



House of Lords

House of Commons

Joint Committee on the
National Security Strategy

**National Security
Strategy and Strategic
Defence and Security
Review 2015:
Government Response
to the Committee's
First Report of Session
2016–17**

**First Special Report of Session
2016–17**

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The Joint Committee on the National Security Strategy

The Joint Committee on the National Security Strategy is appointed by the House of Lords and the House of Commons to consider the National Security Strategy.

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Publication

The reports of the Committee are published by Order of both Houses. All publications of the Committee are on the Internet at www.parliament.uk/jcnss.

Evidence relating to this report is published on the [inquiry publications page](#) of the Committee's website.

Committee staff

The current staff of the Committee are Nick Beech (Commons Clerk), Anthony Willott (Lords Clerk), Ashlee Godwin (Commons Committee Specialist), Amy Vistuer (Commons Committee Assistant), William Jones (Lords Committee Assistant), and Alex Paterson (Media Officer).

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First Special Report

The Committee published its First Report of Session 2016–17, [*National Security Strategy and Strategic Defence and Security Review 2015*](#) (HL Paper 18, HC 153) on 10 July 2016. The Government's response was received on 15 September 2016 and is appended to this report.

Appendix: Government Response

The Government was grateful to the Joint Committee on the National Security Strategy (JCNSS) for its first report of this session, examining the *National Security Strategy and Strategic Defence and Security Review 2015* (SDSR 2015). We note in particular the conclusions and recommendations of the Committee, and provide our responses below to each of these.

Creating the National Security Strategy

1. We welcome the implementation of our predecessor Committee's recommendation to allow more time for review and for engagement with external experts in developing the NSS & SDR 2015. Such engagement must, however, be more than a tick-box exercise and must include a robust examination of the substance of the security strategy. Looking ahead, the Cabinet Office should build on its achievement in engaging external expertise by forming 'red team' panels to challenge the assumptions underpinning the next security strategy. (Paragraph 6)

The National Security Secretariat highly values engagement with relevant experts, and significantly benefited from extensive external involvement in the development of SDR 2015. We spoke to over 50 different organisations including academia, think tanks, non-governmental organisations and industry, and conducted a number of experts' workshops across the UK.

Red teaming techniques are used in Government, including in the National Security Secretariat, to test and improve strategies and implementation. The Government will give further consideration to which is the best format for contribution by relevant experts to ongoing work and to the development of the next National Security Strategy, building on the lessons we have learnt from the 2015 process.

2. The Cabinet Office should produce classified analysis that prioritises specific threats and opportunities to inform decisions taken by policy-makers, diplomats, the security and intelligence agencies and the armed forces. (Paragraph 8)

The Cabinet Office and other Government organisations regularly produce a range of classified analysis products to support decision-making. Setting the context, the National Security Risk Assessment (NSRA) provides a common framework for identifying, assessing, comparing and prioritising risks (threats and hazards). The analysis of these risks and their potential impacts provides both the context for and the body of evidence behind the National Security Strategy (NSS) and Strategic Defence and Security Review (SDSR).

As part of the development of the NSRA, the Government considers the effect of thematic trends and how they might change the impact or likelihood of NSRA risks over the next twenty years. This process is designed to identify both opportunities and threats and enables the Government to make decisions about longer term risk management. The NSRA is available to assist decision-making across Government, and can be accessed by all relevant officials and Ministers.

Where there is a decision that involves consideration of national security, the National Security Council acts as the ultimate decision-making body. It is supported at the strategic level by a range of classified analytical products produced by the Joint Intelligence Organisation, Defence Intelligence Staff, and the security and intelligence agencies. These products analyse the threats and opportunities offered by specific situations and in response to developing trends. The decisions made by the NSC provide direction for a range of activity across Whitehall where more operational and tactical decisions are taken. These decisions are supported by a further range of analytical products—which address the specific issue under consideration—produced by the bodies listed above.

The National Security Strategy

3. The NSS & SDSR 2015 placed unprecedented emphasis on domestic resilience, marking a shift in approach to national security. We welcome the change in focus from shielding the UK's interests and citizens from threats to strengthening the UK's domestic resilience to threats. All capabilities available to the Government, including the armed forces, should be used to make the UK more resilient. However, the NSS & SDSR 2015 provided insufficient detail on the specific activities required to build domestic resilience within UK civil society. (Paragraph 14)

Strengthening the UK's domestic resilience is a key priority for the Government. Our approach is to build capability to respond to and recover from the consequences of civil emergencies, regardless of whether those emergencies are caused by accidents, natural hazards or man-made threats. This is managed through a cross government programme overseen by the Cabinet Office and set out in detail on the [resilience pages of gov.uk](#). The approach is also reflected in the Prepare strand of the [Government's CONTEST strategy](#). These programmes and other supporting strategies provide further detail on actions designed to build domestic resilience.

For example, our work to develop capabilities within civil society focuses in particular on maximising the role of the voluntary sector in responding to emergencies. We also work with experts such as the Prince of Wales' Business Emergency Resilience Group to encourage communities and businesses to build their own resilience.

4. We welcome the stronger emphasis on a whole-of-government approach to national security in the NSS & SDSR 2015. It is an important step in creating and delivering cross-government responses to the threats facing the UK. A more substantial discussion of the three National Security Objectives, the links between them, whether and how they can be traded off against each other, and how they are intended to tackle threats to UK national security would have provided a sound foundation for the rest of the NSS & SDSR 2015 and for future policy-making. (Paragraph 19)

The Government's vision for a secure and prosperous United Kingdom, with global reach and influence, translated into three overarching national security objectives which provided the framework for SDSR 2015. The National Security Risk Assessment 2015, departmental analysis and external consultation allowed the NSC to prioritise the risks and opportunities faced by the UK. This helped to determine the nature and scale of response required, informing the key commitments made in SDSR 2015. The three National Security Objectives are clearly interdependent and mutually reinforcing. Where there are tensions between competing priorities, these will be considered by the National Security Council.

5. **The primary goal of the NSS and SDSR process is to set out (a) what the UK wants to achieve; (b) how it intends to achieve it; and (c) what capabilities are required. The NSS & SDSR 2015 does not achieve that presentational goal. *The Cabinet Office must review the presentation of the NSS & SDSR 2015. SDSR commitments must be numbered and include a timeframe for completion to enhance transparency and accountability.*** (Paragraph 23)

We do not accept this conclusion. The document sets out clearly the UK's vision and objectives, the capabilities required, and the Government's commitments to actions needed to achieve them. We have received positive feedback on the clarity and accessibility of the SDSR 2015 as a public document. We will, however, take into account any lessons learned ahead of production of the next National Security Strategy and Strategic Defence and Security Review.

Key commitments in SDSR 2015 were designed to be easily identified with each of the 89 commitments highlighted in bold text. We have committed to produce an annual update to Parliament on progress in delivering these commitments.

6. **Foreign ownership of the UK's Critical National Infrastructure may reduce the Government's control over key technology and investment decisions. This could make it difficult for the Government to mitigate risks to the infrastructure project in question, as has been shown in the case of the proposed nuclear power station, Hinkley Point C. Foreign ownership of CNI also raises the possibility of security vulnerabilities.** (Paragraph 39)

7. ***We recommend that the Government conducts thorough, continual security assessments of all foreign-owned CNI projects. It is essential that the Government is prepared to veto proposals that do not provide adequate reassurance on potential security vulnerabilities.*** (Paragraph 40)

Any inward investment into UK CNI must meet the relevant legal and regulatory standards and requirements. The Government considers such investments on a case-by-case basis, taking into account the potential security considerations and mitigations. In the case of the Hinkley Point C project, the Government is currently reviewing all component parts of the deal. We will announce our decision this month. Alongside this, the Government will continue to review the resilience and security of UK CNI.

8. ***In producing the next NSS & SDSR, the Cabinet Office should 'game' hypothetical scenarios where the UK's relationships with key allies and partners are called into conflict. That process would help to establish which aspects of the UK's key relationships are the most important.*** (Paragraph 48)

The Government uses a number of tools to test hypothetical scenarios and improve our policy making. We engage internal and external expertise to help develop and assess techniques which may provide relevant strategic insights for developing policy, including the development of the National Security Strategy and Strategic Defence and Security Review.

The UK's network of alliances and partnerships makes a vital contribution to our national security. We routinely keep under review how best we can further enhance our key relationships, as reflected in SDSR 2015.

9. The NSS & SDSR 2015 addressed some of the capability gaps and negative perceptions about the UK's defence capacity following the SDSR 2010. Nevertheless, it is questionable whether Joint Force 2025 will meet the national security challenges faced by the UK. We are concerned that the UK will remain exposed in the short term while the newly announced capabilities are developed. (Paragraph 55)

Britain's Armed Forces are world leading and able to meet today's evolving threats. Joint Force 2025 will be able to deploy more quickly and make best use of new technology. It will enhance the Armed Forces' capability to work alongside the security and intelligence agencies to disrupt threats in the most challenging operating environments worldwide, and to work with allies such as the US and France; through NATO; or as part of a broader coalition. This approach will enable us to deal with the complex challenges of today and those of the future, to maintain our military advantage and extend it into new areas, including cyber and space, and to tackle a wider range of more sophisticated potential adversaries.

We have chosen to meet the NATO pledge to spend 2% of GDP on defence in every year of this Parliament and guarantee a real increase in the defence budget every year of this Parliament. These commitments enable us to spend £178 billion on the equipment programme over the next ten years, and grow our Armed Forces for the first time in over 20 years. The capabilities which will make up Joint Force 2025 will be built up over the coming years. For example, two aircraft carriers will enter service, one in 2018, the other in 2020, and the maritime patrol aircraft will have reached initial operating capability in 2020.

10. *The Ministry of Defence must clarify whether in practice the expeditionary force envisaged as part of Joint Force 2025 will draw on armed forces personnel already on operations or kept on standby to assist civil authorities in dealing with emergencies in the UK. It must also set out progress on developing Joint Force 2025 capabilities.* (Paragraph 56)

SDSR 2015 makes clear that under Joint Force 2025 the Armed Forces will be able to deploy a larger force more quickly—a highly capable expeditionary force of around 50,000 (compared with around 30,000 planned in Future Force 2020). When not deployed at this scale they will be able to undertake a large number of smaller operations simultaneously. The Armed Forces will also continue to undertake tasks such as contributing to the defence and security of the UK homeland and overseas territories, and sustaining the global defence network of attachés. While meeting concurrent demands at times of major conflict will inevitably draw on some of the same forces, it will not compromise our ability to deliver these non-discretionary tasks.

The capabilities that comprise Joint Force 2025 are being developed as outlined within SDSR 2015, and we will continue to set out progress in the annual updates to Parliament.

11. Despite the Government's commitment to maintain the size of the Regular Army at 82,000 and to increase the Royal Navy and Royal Air Force by a total of 700 Regular personnel, the manpower fielded by the UK armed forces is inadequate bearing in mind the range, complexity and potential concurrency of tasks expected of them. In addition, the current establishment will not facilitate the effective use of the state-of-the-art equipment to be purchased as a result of the NSS & SDSR 2015. This situation is exacerbated by ongoing difficulties in maintaining sufficient numbers of trained Reserves. (Paragraph 61)

The Armed Forces are structured and trained to deliver their specified defence missions. The growth of the Royal Navy and Royal Air Force in SDSR 2015 reflects new assumptions about the range, complexity and potential concurrency of tasks within the future operating environment. As new equipment is brought into service, a whole force approach to Defence that looks to deliver the skills we need across regular, reserve, civilian personnel and contractors will ensure we continue to evolve to meet our changing outputs. In developing new capabilities we will exploit the opportunities provided by new technologies and developments in integration to reduce our reliance on scarce specialist skills. There is no change to our plan to grow the size of the Reserve to 35,000 by 2019.

12. There is a risk that the planned 30% reduction in the MOD civilian headcount by 2020 could undermine the Ministry's ability to deliver the NSS & SDSR 2015. The MOD should review the impact of the proposed 30% reduction in civilian headcount by 2020 on policy formulation and delivery and place its analysis in the public domain. (Paragraph 64)

MoD has appointed the Chief of Defence People as Senior Responsible Owner, and work is in hand within the Single Services, Joint Forces Command, and other organisations within the MOD to develop detailed plans to meet this commitment.

This work is initially focussing on two key areas:

- Increasing efficiency and productivity within the Department, including through improved exploitation of technology, simplifying processes, and implementing alternative delivery structures where appropriate;
- Considering the core role of civil servants within Defence, as part of a long-term Workforce Strategy. This will define the future vision for the civil service in Defence, including the core skills and capabilities required, ensuring this is central to recruitment, training and development plans. The Department will explore whether there are roles that are fundamentally better suited to delivery outside of the Department, whether in arms-length bodies or by the private sector.

In conducting this work the Department will ensure it retains access to the skills and capabilities required to deliver all Defence outputs, including policy formulation and delivery of major programmes.

13. We welcome the Government's commitment to meet the NATO target of spending at least 2% of GDP on defence. However, we are concerned that the changed economic climate following the UK's vote to leave the EU will see the defence budget reduced in real terms, reversing the November 2015 decision to make additional funding available for defence. We are also concerned that the NATO minimum spending target would not have been fulfilled in 2015 if UK accounting practices had not been modified, albeit in ways permitted by NATO guidelines. (Paragraph 68)

As the Committee notes, our defence expenditure reporting to NATO follows NATO guidelines, which allows the level of UK defence spending to be compared on an equivalent basis to that of our NATO allies. As with other NATO members, we update our approach to reporting defence spending to reflect its changing nature over time. For example, the cost of military operations has decreased in recent years following drawdown in Afghanistan, while cyber defence has become increasingly important. Were we not to update our defence spending practices, our spending could not be compared to that of other nations on a like-for-like basis. The Government has also committed to an increase in real terms in defence spending in every year of the current Parliament.

14. The MOD may struggle to make the efficiency savings of £9.2 billion expected of it over the next five years. This ambitious target presents a significant risk to the delivery of the defence capabilities set out in the NSS & SDSR 2015. We are concerned that the planned increases in the MOD's budget, as set out in the November 2015 Spending Review, will be offset by increased public sector employee costs. (Paragraph 71)

The MOD's efficiency target of £9.2 billion over the next five years is intentionally challenging, as every pound saved will be reinvested in defence. This is why the MOD has put in place a robust governance process for tracking and monitoring efficiency delivery across the Department. This is designed to ensure that emerging risks to successful delivery of individual elements of the efficiency programme are addressed to ensure that the Department can deliver the defence capabilities set out in SDSR 2015.

The increased public sector employee costs from the additional National Insurance contributions now required have been accommodated within the MOD budget, and were accounted for in the Department's 2015 Spending Review settlement. The change in superannuation contribution will take effect from financial year 2019/20, and the full extent of this change will not be known until re-valuation of the MOD pension schemes is completed in 2018. MOD will continue to work closely with HM Treasury on these changes.

15. We support the inclusion of the armed forces as a key element of the Government's full spectrum response to threats to the UK and its interests. We are concerned, however, that the armed forces will not be able to fulfil the wide-ranging tasks described in the NSS & SDSR 2015 by 2025 with the capabilities, manpower and funding set out in the same document. (Paragraph 72)

As set out in SDSR 2015, we are confident that the strategy, and the policies and capabilities required to deliver it, are fully aligned with the available resources. Delivering the SDSR will require Government Departments to meet high levels of efficiency. This is why, alongside SDSR 2015, the Cabinet Secretary led a process which identified more than £11 billion of savings, which we are reinvesting in our national security priorities.

16. We welcome the Government's recent efforts to consolidate previous cyber initiatives and to establish strong leadership on cyber. *The Cabinet Office should clarify the lines of ministerial responsibility in relation to cyber policy-making, which would facilitate effective scrutiny by Parliament. It should publish a clear outline of those structures on its website.* (Paragraph 78)

The Government remains committed to providing strong leadership on cyber. Cyber security will continue to be a matter in which the National Security Council takes a keen interest. We will set out the details of the structure of ministerial responsibilities in the autumn.

17. **The private sector shares responsibility for the maintenance of the UK's cyber security with the Government. However, the partnership between the Government and the private sector on cyber security is not yet productive. We therefore welcome the initiatives announced in the NSS & SDSR 2015 on facilitating engagement with the private sector.** (Paragraph 80)

We are implementing the initiatives announced in SDSR 2015. Close and active cooperation between the Government and the private sector to deliver improved cyber security is a key theme of the forthcoming National Cyber Security Strategy.

The strategy includes the Government's commitment to roll out:

- A programme of active cyber defence;
- The creation of a National Cyber Security Centre;
- A dedicated ability to counter-attack in cyber space;
- An ambitious skills programme;
- Growing the cyber security sector.

The private sector will benefit from, and participate in, many of these initiatives. The strategy makes clear, however, that while the Government will offer increased support, organisations remain responsible for the security and integrity of their systems and data.

18. **The emphasis on cyber-related education and skills in the 2011–16 National Cyber Security Programme was not matched by a similar level of financial investment, which comprised only 4% of the total programme budget. The cyber skills gap is a barrier to the Government's goal of creating a vibrant cyber economy that is resilient to fast-changing threats. The allocation of the five-year National Cyber Security Programme budget must reflect the strategic imperative to develop cyber skills.** (Paragraph 83)

The previous National Cyber Security Programme spent nearly £15 million on enhancing the cyber skills of the UK. When the National Cyber Security Strategy 2016 is published, it will highlight skills as a continued priority with a significant increase in investment compared with the last programme.

We continue to build on existing work to integrate cyber security into the education system, and are taking measures to reduce the cyber skills gap across industry by working in partnership across government, industry and academia to build a diverse pipeline with people who have the right skills and knowledge.

19. We welcome the aspiration set out in the NSS & SDSR 2015 to entrench a whole-of-government approach to national security in Whitehall. *The Cabinet Office must set out how it will measure the effectiveness of cross-departmental units and funds and of the development of a cross-government culture of collaboration.* (Paragraph 87)

As the Committee has recognised, SDSR 2015 sought to consolidate a whole-of-government approach to national security. Cross-government working is key to effectively tackling the complex challenges which threaten the UK's security, and to building a government-wide collaborative culture.

Important elements of cross-departmental working are enabled and encouraged by our use of flexible strategic cross-government funds. The National Security Council will provide direction to the enlarged Conflict, Stability and Security Fund, including through NSC-agreed country strategies. The Prosperity Fund will be overseen by a separate joint ministerial board.

Seven new cross-Whitehall joint units were announced in SDSR 2015 to bring together relevant governmental expertise on key aspects of national security policy. Four are already in operation, with the other three due to go live before the end of 2016, bringing the total number of joint units working in the national security space to more than twenty. New units are due to carry out internal reviews in 2017. While the circumstances, objectives, size and scope of the units vary considerably, Cabinet Office is working with new and existing joint units to help share best practice and lessons learned. Measurement of the effectiveness of new joint units and cross-government funds forms part of monitoring of SDSR 2015 implementation.

20. We were surprised to learn that no single Minister has responsibility for the Conflict, Stability and Security Fund (see paragraph 109). In May 2016, we launched an inquiry examining the CSSF. The inquiry's terms of reference are available on the Joint Committee on the National Security Strategy website. We welcome written submissions addressing the operation of the CSSF. (Paragraph 88)

The Government welcomes the Committee's inquiry into the Conflict, Security and Stability Fund (CSSF), through which we will outline in detail both the operation and governance of the Fund. As the former Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster set out in his letter to the Chair of the Committee (24 June 2016), ministerial oversight of the CSSF is primarily provided by the National Security Council (NSC). Each year in the Spring, the NSC reviews the regional and thematic strategies underpinning the Fund, and in the Autumn, the NSC agrees the annual allocations for the Fund in line with these strategies. Each NSC meeting is preceded by discussion among the Permanent Secretaries of NSC Departments, as the Accounting Officers for the Departments spending money as part of the CSSF. Departments separately provide assurance to their Ministers at regular points throughout the year on the CSSF interventions which they lead. The Government will be providing further written evidence for the JCNSS inquiry into the CSSF in response to the areas of interest the Committee has highlighted in their call for submissions.

21. We expected the NSS & SDSR 2015 to address what action would be required in the short term following a vote for the UK to leave the European Union. The failure to outline a plan to address that contingency indicated the prioritisation of political interests above national security. If the National Security Strategy is to be credible, it must prioritise the maintenance of national security above political expediency. Planning for a new security review, starting with a detailed analysis of the changed security environment, should begin immediately. (Paragraph 92)

22. The European Union is facing significant security challenges, such as large-scale migration and an emerging domestic terrorist threat. These challenges also have implications for the UK, regardless of whether it is a member of the European Union. A new NSS & SDSR must address how the UK will engage with these issues from outside the EU. (Paragraph 93)

The decision to leave the European Union carries significant implications for the UK. There will be national security policy choices as negotiations proceed. There will also be new opportunities. We judge that national security issues will, however, be less directly affected than many other areas of government policy by leaving the EU, since national security is currently the responsibility of individual member states. We do not therefore agree that a new security review is needed. SDSR 2015 is based on a full analysis of the national security challenges facing the UK; and had a clear national security vision, underpinned by three enduring national security objectives. These objectives and challenges remain valid. Of the 89 commitments in SDSR 2015, only one (“champion an EU-India Free Trade Agreement”) is directly impacted by the decision to leave the EU.

There will of course be implications over time for national security. We will therefore ensure that we have the versatility and means to respond to new risks and threats to our security, as well as to opportunities as they arise. We will set out in our annual reports to Parliament where we judge that a significant change of approach is needed because of the UK’s decision to leave the EU, or as a result of other significant changes to our national security environment.

SDSR 2015 identified large-scale migration and an emerging domestic terrorist threat among the significant national security issues which the UK faces. We will continue to work with NATO, the EU and our allies including EU member states to address the collective challenges we face.

Decision-making on national security

23. Previous and ongoing efforts to mitigate risks to UK national security were considered as a factor alongside likelihood and impact in the production of the National Security Risk Assessment 2015. We welcome the adoption of this recommendation by our predecessor Committee in the 2010–15 Parliament. (Paragraph 100)

The Government thanks the Committee for their recognition of this enhancement to the NSRA process. We will continue to seek continuous improvement to the NSRA methodology when appropriate.

24. The National Security Risk Assessment 2015 may have oversimplified the security risks facing the UK by presenting aggregated risks. We are, however, somewhat reassured by the existence of a finer-grained analysis that is classified but available to the Government when prioritising policy and resources. We could achieve certainty on this point if the Government were to share this analysis with us on a confidential basis. (Paragraph 104)

The NSRA includes both fine grained analysis of risks and aggregated risk information to support strategic decision making. The Cabinet Office provided confidential briefings about the 2015 NSRA for the Committee in March 2015 and May 2016. In preparation for the next assessment, the Government will work with the Committee to determine whether additional action can be taken to allow for greater sharing of information in support of the Committee's objectives.

25. The NSRA must be used as an aid to, not a substitute for, good judgment. This is especially important given that the model relies on an assessment of the likelihood and impact of risks to the UK, for which high-quality data are not always available. We therefore welcome the input from other government assessments and external experts into the risk assessment, categorisation and prioritisation processes. (Paragraph 105)

The Government welcomes the positive response of the Committee to input from other government assessments and external experts into the NSRA.

26. The establishment of a risk assessment with a five-to-20-year timeframe is not a substitute for continual horizon-scanning. (Paragraph 106)

A range of horizon scanning activities take place across Government. The Cabinet Office's Civil Contingencies Secretariat, for example, leads quarterly cross-government short-term horizon scanning for civil risks that may materialise within six months, and coordinates cross-government preparations and mitigation work for potentially serious risks identified. The Government regularly scans for international issues that have the potential to escalate into crises in the short to medium term, and many Government Departments carry out frequent short term horizon scanning to identify emerging issues in their areas of interest. Longer term horizon scanning includes the Government Office for Science's Foresight programme and the MOD-led Global Strategic Trends work.

27. We commend Prime Minister David Cameron's investment in the NSC structures set up by the then Coalition Government in 2010 and developed further under the current Government. However, the effectiveness of those structures depends on the Prime Minister's personal commitment, leaving them vulnerable to decline under his successors should they choose not to invest similar energy in driving cross-government collaboration on national security. *The Government should consider creating a ministerial post within the Cabinet Office with oversight of national security. This would strengthen the leadership on national security at the centre of government, a function which is currently fulfilled by the Prime Minister.* (Paragraph 109)

The Prime Minister has confirmed that the NSC will remain the key forum for overseeing and taking collective decisions on national security and foreign policy issues. She will continue to chair it. Relevant sub-committees will continue to focus on key national

security issues. The Prime Minister has appointed the Home Secretary as the new Chair of the NSC SDR sub-committee, enhancing the cross-government approach to implementation by ensuring that it is overseen by a senior Cabinet Minister.

28. The NSC secretariat would benefit from a greater capacity to undertake horizon-scanning proactively and to conduct a strategic, whole-of-government assessment of UK national security on an ongoing basis, as a complement to the individual viewpoints of Departments. The benefits of actively generating institutional knowledge within the secretariat have been muted by excessive staff rotation. *The Cabinet Office should track the turnover of staff in the NSC secretariat to ensure an appropriate mix of policy expertise, experience, fresh thinking and institutional memory.* (Paragraph 112)

The National Security Secretariat benefits from close cooperation with the Joint Intelligence Organisation's Assessments Staff and is able to access horizon-scanning expertise across the Cabinet Office and more widely across government.

Staff in the National Security Secretariat are drawn from a mixture of long-term Cabinet Office employees and staff loaned from other Government Departments. This combination optimises the benefits of a wider pool of knowledge and experience, with the stability and corporate knowledge necessary for institutional memory and continuous improvement. The National Security Adviser and his senior team ensure that there are robust processes in place to ensure the National Security Secretariat maintains the right mix of expertise and experience.

29. We welcome the establishment of the Implementation Sub-committee of the National Security Council, which introduced ministerial responsibility for overseeing the implementation of the NSS & SDR 2015. We will monitor the effects of this development on the Government's implementation of the 89 commitments set out in the NSS & SDR 2015. *The Cabinet Office should publish the 89 commitments in the NSS & SDR 2015 on its website and detail progress on each of them in the form of an online tracker.* (Paragraph 114)

As former Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, the Rt Hon Oliver Letwin MP, noted to the Committee in oral evidence on 23 May 2016, the establishment of the SDR Implementation sub-committee chaired by a senior Cabinet Minister is a significant step in ensuring the delivery of the commitments in SDR 2015. Detailed monitoring of progress against the commitments is undertaken within the National Security Secretariat on behalf of the NSC and the sub-committee. This ensures we have a clear understanding of progress, and where further work is required. Progress against the commitments will be published in the Government's annual report on implementation of SDR 2015 before the end of 2016. Given the nature of the commitments and timescales involved, it would not be practical to track each in real time on a website.