for P8 Maritime Patrol Aircraft in SDSR 2015, providing long distance flight surveillance, will greatly increase the UK's ability to monitor the Arctic region. The UK is planning a contribution to the NATO exercise TRIDENT JUNCTURE in 2018, which will exercise Alliance capabilities along its Northern Flank.

12. Russia has increasingly demonstrated military aggressiveness in different regions, as well as the ability to create confusion, fear and doubts in others, including NATO member states. Because it perceives these methods as successful, and because they appear to Russia to be unchallenged, it is likely that Russia will continue to use military means and unconventional warfare as ways of reasserting what it believes to be its rightful role on the international stage. Many of the Russian actions outlined in this chapter directly challenge the rules-based international order. Lukewarm responses will not gain respect from Russia, will not improve our relationship with Russia, nor engineer a more palatable environment for European defence. The UK and NATO must employ robust and firm responses. Russia must be certain that Article 5 would be triggered should NATO consider that one of its member states has been subject to an armed attack and effective countermeasures must be designed to deter potential Russian tactics tailored to circumvent the Article 5 guarantee. (Paragraph 94)

We agree with the Committee's conclusion that Russia has increasingly demonstrated military aggressiveness through a variety of means. As noted in our response to Recommendations 1 and 2 of this report, the UK is playing a leading role in NATO's modern approach to deterrence and defence in response to Russian actions. We believe Russia understands that an attack on a NATO nation would trigger an Article V response.

UK/NATO policy and strategy towards Russia

13. Whilst sanctions brought against Russia have caused economic harm, their effects are felt most keenly by the Russian public and they have not reduced Russian military investment and expansion. Nor have sanctions yet led to compliance with the Minsk Agreements. *We agree that the EU sanctions should be renewed in July. We also call on the Government to consider extending travel bans to a larger portion of the Russian leadership.* (Paragraph 103)

The UK supports continuation of the robust approach by the EU towards sanctions against Russia. The EU's Tier III economic sanctions were renewed in July. All EU member states agree that sanctions should be clearly linked to Russia's implementation of the Minsk agreements. The UK supports the EU's Tier II asset freeze and travel ban restrictive measures. The EU will discuss renewal of these sanctions in September 2016, when the UK will argue for complete rollover. We believe that the current sanctions are firm and proportionate.

14. Russia has not been a UK priority since the end of the Cold War and our expertise in this field has withered on the vine. There are comparatively few Russian experts within the Government. Whilst the MoD says that around 40 specialists work on Russia, it is not clear what their level of expertise is, nor whether these cover full-spectrum assessment of Russia, including security, economics, and intelligence remits. *The Government must set out how it will address this shortcoming in order to ensure a solid cadre of experts on Russia who can help to provide, over a sustained period, an effective response to the challenges now posed by Russia. We would also welcome clarity as to how long they have worked on the Russian brief and accordingly what is the level of institutional memory.* (Paragraph 113)

15. It is clear to us that there is a large pool of expertise on Russia which exists externally to the Government, and we welcome the efforts by the Government to utilise this. However, a large number of Russia experts alone will not solve the problem. If expert advice is not effectively understood and utilised within the decision-making systems of Whitehall, expanding the pool of knowledge will not deliver the required results. *We recommend that the Government designate Russia as a high priority, and set out how the mechanisms within Whitehall will ensure that external advice is disseminated and acted upon at the highest levels.* (Paragraph 114)

16. The importance of the role of the Defence Attaché became apparent during our visit to Moscow. It offers the UK a window into Russian military thinking, and an invaluable avenue for dialogue and knowledge-sharing. We are concerned that the MoD has yet to identify sufficient individuals to fill several vacant posts in that office. This must be done as a matter of urgency, alongside a commitment to expand the Moscow Defence Section to a size commensurate with, and at ranks which reflect, the importance of its role. (Paragraph 117)

In 2015 the Ministry of Defence established a dedicated policy unit that focuses on Russia and its periphery. The unit includes staff who have looked at Russia for several years. It has also reinforced the staff looking at Russia in the defence intelligence area and is currently reviewing the number of its Russian speakers. The arrangements that are now in place give the Department increased breadth and depth across policy and intelligence

areas, and broader outreach to academia. The Secretary of State for Defence and Director General Security Policy and Operations referred to this while giving oral evidence to the Committee on 19 July in support of its inquiry into the NATO Warsaw Summit and Chilcot Report.

The 2015 Strategic Defence and Security Review recognised the challenges posed by Russian actions on the global stage and the need to utilise diplomatic channels, as well as other areas of expertise, including academia, when confronting the challenges faced by the UK.

During the evidence session on 19 July the Defence Secretary explained the challenges the Government has faced in bringing the defence section of our Moscow embassy up to full strength. These are not all difficulties of our making, but we are working hard to increase its size. Officers have been identified and visa applications have been lodged with the Russian Embassy. A larger defence section will not only improve our understanding of the Russian military, but also help to underpin a better relationship between the two militaries. However, this is dependent on the visas being granted by the Russian Government.

Beyond Defence we draw on expertise on Russia across Whitehall Departments and we are working across Government to further build up our capability and our understanding. We have regular discussions with external Russia experts, but acknowledge there is more to be done to strengthen our understanding.

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office develops its own expertise in specific areas of Foreign Policy, both geographical and thematic. In line with this policy the Eastern Europe and Central Asia Division (EECAD) contains a mix of staff with varying experience of dealing with Russia and the former Soviet Union countries. Since 2010 the number of Russian-language speaker positions in our Russian posts and the former Soviet Union has increased by 30%. In addition to this the minimum duration for Russian-language training has increased from 11 to 14 months. Sir Tim Barrow, current Political Director at the FCO, was previously HMA Moscow and the current Ambassador to Russia, Dr Laurie Bristow has previously served as Director EECAD and Deputy Head of Mission in Moscow.

17. Dialogue between NATO and Russia is essential to reduce the risk of military escalation and misunderstandings between them both. It is not incompatible with a more adversarial relationship, such as has recently developed. We therefore welcome the reconvening of the NATO-Russia Council, while limited in outcomes, as an important step to re-establishing dialogue between Russia and the West. (Paragraph 121)

The Warsaw Summit confirmed that NATO remains open to focused and meaningful dialogue with Russia where it is in our interests to do so. This should be with a view to avoiding misunderstanding, miscalculation, unintended escalation and to increase transparency and predictability. However, as the Warsaw Communiqué makes clear, it will not mean a return to business as usual.

The NATO-Russia Council met again on 13 July. NATO briefed Russia on the main decisions taken at the Warsaw Summit related to the Alliance's deterrence and defence posture emphasising that the measures are defensive in nature, proportionate, consistent with NATO's international commitments and demonstrate the Alliance's respect for the rules-based European security architecture

18. It is clear to us that Russia has harnessed a wide range of capabilities which can rapidly be deployed for use in conjunction with classic military power. NATO needs to respond in kind if it is to counter unconventional as well as conventional warfare. We therefore most strongly recommend that NATO, as part of its response to Russia, addresses its shortcomings in terms of the full range of unconventional warfare. (Paragraph 130)

NATO has made significant progress in developing its response to hybrid threats, with a strategy on countering hybrid warfare agreed at the end of 2015 and the supporting actionable implementation plan agreed at the beginning of 2016. NATO is working to enhance its ability to recognise and attribute hybrid actions through enhancements to its intelligence surveillance and reconnaissance capabilities, updating its crisis response manuals and the development of rolling environment assessments. Work to support rapid assessment and effective decision making is also underway as are efforts to build resilience and enhance the ability to resist and respond to hybrid threats. The work on resilience focuses on both NATO as an institution and on individual Allies through assessment of the state of civil preparedness and agreement of appropriate resilience guidelines, best practices and practical activities. The challenges of hybrid tactics were exercised during NATO's annual Crisis Management Exercises 2016 (CMX16) and are expected to feature in CMX17.

NATO is also working closely with the EU to deliver a coordinated approach across both institutions. The joint declaration at the Warsaw Summit by the NATO Secretary General, the President of the European Council, and the President of the European Commission outlines a series of actions the two organisations intend to take together in concrete areas, including countering hybrid threats and enhancing resilience. The joint declaration notes there is an urgent need to:

Boost our ability to counter hybrid threats, including by bolstering resilience, working together on analysis, prevention, and early detection, through timely information sharing and, to the extent possible, intelligence sharing between staffs; and cooperating on strategic communication and response. The development of coordinated procedures through our respective playbooks will substantially contribute to implementing our efforts.

The UK has led efforts to drive and develop a coherent response to hybrid tactics through the EU and NATO. We have been key shapers and influencers on EU hybrid policy, and improving EU-NATO cooperation in response to hybrid threats. An effective response, whether domestic or international must include at one end efforts to deter, through building resilience, identifying and attributing; and at the more extreme end how to respond to and defeat hybrid attacks in a crisis situation.

Domestically, work to continue to improve the UK's ability to deter, resist and respond to hybrid tactics remains a high priority. Internationally, we continue to support EU-NATO cooperation and want to ensure that the EU continues its trajectory to deter hybrid threats, including delivering on the proposals in the EU framework on hybrid threats.

19. We are concerned that the UK and NATO do not yet have a fully-developed strategy to counter Russian propaganda and disinformation effectively. We understand that efforts are underway in NATO to develop this. In that respect, the establishment of 77 Brigade by the MoD is a welcome step in the right direction. However, the budget available to Russia means that NATO must substantially increase the level of resources which member states commit to this work. (Paragraph 137)

We agree that events over the past two years have highlighted the need for the Alliance to enhance its Strategic Communications (Strat Comms), particularly in response to the Russian hybrid warfare model used in the annexation of Crimea and the destabilisation of eastern Ukraine. Following a recent external review into NATO Communications there is now an increased emphasis on strategic communications within the Alliance and a marked move towards a campaigns-based approach to communications. The UK has shown leadership within the Alliance in this regard by establishing a Strat Comms Trust Fund. Part-funded by the Trust Fund, a programme of Strat Comms training has started. All training sessions have been carried out by the UK's Government Communications Service and have been very well received. The UK is also encouraging a more joined-up approach to Alliance communications, including greater alignment between policy and communications divisions. We are encouraging NATO to adopt a communication model that more closely resembles the UK's; we hope this will lead to further development of strategies to counter Russian propaganda—with more emphasis on long-term objectives, target audiences and evaluation.

We are also actively working with European and NATO allies to protect and promote access to reliable information, especially in the Russian language. This includes additional funding for the BBC World Service to enhance its Russian language output. In partnership with allies, we are developing projects to improve media plurality and access to balanced and objective Russian-language reporting.

20. The NATO Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF) is a welcome addition to NATO's capabilities. There is concern, however, over the ability of the VJTF to respond speedily and effectively in the event of need. *It will be essential to have agreements for the rapid movement of personnel, equipment and platforms across Europe between member states should the VJTF need to be deployed. We would welcome details of how far advanced such agreements are. We invite the Government to set out how the VJTF will match Russian capability and speed of engagement in regions on NATO's periphery. (Paragraph 148)*

Work is progressing to ensure arrangements, such as for the provision of strategic lift capabilities through both military and commercial means, expediting cross-border transit permissions between NATO nations and further investigation into the desirability and feasibility of forward-positioning of military stores and equipment, are being pursued. Forward presence in the east of Alliance territory will further enhance NATO's ability to react immediately to any act of aggression in concert with host nation forces and

underpinned by rapid reinforcement. In terms of the VJTF's capability, it should be noted that it is the highest readiness force of the much larger enhanced NATO Response Force which would follow, if required.

21. However, in our view, we should be aware of the dangers of undermining the credibility of the Article 5 guarantee—and thus of the entire alliance—by offering NATO membership to states which a potential adversary would not believe we would go to war to defend. We should therefore make it clear that NATO would take Article 5 action in respect of any new member country before it was allowed to join the Alliance. (Paragraph 152)

NATO makes clear through its accession process that the rights and responsibilities associated with all aspects of the Washington Treaty, including Article 5, apply to all members who have acceded to the Treaty. As Heads of State and Government said at the recent Warsaw Summit, NATO's greatest responsibility is to protect and defend our territory and populations as set out in Article 5 of the Washington Treaty. NATO's resolve to defend all Allies, whether old or new, is not in doubt.

22. Russia considers any enhanced military presence in the Baltic States as a threat to its borders. Therefore, we should expect any NATO military consolidation to be mirrored on the Russian side of the border. Further militarisation of the border in this way could increase the risk of misunderstandings, miscalculation or accidents. *The UK and NATO should be very clear in engaging Russia during the Warsaw Summit, and strive for transparency to explain the decisions that it takes. We recommend that the Government reports on how it has increased military dialogue with Russia, both before and during the Warsaw Summit, to reduce the potential for an unintended escalation of hostilities.* (Paragraph 155)

As noted in response to Recommendation 17 of the report, the Warsaw Summit confirmed that NATO remains open to focused and meaningful dialogue with Russia. In addition to being able to meet in the format of the NATO-Russia Council, which met on 13 July, NATO has military lines of communication through the diplomatic mission from Russia to NATO facilitating regular contact and cooperation. An important focus of these measures, which we support, has been to reduce risk and to build transparency and understanding.

The UK will continue to have military to military contact with Russia where it is in our interest to do so, such as the engagement detailed in our response to Recommendation 8 of this report. The visits in 2015 progressed risk reduction through the establishment of a direct communications link between UK operational Headquarters and their Russian equivalents to reduce the scope for misunderstanding and accidents. We are exploring options for future meetings but will not return to business as usual.

23. *We agree with the Government's view that a redefinition of Article 5 could be counter-productive and that greater clarity on what does or does not constitute an Article 5 attack could play into the hands of Russia. Such a move would also run the risk of removing the ability of NATO to respond rapidly to an element of 'surprise'—a warfare tactic so prevalent in the new Russian doctrine. In that respect, the current ambiguity in Article 5 about what constitutes an armed attack should be considered as a strength not a weakness.* (Paragraph 160)

24. Military cooperation could be possible with Russia whilst maintaining a robust response to transgressions on international law. Differences in some areas of global politics do not necessarily exclude cooperation in areas of shared interest. It will be necessary, however, for the Government to be very clear about the extent to which military cooperation with Russia is possible, to set very clear limits and to engage with it eyes wide open. (Paragraph 164).

We welcome the Committee's endorsement of the Government's approach regarding the benefits of ambiguity in relation to Article 5 and its recognition that differences between the UK and Russia do not necessarily exclude cooperation where it is in the UK's interest.

6 September 2016