

House of Commons  
Defence Committee

**DEFENCE AND SECURITY IN  
THE UK:  
GOVERNMENT RESPONSE**

Seventh Special Report of Session  
2001–2002

*Report and Appendix*

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## 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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## SEVENTH SPECIAL REPORT

The Defence Committee has agreed to the following Special Report:

### DEFENCE AND SECURITY IN THE UK

The Committee published its Sixth Report of this Session, on Defence and Security in the UK (HC 518) on 24 July 2002. The Government's response to this report was received on 9 October 2002 and is published as an Appendix to this Special Report.

#### APPENDIX

#### GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO THE DEFENCE SELECT COMMITTEE'S REPORT ON DEFENCE AND SECURITY IN THE UK

1. This memorandum constitutes the Government's response to the Defence Select Committee's report *Defence and Security in the UK* (Sixth report of session 2001–02, HC 518-I published on 24 July 2002). The Government welcomes the Report as an important contribution to the continuing effort to strengthen the UK's defence and security against the terrorist threat.

2. As the Defence Committee noted, the terrorist attack of September 11 2001 changed our appreciation of the vulnerability of UK interests to international terrorism, as well as our understanding of the nature of the terrorist threat—both the sophistication of the planning and the willingness of terrorists to inflict mass civilian casualties. In the aftermath of the attacks, the UK Government instigated a comprehensive review of the UK's preparedness and contingency plans.

3. Prior to the attacks on the United States, the UK Government had already begun to review and improve contingency planning in the UK in response to the disruptive challenges of the kind seen in the fuel protests, the floods of the winter of 2000 and the outbreak of foot and mouth disease. These experiences led to the formation of the Civil Contingencies Secretariat within the Cabinet Office to draw together and co-ordinate the different strands of Government activity that come into play in handling such difficult challenges.

4. Within Government, the Home Secretary has lead responsibility for counter-terrorist policy and maintains a clear oversight of the issues and measures being taken to strengthen the UK's ability to respond to the terrorist threat. The Home Office's national counter-terrorist contingency plans are tried and tested and designed to respond to a wide range of terrorist threats.

5. The Government's effort to tackle domestic terrorism has not in any way decreased, but following 11 September 2001, the Government has been rethinking security across the board to identify vulnerabilities and tighten existing security measures to make the United Kingdom even safer from terrorist attack.

6. Further information on this subject is set out in *The United Kingdom and the Campaign against International Terrorism—a Progress Report* which the Government placed in the House of Commons library on 9 September 2002. This report details the progress made on both a national and international level since September 11 and sets out the Government's priorities for further work.

## The Armed Forces and Home Defence

**7. We are concerned that as time passes there is an increasing risk of complacency in respect of the threat of terrorism. We have found evidence of this during our enquiry. (Paragraph 15)**

The Government recognises the risk of complacency and the vital importance of remaining vigilant. We continue to strive to adapt and improve the strong security measures already in place so that they meet the new challenges we now face. Measures already taken range from physical protection enhancements through to better co-ordinated mutual aid arrangements and constant monitoring of the terrorist threat in the UK. Testing our plans through exercises also plays a significant part in strengthening our capabilities. A rolling programme of work is being carried forward under the supervision of the Home Secretary. This is addressing issues according to their priority and will remain in place for the foreseeable future.

**8. Over the years since the end of the Cold War, there has been a significant shift in the Government's interpretation of how the Armed Forces should discharge their fundamental responsibilities for the defence of the realm. This has occurred in response to the changing nature of the military threat to the UK and to developments in the understanding of where the UK's Armed Forces could most effectively make a contribution. (Paragraph 25)**

**11 September may have pointed to the need for enhancing existing provision in certain areas, but it has not led to any fundamental re-evaluation of the principles underpinning the Strategic Defence Review or the roles and responsibilities which the SDR gave the Armed Forces. (Paragraph 27)**

The Committee is correct in its assessment of the change in the role of the Armed Forces. The role changed with the disappearance of the threat from the Soviet Union and Warsaw Pact. Since then the Armed Forces have responded to the increased potential for smaller regional conflicts within Europe and beyond and have consequently evolved a stronger capability to undertake operations abroad.

The Committee recognises (paragraph 18) that this evolution was driven in part by the recognition of asymmetric threats. There was, therefore, no need for a fundamental re-evaluation of the principles underpinning the SDR. The change which occurred as a result of 11 September was, however, fully recognised by the Government as a whole. The White Paper published on 18 July 2002, *The Strategic Defence Review: A New Chapter*, outlined the results of the review of MOD capabilities following those events. It states at paragraph 4 that "...whereas the SDR saw these potential asymmetric threats as one of a range of tactics that an adversary might use, the attacks on the US on 11 September have shown that such action has the potential for strategic effect. It is this development that has prompted the work we are now undertaking." (Paragraph 18)

The SDR New Chapter will lead to enhancements to the capabilities of the Armed Forces, including an enhanced role for the Reserves in Home Defence and Security. The Committee rightly draws attention to the information in paragraph 24 of the MOD Memorandum (January 2002): "whatever its source, terrorist activity in the UK is criminal. The operational lead rests, in most cases, with the police." And as the same Memorandum points out "Developing and implementing methods of preventing terrorism in the UK, including threat assessments, and responding to terrorist incidents in the UK while they are under way, rests on the activities of a wide range of agencies and Departments. Cabinet Office groups co-ordinate both the *prevention* of terrorism and the *response* to an incident."

The Armed Forces consequently make a full and effective contribution to an integrated response, designed to ensure the defence and security of the UK. Their primary contribution, however, is their ability to take pre-emptive action abroad against the threat from international terrorism.

#### Air Defence

**9. Together the requirements to establish hostile intent and to assess whether the action would be proportionate in terms of its likely consequences place a high hurdle in the way of any decision to shoot down a 'rogue' civilian aircraft. We support this and believe that the MOD's approach to this very difficult issue has been the right one. (Paragraph 44)**

**We firmly believe that a decision of this magnitude should not be delegated to officials, whether civilian or military, and that any decision to shoot down a suspected rogue civilian aircraft must be taken by Ministers. (Paragraph 45)**

The Government welcomes the Committee's endorsement of its general approach to this difficult issue. As the Committee's Report makes clear, a robust mechanism does exist to respond to the threat from renegade civil aircraft. We will continue to ensure that this mechanism remains both safe and effective in every eventuality.

#### Response Time

**10. We believe that the MOD should continue to look for suitable air bases close to London at which Quick Reaction Alert (QRA) aircraft might be stationed, bearing in mind that the full panoply of support and protection provided by the aircrafts' current bases would not be necessary for this deployment. (Paragraph 47)**

The results of the site assessments were published at paragraph 87 of the SDR: A New Chapter. Enhancements will be made to airfields across the UK (RAF Marham in Norfolk, RAF St Mawgan in Cornwall) and RNAS Yeovilton in Somerset) to support QRA aircraft. Together with the use of existing QRA airfields, the Government believes that this will give us greater flexibility and fuller coverage in our response arrangements.

Clearly, hangars and runways must be of the right size and length and freely available to ensure a rapid response. As was explained in evidence to the Committee, these conditions led us to rule out civil airports close to London, even as temporary locations for QRA aircraft. Whilst aircraft could, of course, use other airfields in an emergency, we believe that it would be more prudent in our planning to prepare to provide QRA aircraft with the support they will need to do their job safely and effectively. We also have a responsibility to ensure that munitions are effective at short notice whilst representing no danger to the public.

**11. We do not believe that the use of ground based missiles against civilian aircraft can be justified. Neither do we believe that they can be an effective deterrent. (Paragraph 51)**

The Government welcomes this endorsement of its assessment. We will keep open the possibility of deploying these assets should circumstances arise which do justify their deployment. Any deployment of ground-based air defence systems would be as an integrated part of the overall air defence system.

### Effects on Air Crew

**12. We recommend that the MOD and the RAF provide specific additional psychological advice and training for interceptor aircrew of the QRA aircraft which may be called upon to respond to a rogue civilian aircraft incident. (Paragraph 51)**

Relevant training and advice is being provided to these aircrew and the squadrons involved will continue to participate in the development of all aspects of the operation.

### NATINADS

**13. We recommend that the Government initiate within NATO an examination of how NATO's integrated air defence system should be restructured to provide optimal air defence capability against new and emerging threats including those from 'rogue' civilian aircraft. (Paragraph 55)**

An examination of NATO's role in the response to the threat from international terrorism, including its role in home defence, forms an important part of NATO's wider agenda for the Prague Summit in November 2002. The UK Government will, as always, play a full and active part in developing that agenda.

### Key Point Defence

**14. We look forward to the Government's consideration of the Armed Forces' role in the protection of key sites in the SDR New Chapter. (Paragraph 61)**

Arrangements are clear cut and precise. The list of economic and military key points has been reviewed to ensure that it remains relevant and comprehensive, and that the security of the key sites can be provided by nominated organisations.

The Government shares the Committee's caution about extending the role of the Armed Forces beyond those locations for which they are clearly responsible or have a direct interest. Nonetheless, should a particular emergency make it impossible for other organisations to ensure security at 'their' key points, the police can request support from the Armed Forces. With this in mind, access control is one of the possible functions for the Reserves outlined in the MOD Discussion Document, 'The Role of the Reserves in Home Defence and Security', published on 12 June.

In view of the effectiveness of the arrangements already in place, we would not see this as the most likely or common role for the regular or reserve Armed Forces to be given during an emergency. But we do recognise the need to remain flexible and responsive to any situation.

### Military Sites

**15. We welcome the prompt action of the MOD to increase the level of protection to our Armed Forces and those of the United States stationed in the UK. (Paragraph 63)**

The Government welcomes the Committee's recognition of the prompt and effective action taken by The Ministry of Defence and Ministry of Defence Police. Their action was taken as part of a wider response by police forces across the country, designed to enhance the protection of the population as a whole.

### Ministry of Defence Police

**16. In general we have a high opinion of the professionalism of the Ministry of Defence Police, MDP, but we would be concerned to see them develop a role as an armed counter-terrorist police force without appropriate safeguards in terms of governance and public accountability. (Paragraph 68)**

The powers of the MDP under the Anti-Terrorism Crime and Security Act were granted to bring them in to line with the powers available to other police forces in the event of terrorist actions. The contribution they made to the boarding of the M V NISHA was the result of the mutual aid arrangements that exist between all police forces in UK. They will continue to make a full contribution to the response to the threat from terrorists in the UK but there are no plans to develop them as an armed counter-terrorist police force. The MDP will continue to be accountable through existing command chains to the Secretary of State for Defence and consequently, to Parliament.

**17. We recommend that the MOD publishes the conclusions of Stage 2 of the Quinquennial Review of the, MDP as they relate to the proposed reserve capability and governance and accountability issues. (Paragraph 69)**

The Government welcomes this recommendation. The work on establishing the MDP's future surge capacity requirement is still in progress. The Ministry of Defence should be in a position to be able to advise the Committee of the outcome before the Christmas parliamentary recess.

### Royal Navy Vessels

**18. We accept that security measures at naval bases and military ports should be based on threat assessment and intelligence and should be designed to interfere as little as possible with legitimate civilian activity consistent with maintaining appropriate levels of security. This balance should be kept under review. We believe that the threat of asymmetric terrorist attack on Royal Navy ships is a real one and we recommend that the MOD take urgent steps to ensure that any capability gaps in their defences against known threats are closed. (Paragraph 74)**

The Government shares the Committee's overall assessment. The security of Royal Navy ships is a high priority and every effort is made to close gaps in their defence against known and emerging threats. The balance between civilian activity and military security is one we believe we have maintained effectively. In its evidence to the Committee on 6 March (Ev 98), the MOD emphasised the potential risk to the public of foolhardy attempts to breach security measures. The Government would like to take this opportunity to reiterate this point.

### Counter-terrorism

**19. We have not examined in detail the case for a National Counter-Terrorism Service, but we do believe that it merits further consideration. The Anti-Terrorist National Co-ordinator should not have to operate by invitation. It is odd that the national co-ordination of anti-terrorist matters is achieved through a Committee of ACPO. We do not criticise the present arrangements which seem to work well, but neither do we believe that they are incapable of improvements. (Paragraph 81)**

The Government agrees that the present counter-terrorist arrangements work well but there must be a continual search for improvement. Effective co-ordination is central to the defence and security of the UK against the threat from international terrorism. The Government will not hesitate to introduce any necessary improvements.

The effectiveness of these arrangements rests on the work of police forces across the country, and the expertise they have all built up. There is a clear role for the Anti-Terrorist National Co-ordinator, and as the Head of the Metropolitan Police Anti-Terrorist Branch made clear in his evidence, the mechanism of an invitation from a Chief Constable before the National Co-ordinator becomes involved in an incident is not a practical constraint. Should a problem arise the question can be reviewed very rapidly by the Government, in consultation with ACPO, ACPO(S) and the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI).

The Government will continue to look to ACPO for the national co-ordination of police anti-terrorist planning, specifically by ACPO(TAM). The Government's UK-wide mechanism for co-ordinating anti-terrorist matters was outlined in the Joint Memorandum by the Home Office, Ministry of Defence and the Cabinet Office (Ev 258 to 260), and by Mr Denham, Mr Ingram and Mr Leslie in their evidence of 22 May. The relationship between the police and Government involvement is also described in this evidence.

### **Intelligence**

**20. We recommend that the Government reviews the arrangements for the transmission of intelligence-based information to individuals with key responsibilities in local government and the private sector. We are not satisfied that the current system is adequate. (Paragraph 92)**

The arrangements for transmitting intelligence are kept under constant review, including the provision of advice on security to local government and the private sector. Particular attention has been paid to the subject since the events of 11 September. Security advice is based on generic threats, which are constantly being reviewed and updated. The advice is designed to enhance the security and resilience of locations and systems against a possible attack. New mechanisms have been put in place since 11 September to provide additional advice, based on generic threats, to a wider range of private sector operators.

Intelligence of a specific threat against a particular location requires rapid, and appropriate, handling. Methods exist to ensure that this intelligence is disseminated to the police and supporting organisations as soon as possible to ensure that the best use is made of the time available to take preventive and ameliorative actions. These methods take account of the need to ensure that sources and intelligence collection methods are properly protected.

It is essential to classify some documents relating to the response to the terrorist threat to ensure that they are properly handled and do not, consequently, fall into the hands of terrorists and undermine the response. These documents are not therefore passed to officials who are not security cleared, or to locations that are not capable of handling security material. We note from evidence to the Committee statements that there is some resistance to security clearance in local government. But we also note the Committee's understandable interest in effective security arrangements, which the Government shares. Security clearance forms an integral part of these arrangements. It is therefore inevitable that individuals who are not security cleared will not be given access to all documents. Every effort will, however, be made to ensure that the key messages about the level of threat, as opposed to the detail of the intelligence, are passed on to those who need to know. This can often be achieved in the absence of formal clearances.

### **Aviation Security**

**21. We have not examined aviation security outside the UK, but clearly, given the nature of the aviation industry, the security not just of UK airlines but of all air traffic coming into the UK will depend significantly on the robustness of the international security regime. (Paragraph 100)**

The Government agrees with this statement, which is why the UK plays an active role in the various international bodies that set standards for aviation security including the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) and the European Civil Aviation Conference. We have also been active in the development of EU regulations for aviation security. Since 11 September 2001 a considerable amount of work has been done to drive up international standards. Particularly noteworthy is the start in October 2002 of ICAO audits of aviation security to monitor implementation of standards by member states.

Because of the complexity of the industry the principle of 'host state responsibility' has been long established in respect of the implementation of security measures. This means that the state of departure of flights is responsible for ensuring compliance with international standards. The UK can and does set requirements for UK operators overseas, but has no power as regards overseas operators flying to the UK.

**22. We welcome the improved performance in baggage screening. However, as the fact that there was room for such improvement illustrates, X-ray screening cannot be guaranteed to be 100 per cent effective. And that in turn reinforces the need to ensure that each of the different elements which contribute to the overall security of airports is as robust as possible. (Paragraph 106)**

The Government agrees that there is always room for improvement in any system, be it manual or technology based, or a combination. This is why we have developed a programme based on a combination of measures and processes that support one another, and that use the best available technological support. We are never complacent about the security programme and are always looking at ways to improve it. We also invest in research and development, and share in other states' work, to ensure the best available technological support. It is important to remember, however, that a balance must be maintained to ensure both that the inconvenience to the travelling public and to trade is minimised, and that all elements of airport security are as robust as possible. The introduction of new technology allows improvements to be made whilst maintaining the efficient and safe flow of passengers and freight. It is a continuous process of improvement.

**23. Airport security involves the contributions of many different agencies. We welcome the Government's determination to improve co-ordination between them and to create a more strategic approach. We look to them to report progress on this in their reply to our report. (Paragraph 112)**

We welcome the Committee's support for our proposals to improve co-ordination and adopt a more strategic approach. The Home Secretary and the Secretary of State for Transport have commissioned an urgent study on airport security from Sir John Wheeler JP, DL. Sir John's report was received on 13 September and is now being considered by the Government.

### **Port Security**

**24. The catastrophic scale of the potential consequences of a terrorist attack [using containers] requires us fundamentally to re-examine our security measures. And to do so promptly. We were concerned, for example, by the apparent lack of real urgency in the work on improving CBRN detection for containers. (Paragraph 116)**

The Committee is aware of the complexity of this issue and the need to ensure that security requirements do not hinder trade and business. Careful consideration has therefore been given to establishing the right way of approaching this issue.

Scanning shipping containers is only one option and a number of actions have been taken since 11 September 2001, to improve the deterrence and detection of a possible CBRN attack. This includes international initiatives to improve generally the security of containers in transit and the identification of those that are considered suspicious.

A trial at selected ports to assess the feasibility of routinely scanning port traffic for the illicit movement of the radioactive and nuclear material that could be used by terrorists, will be completed in October. A decision will then be made on the value and effectiveness of carrying out such scanning on a regular basis. This work has been taken forward as quickly as it reasonably could be and good progress has been made in considering the issues and logistics involved.

As the Select Committee acknowledges, the success and effectiveness of much of this work relies on good intelligence and targeting.

### Networks and Systems

**25. We are not persuaded that the Government has understood the vulnerabilities of an interdependent highly connected, technically dependent yet open society or has incorporated that understanding into its policy and planning. (Paragraph 119)**

The Government shares the Committee's view on the increasing vulnerability of modern society. The Government's systems reflect its understanding of the need to counter asymmetric threats. The Prime Minister has approved the creation of a new Ministerial Group on Consequence Management and Resilience (DOP(IT)R) to support the his Committee on International Terrorism. It keeps the Government's policy for managing the consequences of major terrorist or other disruptive incidents in the United Kingdom under review. This Group represents a wide range of Departments and Agencies, who, in turn engage with the industries and economic sectors for which they are responsible.

**26. We agree with the CCS that there is much work to be done to identify and protect the vulnerabilities of networks and systems and we expect to be kept abreast of progress. (Paragraph 123)**

In particular, and as the Committee's Report makes clear, work has been under way since 1999, to protect critical networks from electronic attacks. The particular threat of electronic attack falls, as the Committee recognised, to the National Infrastructure Security Co-ordination Centre (NISCC).

NISCC is, in effect, a coalition of a number of Government departments and agencies. Representatives of the CCS and the Office of the E-Envoy sit on the NISCC management board to ensure that the process of enhancing resilience in the electronic CNI does not take place in isolation from the broader programme of protecting UK plc from all kinds of threats. NISCC has a clear remit to focus on protecting the truly critical information components of the CNI and does not have the resources to protect business systems generally nor the private computer user, except to the extent that they are themselves dependent on component parts of the critical national infrastructure. Information sharing and reporting about the threat and vulnerabilities is important within the CNI, but NISCC's efforts to promote this also extend out to a wider range of public and private fora, both international and national. One of NISCC's principal functions is to work in partnership with CNI organisations, both in the private and public sector, in order to help protect them from electronic attack. NISCC's relationship with CNI organisations is not regulatory but is based on mutually productive and long lasting partnerships.

Until recently, costs fell directly on the individual component parts of the NISCC coalition. The Home Office now has a small separate budget (currently £2 million) which will be

used to help NISCC expand its capability to counter the threat of electronic attack. Areas which will be particularly strengthened are NISCC's capacity to issue alerts, assess intelligence, carry out analyses of key systems, and make assessments of vulnerabilities and actual attacks. It will also work with the Central Sponsor for Information Assurance in order to help develop a national information strategy.

### **Nuclear Installations**

**27. We invite the Board of POST to consider the proposal for an investigation into the possible consequences of a terrorist attack on a nuclear installation. We believe that this investigation should examine the physical robustness of installations against such attacks as well as the potential consequences of an attack in terms of the amounts of radioactive material liable to be released and its effects. (Paragraph 131)**

It is for POST to take its own view on whether to undertake any investigation and the Government would co-operate to the full extent possible. However, much of the information that POST would require to undertake the proposed investigation into the physical robustness of installations against attack is not in the public domain. The Director of Civil Nuclear Security does not permit the disclosure of information relating to the physical structures of installations that is potentially of use of terrorists.

The Government has considered the vulnerabilities of nuclear installations and the consequences of a terrorist attack. It has initiated a major programme of activities to reduce the vulnerabilities and strengthen the arrangements for consequence management.

### **Civil Contingencies Secretariat**

**28. It is a matter of regret that the CCS was not able to respond more positively and energetically to the events of 11 September. Instead of using its unique position at the heart of Government to lead a strategic response it seems to have become bogged down in the details of the plans of individual departments and the relationships between them. Instead of being the solution to the habitual 'departmentalism' of Whitehall, it has become a casualty of it. (Paragraph 153)**

The Government is disappointed that the Committee has failed to recognise the energy and exceptionally hard work that the CCS put in after 11 September, in co-operation with departments, to deliver the Government's high-level objective of making the country better prepared to manage the consequences of catastrophic incidents.

The CCS is a Cabinet Office Secretariat and its function is to support and co-ordinate the collective effort of Ministers and their Departments to ensure that the necessary plans and capabilities are in place should such incidents take place. The collective effort co-ordinated by the CCS over the past year has improved our state of readiness in numerous ways. For example:

- a dedicated crisis co-ordination centre has been created so that there can be a seamless transition under Home Secretary chairmanship from the preventative phase of a potential terrorist threat to the management of the consequences of an actual event;
- alongside the existing machinery focused on foreign and terrorist threats, CCS is now working systematically with departments to assess the implications on potential domestic disruptive challenges so that Ministers are enabled to consider preventative or ameliorative measures before crises develop;

- new command and control arrangements have been introduced for London, with a 'diamond' level police control, and government co-ordination agreed with the Mayor;
- the procurement process has been launched to ensure full compatibility between the communication systems of the emergency services.

Under the guidance of Sir David Omand, recently appointed to the post of Security and Intelligence Co-ordinator, the CCS is improving its ability to develop the UK's resilience to disruptive challenge through working with others on anticipation, preparation, prevention and resolution. The CCS is now organised around three core functions: assessing potential challenges, managing the domestic impact of crises, and giving assurance that departmental plans will improve the country's overall capability to prepare for, withstand and recover from disasters. This effort will, in the future, be driven and overseen by the new Ministerial Group on Resilience and Consequence Management (DOP(IT)(R)).

The Civil Contingencies Secretariat (CCS) will be placing additional emphasis on involving local authority emergency planners and local authorities in order to ensure that the UK's contingency planning is as robust as possible. The Secretariat will work to build successful and mutually beneficial relationships with local authorities.

### **Emergency Planning Review**

**29. Ten months have now passed since the terrible attacks of 11 September and nearly a year since the publication of the emergency planning review document. We believe that the Government has had time enough to address the issues raised by the review. It should now as a matter of urgency publish its proposals for civil contingencies legislation, with the explicit aim of introducing that legislation in the 2002–03 parliamentary session. (Paragraph 158)**

The Government shares the Committee's regret that the timetable of the Emergency Planning Review was delayed by the need to respond immediately and effectively to the events of 11 September. At the same time, the Committee's Report, and much of the evidence received by the Committee, highlights the many complex issues involved in the reform of contingency planning and response arrangements. It also makes clear the need to involve all the many interest groups involved in developing a clear understanding of the issues and the proposals for their effective resolution. That is the basis of the work now underway to prepare the ground for new legislation in this area.

It is not the practice of any Government to make a firm commitment to the introduction of any individual piece of legislation in a particular session prior to the Queen's Speech for that session. The Government's position remains that it will introduce new legislation as soon as Parliamentary time allows.

### **Role of Central Government**

**30. We believe that there should be national performance targets for local authorities' and other agencies' emergency plans. We accept that there may be difficulties in imposing such targets in the absence of a statutory duty to prepare emergency plans. We recommend that once that duty is in place targets should be imposed and performance against them monitored. In the meantime we encourage local authorities and others to introduce such targets on a voluntary basis. (Paragraph 161)**

The Government is grateful for this advice, and recognises that it is—in broad terms—consistent with good management practice. We would also encourage local authorities to note the advice. The incorporation of this mechanism into the statutory reform of civil emergency planning mechanisms will be given careful consideration.

**31. We believe that consideration should be given to the alternative proposition that the Government's role in all emergencies which make a call on central government (including the more frequent and localised emergencies) should be co-ordinated by the central co-ordinating machinery which would have to respond to a major emergency. This would be for two principal reasons. Firstly, as we have already discussed, the lack of clarity amongst non-central government agencies as to which department is responsible for what, is one of their major complaints. They believe that they need a single central co-ordinating body; in other words a one-stop shop. Secondly the experience gained by the officials in such a body from dealing with smaller scale emergencies would be of huge help to them if they ever had to deal with a massive disaster caused by a terrorist attack. (Paragraph 173)**

On 24 July, the Home Secretary wrote to the Chairman of the Committee. He set out the outcome of recent work on lead government departments.

'Since 11 September, the main focus of the CCC has been to check and confirm the country's preparedness for an exceptionally serious or widespread disaster that could lead to massive devastation and widespread casualties and fatalities.

But in "normal" times, most emergencies are handled at the local level by the emergency services and by the appropriate local authority or authorities with no direct involvement by central government.

Where central government does become involved (because the incident is of such a scale or complexity as to require central co-ordination or support), it is essential that it has been established in advance which department is in the lead.

All government departments have a responsibility to plan, prepare, train and exercise for handling incidents and emergencies that might occur within their field of responsibility. They will take on the leading role on behalf of central government in managing the initial response to a crisis, mitigating its immediate effects and organising the development of a recovery plan.

The CCC has had an up-to-date list of pre-nominated leads produced in order to reflect the devolution settlement; the changes to the machinery of government made by the Prime Minister since the general election; and incidents which were not covered in the earlier *Dealing with Disaster* guidance document.

I have placed a copy of this list in the library of the House explaining the roles of lead government departments and the Civil Contingencies Secretariat. This information is also available on the Government web site [www.ukresilience.info](http://www.ukresilience.info).'

The paper deposited in the library explains the role of the CCS as follows.

'The Civil Contingencies Secretariat was not set up, and nor is it resourced or designed, to manage all crises. The CCS's role, under the leadership of the CCC, is to provide the central focus for the cross-departmental and cross-agency commitment, co-ordination and co-operation necessary if the UK is to deal effectively with disruptive challenges and crises. This focus goes beyond first response and consequence management and applies to our systems for identifying new challenges, for assessing risks, for anticipating, planning, preparing and exercising for crises, for building up our

resilience to them, and for systematically applying the lessons learned from particular incidents.

In the event of an emergency of a scale, or of a kind notified by the lead government as requiring central involvement, CCS will engage in a way designed to enable the department's Ministers and senior officials to concentrate on strategic decisions. Key objectives will be smooth working between organisations and seamless transition to central co-ordination if required. Working very closely with the department concerned, the CCS will:

- (i) provide an assessment of immediate needs, and support their provision;
- (ii) establish possible scenarios up to worst case and plan for scaling-up, logistical management and exit;
- (iii) ensure that the centre and other interested departments are kept informed and are prepared to engage;
- (iv) help establish structures, rhythms, routines and data flows for managing the response—in particular facilitating augmentation of the department's resources and public information systems;
- (v) connect the department with agencies able to provide specialist advice and information;
- (vi) decide whether and when to approach the Chairman to convene a meeting of CCC, thereafter providing ongoing support from the centre.

In all its work, the CCS starts from the premise that the ability of central government to manage effectively our national capacity and capability to deal with disruptive challenges is a vital component of enhancing the country's resilience. The Secretariat therefore will seek to work in close partnership with lead departments, helping them to:

- (vii) enable and protect their own decision takers;
- (viii) develop their own early warning systems;
- (ix) prepare plans against various eventualities and make sure those plans are properly integrated with those of other departments and agencies;
- (x) identify the training and exercises needed to test the plans and enable continuous improvements;
- (xi) build up the necessary management and professional expertise to maintain and activate the plans and to know where to turn for reinforcement and augmentation;
- (xii) learn, and share their learning, with other departments

The Government stands by the division of labour between departments and the centre, but it recognises that the CCS should do more to explain its role to non-central government agencies. It also shares the Committee's view that CCS staff would benefit from training and exercise programmes that exposed them to the handling of local emergencies and brings them into closer contact with colleagues working on emergency planning and management at the local level. This will be taken into account in planning the cross-Government exercise and training programme.

**32. The proposed Civil Contingencies Bill will place a statutory duty on local authorities and other local agencies to have in place civil contingency plans and will require those agencies to co-operate in the preparation of the plans. Central government should be prepared to accept a similar responsibility. To do so will require not only central co-ordination but also central enforcement. (Paragraph 176)**

As yet the Government has made no decisions on the content of a Bill. However, the work it has set in hand to prepare the ground for a Bill includes determining the relative roles and responsibilities of government at the local, regional and central levels. Setting the legislative position aside, the Government accepts that civil protection is one of its

fundamental responsibilities and that is why it gives such high priority to being prepared to deal with disaster whatever the cause—natural, accidental or terrorist.

**33. We believe that the CCS should be renamed the Emergency Planning Agency (or Centre); it should be given a clear role as the public face of the Government's response to emergencies; it should be a one-stop shop for government assistance and support to local agencies in the event of an emergency; and it should take the lead in co-ordinating central government's response to massive and cross-departmental emergencies. It should have adequate resources and authority to carry out its terms of reference. (Paragraph 181)**

The co-ordination of the Government's response to major, cross-cutting civil emergencies is led by the Civil Contingencies Committee, chaired by the Home Secretary, and supported by the CCS. It has the authority of the Prime Minister and includes every department involved in the management of a major crisis. The Committee has access to all the resources and authority necessary to resolve a crisis. Its purpose is long established and well recognised as the focus of Government's civil emergency management.

Local agencies have strong links with their sponsoring Government departments, which are familiar with their business and through which they can request help quickly. In a major emergency, departments can also use the Civil Contingencies Committee to seek resources and support.

These arrangements have worked well for many years, and they have been reviewed and updated in the light of the events of September 11. The CCS's internal structure and the committees that it supports have been simplified and streamlined. The Government is not complacent and will continue to keep all these arrangements under review. However, it sees no purpose in changing the Secretariat's title.

**34. We believe that such an organisation will require strong and dedicated political leadership. We believe that leadership should be provided by a Cabinet Minister. We are not convinced that the Home Secretary, given his many other responsibilities, is best placed to deliver it. (Paragraph 182)**

The Government does not accept this recommendation. The Home Secretary has responsibility for the security of the citizens of the UK and chairs the Civil Contingencies Committee. He has the collective support of Ministers from all Departments.

**35. We welcome Sir David Omand's appointment and the bringing together of intelligence and consequence management which it implies. (Paragraph 183)**

**36. We believe that Sir David's new post will give him a unique opportunity to reinvigorate the central government machinery for co-ordinating and directing national security and consequence management functions. (Paragraph 184)**

The Government notes the welcome given to the appointment and role of the Security and Intelligence Co-ordinator.

### Mutual Aid

**37. We recommend that the Department of Health and the Fire Service Inspectorate ensure that their work to provide mutual aid and reinforcement on a national basis is completed by the end of the year. (Paragraph 195)**

The Ambulance Service Association is currently working to develop a national doctrine and a standard pre-hospital approach to CBRN incidents and intends to complete that task

before the end of the year. That approach will be based on defined mutual aid arrangements. The Department of Health will monitor progress.

The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (HM Fire Service Inspectorate) are taking forward, in discussion with the representatives of Fire Authorities, the development of a national mutual aid agreement, with the aim of concluding this by 31 December 2002.

### Communications

**38. We are very concerned that the communications system which would be used in the event of an emergency have unknown but potentially fundamental vulnerabilities. We note the lack of confidence in the reliability of the Government's Emergency Communications Network. We recommend that an urgent review is conducted into the potential vulnerabilities and reliability of the communication networks which responding agencies would have to rely upon in an emergency. (Paragraph 199)**

**We welcome the decisions by the Government to ensure interoperability of communications between the emergency services and other responders, including the military, although we believe that this result could have been more effectively achieved by earlier co-ordination between government departments and the services concerned. (Paragraph 204)**

**We recommend that Airwave and the other compatible new systems should be included in the review into communications resilience which we recommend. Any contract entered into for the procurement of these systems must guarantee a robust level of resilience throughout all parts of the system. (Paragraph 205)**

The Government notes the Committee's concern about the Emergency Communications Network. In view of the importance of effective communications, we are seeking further information from the LGA on the weaknesses they perceive in the system, their views on why these occur, and on means of enhancing the system.

Working with the government departments concerned, and the emergency services, the Civil Contingencies Secretariat co-ordinated the development of an agreed operational requirement for radio interoperability between the emergency services and for resilience. Cross-service agreement on this requirement is fundamental to effective co-operative working between the services.

The Home Office, the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister and the Department of Health have fully supported the co-ordinating role of the Cabinet Office Civil Contingencies Secretariat in securing agreement on the appropriate level of interoperability between the emergency services' radio systems, in order to handle post-11 September scenarios. The MOD has also supported this work with the objective of ensuring wider interoperability during civil emergencies.

The agreed requirement for interoperability and resilience forms the basis of the performance specification with which any bidder must comply before any future contracts for wide-area radio systems can be let by the emergency services. It does not specify a technical standard nor limit it to the product of a particular supplier.

MmO2's Airwave service has been developed to meet the requirements of the police service. It is also available as an option which other emergency services might choose to provide their radio communications. But whether or not they adopt this option will depend on the outcome of technology-neutral procurement competitions which take account of the

extent to which proposed solutions meet their requirements, and costs. No final decision has been taken.

All emergency service radio systems will need to provide a robust level of interoperability and resilience throughout all parts of the system.

### **The Private Security Industry**

**39. We believe that there is an opportunity to increase the involvement of the private security sector in counter-terrorist reinforcement. But this should only be done in step with the raising of standards in the industry. It is disappointing that the licensing regime for the industry will not be introduced before 2004–05. If the private security industry and its staff are to play an effective role they will need the appropriate training. We look to the police and the private security industry jointly to bring forward detailed proposals as a matter of urgency, for consideration by the Home Office and the Security Industry Authority. (Paragraph 212)**

The Government notes the views of the Committee.

The Government agrees that any moves to utilise the resources of the private security industry in the fight against terrorism should be made within the context of a regulated and increasingly professionalised industry. The Security Industry Authority, which will come into being on 1 April 2003, will lead on the raising of training and performance standards in the industry within the regulatory framework established by the Private Security Industry Act 2001. The Authority will also provide a new framework under which the industry, the police and other stakeholders can better collaborate and exchange ideas and proposals.

The guarding sector of the industry appears to offer the most likely potential suggested by the Committee, and is the second of the Authority's planned tranches of regulation, beginning in 2004.

### **Military Support**

**40. We cannot understand why a process which was planned to be completed by April has in fact only entered its consultation period in mid-June, and seems unlikely to be completed until late autumn at the earliest. (Paragraph 221)**

At the evidence session on Wednesday 13 February 2002, the Director Military Operations indicated that 'it would be quite wrong, until we have conducted the consultation process with employers, with the TA, with the chain of command and other interested bodies, to go firm on what the eventual findings [of proposals for the reserves within the SDR New Chapter] might be.' In the first SDR New Chapter discussion paper, published on 14 February 2002, we asked, amongst other questions, for views on whether there were additional or enhanced roles for the Reserve forces. The views received were then added to ideas being generated within the MOD (including by Reserve officers) to form a series of detailed proposals. These were published in the second discussion paper on 12 June 2002. In order to allow these to be discussed widely within the Reserves community this discussion period was set for the summer period, when many Reserve units come together to undertake their annual training camps.

**41. It is not clear to us how the MOD will ensure that the necessary skills and training for even these tasks are to be found in a volunteer reserve force of 500 persons per region and only 5 or 6 days training a year. (Paragraph 232)**

The MOD Discussion Document provides a significant amount of detail on the enhancements proposed to existing MOD arrangements. A recommendation to the MOD

to deploy a Reaction Force would be made by the regional commander, who would exercise his judgement as to which of the forces at his disposal, including the Reaction Force but also Regular Forces, best matched the requirements of the situation.

In prior planning work, Reaction Force capabilities would be matched to the particular needs of each region, through discussion with lead local civil agencies including civil police commanders, and may therefore include particular specialisms if required. But a substantial element would be personnel prepared to carry out a wide range of general duties, both before an incident and in consequence management tasks if necessary after an incident has arisen.

Local civil agencies including the police will retain the lead in responding to an event. The Armed Forces would provide support from resources available at the time and in particular for aspects of the problem for which the Armed Forces are particularly suited. Enhancements to the arrangements for liaison with civil agencies in the regions are outlined at paragraph 12 of the Discussion Document. They are mentioned, with approval, by the Committee at paragraph 237 of its Report. It is essential in considering the Discussion Document and the future deployment of the Armed Forces in support of the civil power that these arrangements are not overlooked.

**42. We believe that it is irresponsible to offer to put volunteer Reserves into such a situation without also explicitly providing for their protection. (Paragraph 235)**

As paragraph 15 of the Discussion Document makes clear, 'Reaction Forces would encompass the capability to act in chemical, biological, nuclear and radiological conditions if necessary.'

**43. We recommend that MOD publish estimated costs of the Reserve Reaction Forces, including illustrative costs for their deployment, and indicate where it expects these costs to fall. Without adequate information on the level and attribution of costs, it will not be possible for local authorities and others to include the Reserve Reaction Forces in their plans. (Paragraph 236)**

The MOD will fund from within the Defence Budget the costs of providing the enhanced Reserve Force capabilities identified within the Discussion Document.

The Government will continue to draw the distinction between circumstances in which costs will be waived, and circumstances in which they will not be waived. Charges will not be made for a rapid response, when lives are in imminent danger, if relevant Armed Forces resources are available.

Civil authorities can already gauge the approximate cost of deploying the Armed Forces (see Ev 131). Further information can be provided at their request for contingency planning purposes, though much would be dependent upon the assumptions made about the circumstances of the deployment.

**44. Provisionally, we welcome the thrust of the proposal insofar as it gives back to the Reserves a role in home defence. We also welcome the proposal to establish single 'joint' points of liaison on all emergency planning matters in each military region. We do not, however, believe that these proposals excuse the regular forces from being considered for an additional role. (Paragraph 237)**

The Government welcomes the Committee's support for the proposals for the creation of Reaction Forces from the volunteer Reserves, and for the appointment of Joint Regional Liaison Officers. The consultation process finished on 13 September 2002, and we are

now analysing the many inputs received and developing the proposals in the light of those comments, prior to reaching and announcing to Parliament, our final conclusions.

The creation of the Reaction Forces would not in any way 'excuse the regular forces from being considered'. The regional commander would use the most appropriate military capability under his command to respond to any request from the civil authorities, including available regular forces.

**45. We believe that the SDR New Chapter should include a commitment to making available, in the context of a terrorist incident, certain capabilities from the regular Armed Forces. These might include specific capabilities—for example in the CBRN field—on a national basis as well as more general assistance at a regional level. The commitments from the Reserves and Regulars taken together should meet as far as possible the skills and capabilities required by the civil authorities, who should be closely involved by the MOD in identifying those skills and capabilities. (Paragraph 240)**

The Government's position on the use of the Armed Forces in home defence and security was outlined in the Strategic Defence Review New Chapter published on 18 July 2002. In particular: 'We have made clear that we are not going to allow threats at home to tie up significant numbers of our high readiness Armed Forces and prevent us from acting abroad.'

The civil authorities have primary responsibility for home defence and security. The Armed Forces would supplement and support the civil authorities but the latter retain responsibility for undertaking the necessary tasks. There is no intention to restructure the Armed Forces, or change their role, in order to provide capabilities already provided by the civil authorities.

The Committee will, however, be aware from evidence provided by the MOD (Ev 29, paragraph 17; Qs 450 to 456 and Ev 100) that support is already provided in the CBRN field. It is in the nature of the way in which the Department responds to requests for assistance that all support is in effect provided 'at a national level', though this does not preclude regional liaison.

The skills and capabilities that might be provided will thus be those available from the whole of the Armed Forces.

**46. We recommend that the MOD identify what provision of airlift capacity, both fix-wing and rotary, can be committed to the response to a major terrorist incident. (Paragraph 241)**

No MOD airlift capacity is permanently committed to the response to a major terrorist incident. The Armed Forces' airlift capacity, which combines both military aircraft and civil aircraft on contract, is designed to enhance the ability of the Armed Forces to undertake the full range of their missions at home and abroad, including in this context, missions to pre-empt terrorist attacks within the UK. If civil authorities have a requirement for an airlift capacity within the UK it can be provided through civil resources without disruption to the military capability and the missions of the Armed Forces.

### **Military Civil Liaison**

**47. We regret the absence of any reference to the contribution of Armed Forces in the Emergency Planning Review consultation paper and the failure of the MOD to engage in the consultation process. (Paragraph 244)**

The MOD did engage in the Emergency Planning Review, before during and after the consultation process. It continues to be closely engaged in the process resulting from that Review.

The MOD is not responsible for civil emergency management. Consequently, they did not feature in a document designed to seek views on enhancements to those mechanisms. Clearly the MOD, as part of the Government, supports the need for very significant improvements in the civil emergency management mechanism, especially at the regional and local level, and consequently supports the outcome of the consultation process completed in March.

**48. We believe that joint exercises between the Armed Forces and the emergency services should be increased and should include other agencies as well. (Paragraph 245)**

The Government recognises the need for some enhancement to Armed Forces liaison and the MOD has announced its intention to appoint Joint Regional Liaison Officers, as single 'joint' points of liaison on all emergency planning matters within each military region. These appointments will clarify the co-ordination arrangements.

The Government supports the principle that all relevant agencies should be involved in the exercise programme.

#### **Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear.**

**49. We welcome the proposed creation of the Health Protection Agency. (Paragraph 256)**

The Government welcomes the Committee's endorsement of this Agency, which will allow for the re-deployment of funding to the front-line services. By bringing together the various agencies and front-line staff, the Agency will be better equipped to deal with a range of emergencies, and provide a comprehensive, unified national response.

**50. We recommend that the Government report progress on the PCTs preparation of emergency plans and the arrangements for including the ambulance service in that process in their response to this report. (Paragraph 259)**

Work has been proceeding through Regional Directors of Public Health and Regional Health Emergency Planning Advisers to assist PCTs to develop appropriate emergency plans. This is being monitored by the Department of Health. The progress has been hampered in some areas by delays in Directors of Public Health coming into post but is generally on schedule. Regional Health Emergency Planning Advisers work closely with their counterparts in the Ambulance Service and work collaboratively in planning and assessing plans.

**51. If ambulance and fire crews are expected to respond to a CBRN incident, they must have the necessary training and protective equipment. Now there is a real threat of a CBRN attack on a scale not previously planned for, the Government must provide the additional resources needed. We were pleased to hear that progress was being made with the introduction of properly constructed decontamination facilities. We look to the Government to ensure that the resources are available to build on this beginning (Paragraph 263).**

The full additional ambulance service costs associated with developing and maintaining preparedness for CBRN incidents can only be quantified when the national doctrine has

been fully established. The Department of Health will consider funding requests when those costs have been identified.

The Government agrees with the Committee on the need for effective training and protective equipment. Additional resources have been made available for this purpose. DH made available £5 million for procurement of personal protective equipment (PPE) and training in its use, and decontamination units for Ambulance Trusts and major accident and emergency hospitals throughout the UK. For large-scale incidents, DH has agreed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Fire Service to provide a decontamination service. DH has also been developing education and training programmes to improve capability of NHS staff to respond to CBRN incidents. The Committee will be aware that a Home Office Police Training Unit has been established, co-located with the Defence NBC Centre at Winterborne Gunner. Personnel from all the emergency services attend courses at this centre.

As part of the work to improve the UK's resilience to a range of threats, including CBRN related incidents, a cross-government decontamination strategy is being prepared. One of the work streams within the strategy is to produce agreed high level guidance on procedures for decontamination. The guidance will specify the roles and responsibilities of the emergency services, local authorities and others and is intended to provide a common set of principles, establish common terminology, and a shared and agreed understanding of stakeholders' roles and responsibilities.

The Government does not accept that there is 'a real threat of a CBRN attack on a scale not previously planned for'. But the Government is equally aware that there is always room for improvement in the state of preparedness and a great deal of work has already been undertaken to enhance the existing mechanisms. This work will continue.

**52. We believe that the Government should reconsider its policy of not providing information on CBRN countermeasures. We believe that the public has a right to know, to an indicative level at least, what provisions the Government has made for its protection. We are not persuaded that such information would materially assist terrorists. (Paragraph 267).**

The Department of Health has explained publicly that it holds strategic levels of a range of medical countermeasures for different biological and chemical incidents. However, we consider it inappropriate to give more detailed information on the types or level of these countermeasures. Our policy on providing limited information on medical countermeasures is also in accord with the approach currently taken by our EU partners. General guidance concerning the Public Health response to smallpox and other biological agents was sent to Public Health physicians in October 2001 and is now available on the DH website at: [www.doh.gov.uk/cpx](http://www.doh.gov.uk/cpx)

### **Regional Co-ordination**

**53. A major responsibility will fall on the Regional Directors of Public Health to ensure that PCTs have adequate emergency plans in place by October 2002, and that these have been prepared in co-ordination with other agencies, including in particular the ambulance service. (Paragraph 273)**

Regional Directors of Public Health and Regional Health Emergency Planning Advisers have played a crucial role in ensuring that PCTs have adequate emergency plans in place by October 2002. They work as part of a whole systems approach that links with the NHS, the proposed Health Protection Agency, Local Authorities, Ambulance Services and other Emergency Services, the voluntary sector and other agencies and interested bodies.

**54. The Government clearly expects the regional tier to play a significant role in co-ordinating emergency planning and consequence management. (Paragraph 275)**

The Government believes that there is an important role for the Government Offices in the Regions, where Regional Directors of Public Health will be based, to play in joining up departmental emergency plans at a regional level and assisting in improving preparedness for wide area civil contingencies. Work on developing the details of this role will be taken forward in consultation with local authorities, the emergency services and other key regional players on emergencies.

The Scottish, Welsh and Northern Ireland Assemblies and Executives already play an important role in managing civil emergencies.

**55. There may be role for a regional tier in assisting with the co-ordination of the response to a civil emergency of wide geographical extent. But we believe that a major terrorist incident will require the direct and continuing involvement of central government including direct and close communication with the local agencies. If the Government believes that its contribution can be best delivered through GORs or other regional agencies it must ensure that their efforts are co-ordinated with and supportive of the work of local and emergency agencies. (Paragraph 279)**

The Government agrees with the Committee's comments on the need for direct and close involvement of central government with local agencies during a major terrorist incident.

It is not intended that Government Offices in the Regions should direct or lead the response to major incidents.

#### **Resources and risk management**

**56. As time passes and the memories of even such a terrible events as the attacks of 11 September begin to fade, the urgency of the priority given to issues of defence and security may diminish. There is an increasing temptation to impose a conventional or historic template on the response to a radical new threat. (Paragraph 283)**

We recommend that the Government, perhaps through the Cabinet Office and the CCS, publishes an annual report on the measures taken and the expenditure incurred in respect of home defence and security. This report should bring together the contributions of all government departments and other relevant agencies and include reports from the devolved administrations. (Paragraph 284)

We believe that our recommendations for an annual report on security will give the Government a regular opportunity to set out its strategy for delivering home defence and security in the UK. (Paragraph 293)

The Government recognises the importance of maintaining vigilance and of keeping Parliament and the public fully informed of its efforts to secure civil protection and security. This is why on 9 September, it published *'The United Kingdom and The Campaign against International Terrorism, Progress Report'*.

The Government will continue to produce such reports as and when it believes there is a need and believes this is the best way of demonstrating the commitment and vigilance and of securing the transparency the Committee seeks.

### Informing the Public

**57. We believe that security against terrorist attacks in the UK could be improved by constructive public involvement. (Paragraph 288)**

The Government agrees. The public contribution to the fight against international terrorism is already of great importance, and that fight will only be won through constructive contributions from all quarters.

It is important to ensure that the methods used to encourage public involvement are themselves carefully chosen and constructive, and that they do not add unnecessarily to public disquiet, or imply that safeguards are not already in place. The Government recognises the importance of keeping the public informed, reassured and engaged.

**58. We understand that there is information whose public disclosure could be of material assistance to the potential terrorists. We have evidence, however, which suggests that the Government takes refuge in that argument without always examining it as rigorously as it should. Information should be withheld from the public only where its publication would give rise to a specific and identifiable risk. (Paragraph 291)**

The Government shares the Committee's evident frustration that more information cannot be shared openly with the public. It is, however, all the more important, given the threat from international terrorism, to ensure that our key capabilities are properly protected. International terrorists can access any openly published information. The risk of useful information reaching the terrorist should, therefore, be kept to a minimum.

The Government has provided the Committee with all the information it has asked for, whilst indicating that some of the information must be kept confidential. We are grateful for the Committee's continued co-operation in this matter.

## DEFENCE COMMITTEE REPORTS IN THE CURRENT PARLIAMENT

**FIRST REPORT:** *Ministry of Defence Police: Changes in jurisdiction proposed under the Anti-terrorism, Crime and Security Bill 2001*, HC 382, published on 6 December 2001

**SECOND REPORT:** *The Threat from Terrorism*, HC 348 -1, published on 18 December 2001.

**THIRD REPORT:** *The Ministry of Defence Reviews of Armed Forces' Pension and Compensation Arrangements*, HC 666, published on 9 May 2002.

**FOURTH REPORT:** *Major Procurement Projects*, HC 779, published on 10 July 2002

**FIFTH REPORT:** *The Government's Annual Report on Strategic Export Controls for 2000. Licensing Policy and Prior Parliamentary Scrutiny*, HC 718, published on 19 July 2002

**SIXTH REPORT:** *Defence and Security in the UK*, HC 518, published on 24 July 2002.

**SEVENTH REPORT:** *The Future of NATO*, HC 914, published on 31 July 2002.

