



House of Commons
Foreign Affairs Committee

The Work of the Committee in 2007

Fourth Report of Session 2007–08

Report, together with formal minutes

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Foreign Affairs Committee

The Foreign Affairs Committee is appointed by the House of Commons to examine the administration, expenditure and policy of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and its associated agencies.

Current membership

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Rt Hon Sir Menzies Campbell (*Liberal Democrat, North East Fife*)
Mr Fabian Hamilton (*Labour, Leeds North East*)
Rt Hon Mr David Heathcoat-Amory (*Conservative, Wells*)
Mr John Horam (*Conservative, Orpington*)
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Powers

The Committee is one of the departmental select committees, the powers of which are set out in House of Commons Standing Orders, principally in SO No 152. These are available on the Internet via www.parliament.uk.

Publication

The Reports and evidence of the Committee are published by The Stationery Office by Order of the House. All publications of the Committee (including press notices) are on the Internet at http://www.parliament.uk/parliamentary_committees/foreign_affairs_committee.cfm.

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1 Introduction

1. The Foreign Affairs Committee (FAC) is one of the departmentally-related select committees of the House of Commons, which scrutinise the expenditure, administration and policy of government departments. In the case of the FAC, this scrutiny is exercised over the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) and the agencies for which the FCO's Ministers are accountable to Parliament: including the British Council, the BBC World Service, and the Wilton Park conference centre. The Committee has 14 Members, and since July 2005 its Chairman has been Mike Gapes MP.

2. In the calendar year 2007, the Committee met on 35 occasions; it heard oral evidence from 83 witnesses (some of them on more than one occasion); it visited 18 countries overseas; and it held 63 informal meetings with visitors to the United Kingdom, ambassadors to the Court of St James and others. The Annexes to this Report give more detail on these visits and meetings.

3. In this Report we adhere to the practice adopted by the Committee in previous years, of presenting its work under the following headings:

- Continuing scrutiny of foreign policy;
- Scrutiny of specific foreign policy issues;
- Scrutiny of Foreign and Commonwealth Office publications;
- Pre-legislative foreign policy scrutiny; and
- Other scrutiny activities.

4. We relate our work to the wider parliamentary process of scrutiny of the policies and actions of the executive; we comment on the responses of the FCO to our Reports, and on its wider relationship with the Committee; and we preview our future programme.

5. We also seek to demonstrate how the Committee's work relates to the indicative 'core tasks' identified by the House's Liaison Committee. Our pattern of activities is somewhat different from that of other departmental select committees. In addition to our central task of scrutinising the work of the FCO, we see ourselves as having a useful role to play in informing Members and the wider public about major developments in world affairs and their consequences for the UK. Our extensive programme of informal meetings with diplomats, foreign politicians and other key players, held at Westminster and during our overseas visits, is part of this process, and the knowledge thus gained feeds through into our reports. The FCO itself differs in significant ways from most other government departments; in particular, it is responsible for comparatively little primary or secondary legislation, and has only a small number of associated public bodies. We therefore have to adapt our approach to the core tasks to reflect these circumstances. Annex 1 to this Report sets out in tabular form an analysis of our activity in relation to the core tasks.

2 Continuing scrutiny of foreign policy

6. The Committee has continued to conduct in-depth scrutiny of threats to global security, the United Kingdom's foreign policy response to those threats, and the United Kingdom's strategic international priorities. For a number of years we produced reports on these subjects under the title "Foreign Policy Aspects of the War on Terrorism". In the last of these reports, published in July 2006, we concluded that the phrase 'war on terrorism' was inappropriate,¹ and in our last annual report, published in January 2007, we announced that our work in this area had been transferred to a new inquiry, '**Global Security**', which would be pursued through a series of focused exercises.² This would enable us to scrutinise the work and effectiveness of the FCO in one region at a time. We have subsequently produced two reports under this overarching 'Global Security' inquiry title, on the **Middle East** and **Russia**, and intend shortly to publish a further such report, on **Iran**.

7. In addition to our work on global security, we have continued our monitoring of other consistently important areas of policy. We have taken evidence on **developments in the European Union**, culminating in a report on foreign policy aspects of the Lisbon Treaty; and as in previous years we have contributed to the work of the **Quadripartite Committee** on Strategic Arms Export Controls. We deal in more detail with each of these aspects of our work in the following paragraphs.

Eighth Report of Session 2006–07, Global Security: The Middle East (HC 363)

8. As we stated in this Report,

[t]he Middle East is, and will continue to be, of critical importance to British foreign policy. It presents the Foreign and Commonwealth Office with some of its most complex and controversial challenges.³

9. In March 2007 we held discussions with a range of key interlocutors in a number of Middle Eastern states. The Committee travelled in two groups, with one visiting Egypt, Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories (it also received a briefing from the British Embassy in Amman whilst passing through Jordan), and the other visiting Syria and Lebanon.

10. Our Report was published in August 2007. It contained conclusions relating to Israel, the Occupied Palestinian Territories, the Middle East peace process and the 'roadmap', Lebanon, Syria, Egypt, Iraq and Iran. It also considered the Government's approach to the region as a whole; its strategy for engaging with the Islamic world; and its need to adopt a holistic approach to the Middle East, while acknowledging the diversity in the political environment across the region.

¹ Foreign Affairs Committee, Fourth Report of Session 2005–06, *Foreign Policy Aspects of the War on Terrorism*, HC 573, para 3

² Foreign Affairs Committee, First Report of Session 2006–07, *The Work of the Committee in 2005 and 2006*, HC 206, para 7

³ Foreign Affairs Committee, Eighth Report of Session 2006–07, *Global Security: The Middle East* (HC 363), para 2

11. In its response to this Report, the Government welcomed our scrutiny of the FCO's work in the Middle East.⁴ We will pursue specific issues raised in the inquiry in our continuing work on Global Security and in our inquiries into specific bilateral relationships such as that with Iran.

Second Report of Session 2007–08, Global Security: Russia (HC 51)

12. We decided that our second 'Global Security' inquiry would be into Russia. This decision was taken partly because of Russia's role in UK and EU energy security. We were also aware of the wide range of other international security issues important to the UK where Russia has an impact, and of tensions in the UK-Russia relationship.

13. During the course of our inquiry, relations with Russia became a major foreign policy issue for the UK, with a low point reached in July 2007 when the UK expelled four Russian diplomats and Russia expelled four UK diplomats in response.

14. As part of its inquiry, the Committee visited Moscow in June 2007. Some Members of the Committee also visited Azerbaijan, as an example of a post-Soviet country which represents an important alternative to Russia as a source of energy supply. Other Members visited a number of international organisations relevant to the Global Security inquiry in Vienna, including the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the Office of the UN Special Envoy for Kosovo, and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

15. Our Report was published in November 2007. It encompassed issues including the promotion of democracy and human rights in Russia, the UK's dealings with Russia (including the Litvinenko case), energy security, the EU-Russia relationship, European security issues involving both countries, and Russia's role in the broader international arena.

16. Since the publication of our Report, Russia has announced that it plans to shut down the British Council's offices in St Petersburg and Yekaterinburg in January 2008, an action which the UK Government has described as illegal.⁵ We are concerned about this recent development and will continue to monitor the situation.

Global Security: Iran

17. Our third Report in the 'Global Security' inquiry will deal with Iran. We visited Tehran and Esfahan in November 2007, and have taken evidence from FCO Ministers and officials, academics and other commentators, and a former Ambassador to Iran.⁶ We intend to publish a Report on Iran in Spring 2008.

⁴ *Eighth Report of Foreign Affairs Committee, Session 2006-07, Global Security: The Middle East: Response of the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs*, Cm 7212, p 3 (para 1)

⁵ See Written Ministerial Statement, HC Deb, 13 December 2007, Col 56WS

⁶ See Annex 4 (evidence taken on 2 May, 23 May, 4 July and 28 November 2007).

18. In addition, in July 2007 we published a Report on the specific issue of foreign policy aspects of the detention of UK naval personnel by Iran in March 2007. We comment further on this Report in paragraph 35 below.

Developments in the European Union

19. The Committee has continued to play close attention to developments in the EU. We produced a Report on this subject in June 2006.⁷ During 2007 we have taken a particular interest in the process of EU Treaty reform. We questioned the then Foreign Secretary, Rt Hon Margaret Beckett MP, about this when we took evidence from her in June 2007 (continuing our practice of inviting either the Foreign Secretary or the Minister for Europe to appear before us in advance of each six-monthly meeting of the full European Council). We took further evidence on this subject from the new Minister for Europe, Mr Jim Murphy MP, in September, and from the Foreign Secretary in October.

20. In the light of this evidence, we decided to conduct an inquiry specifically addressing the foreign policy aspects of the new EU Treaty – the ‘Lisbon Treaty’ as it is now known. We took oral evidence on four occasions between November 2007 and January 2008: from academics and a former senior official of the European Commission, from Rt Hon the Lord Owen, former Foreign Secretary, from the current Foreign Secretary, and (during a visit to Brussels) from Dr Javier Solana, the EU’s High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy. We published our report on 20 January 2008, in time for it to be listed on the House’s Order Paper as relevant to the debate on Second Reading of the Government’s European Union (Amendment) Bill, which seeks to give effect to the Lisbon Treaty in UK law.⁸

21. We have continued our practice of visiting the capital of the country which holds the EU presidency in each six-month period, while taking the opportunity of combining this with visits to other EU states, particularly those which have recently acceded or which are applicants for accession. In January 2007, one group of us visited Brussels and Berlin (to mark the German presidency), while another group travelled to Turkey and Cyprus, to discuss progress towards Turkish accession. (We subsequently published notes on our discussions in Turkey and Cyprus: see paragraph 33 below.) In July 2007, to mark the commencement of the Portuguese Presidency, a group of us visited Lisbon, and travelled on to Spain and Gibraltar. At the same time another group took the opportunity to visit Kosovo and Serbia. Likewise in January 2008, to mark the start of the Slovenian Presidency, a group of us visited Brussels and Ljubljana, while another group revisited Kosovo. This latter visit was timely in that it enabled the visiting group to discuss with a range of interlocutors the implications of the EU’s decision, taken by the European Council at its meeting in December 2007, to support “managed independence” for Kosovo. We made some comments on the FCO’s work on Kosovo in our Reports on the FCO’s annual report for 2006-07 and on Global Security: Russia.⁹ We will continue to monitor the fast-developing situation in Kosovo.

⁷ Foreign Affairs Committee, Sixth Report of Session 2005-06, *Developments in the European Union* (HC 768)

⁸ Foreign Affairs Committee, Third Report of Session 2007-08, *Foreign Policy Aspects of the Lisbon Treaty*, HC 120-I

⁹ Foreign Affairs Committee, First Report of Session 2007-08, *Foreign and Commonwealth Office Annual Report 2006-07*, HC 50, paras 39-42; Second Report of Session 2007-08, *Global Security: Russia*, HC 51, paras 243-64

Seventh Report of Session 2006-07, Strategic Export Controls: 2007 Review (HC 117)

22. As in past years, the Committee has played a full part, together with colleagues from the Defence, International Development and Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform (formerly the Trade and Industry) Committees, in the work of the 'Quadripartite' Committee on strategic arms export controls. This Committee carries out detailed scrutiny of the Government's controls on exports of equipment and technology with a military application.

23. In 2006-07 the Quadripartite Committee carried out a wider than usual inquiry when it examined the operation of the Export Control Act 2002 and the orders made under the Act. In August 2006 it published its "2007 review". In 2007 for the first time the Committee took oral evidence from the Department for International Development as well as evidence from the FCO, HM Revenue and Customs and the Revenue and Customs Prosecutions Office.

24. The Quadripartite Committee maintained its interest in a range of issues, including:

- post-legislative scrutiny of export control legislation which will contribute to the Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform's Review of the operation of the Export Control Act 2002
- support for an international Arms Trade Treaty
- the need for defence attaché posts in countries where the export of goods and technology from the UK requires careful scrutiny
- possible changes to the rules on intra-European Community transfers of defence products
- the need to tighten controls on those selling and brokering arms
- the need for better enforcement of the export control rules at arms fairs
- the need for better outreach to industry to prevent inadvertent export of goods subject to export control
- cluster bombs
- the method the Department for International Development uses to assess the impact of applications for arms exports on developing countries.

25. During Session 2006-07 the Quadripartite Committee visited the Export Control Organisation at the Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform, and the FCO.

3 Scrutiny of specific foreign policy issues

Second Report of Session 2006–07, Visit to Guantánamo Bay (HC 44)

26. The Foreign Affairs Committee first commented on the United States detention centre at Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, in its June 2002 Report on Foreign Policy Aspects of the War against Terrorism.¹⁰ At that time, the camp had been in use for a matter of months. Over the following four years, the Committee continued to take a close interest in Guantánamo, commenting in nine further Reports. In September 2006, seven of us spent a full day at Guantánamo Bay, where we were able to see for ourselves the conditions in which the detainees are held and to ask questions of the camp authorities. Ours was the first delegation from a national legislature other than the US Congress to visit the camp. In January 2007 we published a Report on Guantánamo Bay. The purpose of the Report was to place on the record a summary of what the group who visited Guantánamo saw and heard, and to make a further contribution to the debate on a number of issues relating to the US authorities' continued detention at that base of men classed by it as 'unlawful enemy combatants'.

27. In its response, the Government described our Report as "a comprehensive and helpful contribution to the debate over conditions at Guantánamo Bay and its future".¹¹ We have continued to discuss the future of Guantánamo with senior figures in the US administration and welcome the further releases of detainees, with appropriate safeguards, in 2007.

Fourth Report of Session 2006–07, South Asia (HC 55)

28. In August 2006 we published a report on East Asia, which addressed in particular the implications of the rising power of China.¹² We have followed this with a major inquiry into South Asia, one of the world's most dynamic economic regions, which is beginning to play a major role on the international stage. The main focus of the inquiry was on the other 'Asian giant', India, the world's largest democracy, which is expected to overtake the United Kingdom as the fifth largest economy within a decade.

29. As part of our inquiry, we held three evidence sessions with academics and other commentators, as well as an evidence session with the then Foreign Secretary. We visited India, Pakistan and Afghanistan, where our programme included meetings with government leaders and ministers, security forces, parliamentary committees, business representatives, non-governmental organisations and religious figures.

30. Our Report, published in May 2007, dealt with topics which included political and economic developments in India, relations between India and Pakistan and the question of

¹⁰ Seventh Report of the Foreign Affairs Committee, Session 2001–02, *Foreign Policy Aspects of the War Against Terrorism*, paras 137 to 145

¹¹ *Second Report of Foreign Affairs Committee, Session 2006-07, Visit to Guantánamo Bay: Response of the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs*, Cm 7063, p 1

¹² Foreign Affairs Committee, Seventh Report of Session 2005-06, *East Asia*, HC 860-I

Kashmir, India's role in the region and its links with its neighbours, India's contribution to the international system, and the roles of the United Kingdom and the EU in South Asia.

31. In its response, the Government welcomed the Committee's "detailed work" and noted that the Report "fully recognised" the broad range of factors underpinning the UK's relationship with the countries of South Asia.¹³

Fifth Report of Session 2006–07, Visit to Turkey and Cyprus (HC 473)

32. As we have mentioned above (in paragraph 21), the Committee undertakes visits in connection with its continuing Inquiry into Developments in the European Union. In January 2007, we judged that Turkey and Cyprus were priority destinations for such a visit. Turkey's accession process was partially stalled following a decision by the European Council to suspend negotiations on eight key chapters of the *acquis*.

33. Although it is not our standard practice to produce a Report on the Committee's visits (because of the necessary confidentiality of our discussions), we felt that it was important to acquaint the House with what we heard during our visit to Turkey and Cyprus. We therefore published a Report containing, as an annex, a summary of the issues we discussed and the opinions we encountered during the visit. In order to maintain the confidentiality of the exchanges, we arranged the material by theme, rather than by interlocutor. We made it clear that none of the comments or opinions we summarised was to be taken as representing the view of the Committee or was to be ascribed to any particular individual or organisation.

Sixth Report of Session 2006–07, Foreign Policy Aspects of the Detention of Naval Personnel by the Islamic Republic of Iran (HC 880)

34. On 23 March 2007, eight Royal Navy sailors and seven Royal Marines based on HMS Cornwall, a Type 22 Frigate engaged in boarding and searching merchant vessels passing through Iraqi territorial waters, were seized by Iranian Revolutionary Guard forces close to the mouth of the Shatt al-Arab waterway. This incident created a diplomatic crisis and raised a number of issues regarding the decisions taken by, and the performance of, the Government in the following days.

35. We published a Report commenting on foreign policy aspects of these events: in particular, the use of diplomacy to resolve the situation, through bilateral contacts and third parties, and through the attempt to use the UN Security Council to increase the pressure on Iran; the effectiveness of inter-departmental co-ordination during the crisis; the Iranians' treatment of the detainees; and the involvement of the media. The Defence Committee has subsequently published a Report dealing with aspects of the same events which lie within the responsibilities of the Ministry of Defence.¹⁴

¹³ *Fourth Report of Foreign Affairs Committee, Session 2006-07, South Asia: Response of the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs*, Cm 7142, p 1 (paras 1-5)

¹⁴ Defence Committee, Fourth Report of Session 2007-08, *The Iran Hostages Incident: The Lessons Learned*, HC 181

Evidence on Overseas Territories

36. One of the FCO's ten Strategic Priorities is the security and good governance of the United Kingdom's fourteen Overseas Territories.¹⁵ In June 2007 we announced a new inquiry into the Overseas Territories in order to examine the exercise by the FCO of its responsibilities in relation to these Territories. The inquiry's terms of reference include the standards of governance, financial regulation, transparency and accountability, and human rights in the Overseas Territories, as well as the role of Governors and the procedures for amendment of the Territories' constitutions. So far we have held one evidence session on this inquiry, taking the opportunity of the meeting in London of the Overseas Territories Consultative Council, an annual forum for territory government leaders hosted by the FCO, to invite these representatives to give oral evidence to the Committee. Further evidence sessions will be held in the New Year. We have extended our deadline for written evidence until 31 January 2007 so that individuals can continue to send us their views during the course of the inquiry.

Evidence on Iraq (HC, 2006–07, 209-i)

37. We heard oral evidence on Iraq in January 2007 jointly with the Defence Committee from both the Foreign and Defence Secretaries. This provided an opportunity to scrutinise the Government's role in Iraq in a more holistic way. We subsequently commented on Iraq in our Reports on the FCO's Human Rights Annual Report and on *Global Security: The Middle East*.¹⁶

¹⁵ The Overseas Territories are: Anguilla, Bermuda, the British Antarctic Territory (BAT), the British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT/Chagos Islands), the British Virgin Islands (BVI), the Cayman Islands, Falkland Islands, Gibraltar, Montserrat, Pitcairn Islands, St Helena and its Dependencies (Ascension Island and Tristan da Cunha), South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands, the Sovereign Base Areas of Akrotiri and Dhekelia in Cyprus, and the Turks & Caicos Islands (TCI).

¹⁶ Foreign Affairs Committee, Third Report of Session 2006-07, *Human Rights Annual Report 2006*, HC 269, paras 81-92; Eighth Report of Session 2006-07, *Global Security: The Middle East*, HC 363, paras 166-89

4 Scrutiny of Foreign and Commonwealth Office publications

Third Report of Session 2006–07, Human Rights Annual Report 2006 (HC 269)

38. Each year, we take evidence and produce our conclusions and recommendations on the annual human rights report produced by the FCO. In our latest such Report, published in April 2007, we commented that:

There is a risk with any annual publication, even one dealing with the vitally important area of human rights, that it may become formulaic and lose its ‘edge’. It is a credit to a succession of officials and Ministers of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office [...] that, since 1998, they have produced a series of increasingly useful, well-written reports on human rights around the world which have gained the respect of non-governmental organisations and of this Committee.¹⁷

39. In our Report we looked at human rights with respect to Burma, China, Colombia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Iran, Israel and Hezbollah, Israel and the Palestinian Territories, Pakistan, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Thailand, Uzbekistan and Zimbabwe. We also looked at cross-cutting issues such as the UN Human Rights Council, the arms trade and cluster munitions, corruption, international criminal tribunals, and human rights issues related to terrorism (including use of evidence gained under torture, and extraordinary rendition).

40. The FCO did not publish a Human Rights report in 2007. It is our intention to inquire into the report expected to be published in March or April 2008.

First Report of Session 2007–08, Foreign and Commonwealth Office Annual Report 2006–07 (HC 50)

41. The Committee supplements its inquiries into the FCO’s work on a particular theme or in a specific country or region by carrying out an annual inquiry into how the FCO is managing its resources, using the Department’s Annual Report as our starting point. In the past we have described this exercise in scrutiny, dealing with expenditure and administration as well as policy, as being “at the heart of our work”,¹⁸ and that continues to be the case. Our most recent Report in this annual series was published in November 2007, examining the FCO’s departmental report for the financial year 2006-07.

42. Our Report dealt with a wide range of FCO activities. A key area of interest for us was the Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR07): our comments on this are dealt with in the section below on financial scrutiny.¹⁹ Our comments on the British Council and on the

¹⁷ Foreign Affairs Committee, Third Report of Session 2006-07, *Human Rights Annual Report 2006*, HC 269, para 1

¹⁸ Foreign Affairs Committee, First Report of Session 2006-07, *The Work of the Committee in 2005 and 2006*, HC 206, para 30

¹⁹ See paras 51-52 below

BBC World Service are dealt with in the section on FCO associated public bodies.²⁰ Some comments on the FCO's relations with Parliament are dealt with in the section entitled 'Departmental Response'.²¹

43. In a departure from our previous inquiries on the FCO's Annual Report, we decided also to hear from witnesses outside the FCO and its associated bodies. We asked Sir Ivor Roberts, former Ambassador to Italy and San Marino and author of a leaked valedictory e-gram critical of the FCO, to give evidence on the Department's performance over the last financial year. We also invited the Rt Hon Lord Ashdown of Norton-sub-Hamdon, High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina until 31 January 2006, to discuss the FCO's work in the Western Balkans. His evidence helped us to put together a case study on the FCO's performance against its PSA target on conflict prevention, looking at its work in peacebuilding in the Western Balkans.

44. We considered the FCO's performance against the other nine PSA targets agreed with the Treasury for the SR04 period, which runs until March 2008, and discussed the FCO's new framework of targets for the CSR07 period. We expressed disappointment that we were not consulted by the FCO about its draft targets far earlier in the process. We concluded that the current system of performance targets is less appropriate for the FCO than it is for other departments, and may absorb time which could be better spent on core functions. We also concluded that ten strategic priorities is too many, and recommended that both targets and priorities be simplified and reduced in number.

45. We discussed the conclusions of the 'capability review' of the FCO conducted between October 2006 and February 2007, as a follow-up to the Collinson Grant review which reported in 2005. We welcomed the current Permanent Under-Secretary's commitment to improving management capability in the FCO, in particular signs that the FCO is opening up competition for senior management roles to professionally qualified, experienced individuals from outside the Department. We recommended that in its quarterly management reports to the Committee, the FCO should continue to update us on progress against the four key areas for action highlighted in the capability review.

46. Our Report also made recommendations in relation to FCO Services' transformation into a Trading Fund, the closure of the FCO's language centre, diplomatic representation overseas and public diplomacy.

²⁰ See paras 48-50 below

²¹ See paras 56-59 below

5 Scrutiny of legislation

47. Our Report on foreign policy aspects of the Lisbon Treaty included consideration of the provisions of the Government's European Union (Amendment) Bill, and was listed on the House's Order Paper as relevant to the debate on Second Reading of that Bill on 21 January 2008.

6 Other scrutiny activities

Scrutiny of associated public bodies

48. Our scrutiny of the work of the FCO's two major associated public bodies – the British Council and the BBC World Service – is chiefly carried out as an integral part of our annual exercise in looking at the FCO's departmental report.

49. In our Report on the FCO Annual Report 2006-07, we reviewed the British Council's activities during 2006-07.²² We expressed some anxieties about the continued provision of satisfactory levels of funding for the British Council under the CSR07 settlement. We also commented on this issue in our Report on Global Security: Russia.²³ As we have commented in paragraph 16 above, we are also concerned about the extent to which the authorities in Russia are increasingly placing obstacles in the way of the Council's activities, culminating in their stated intention of shutting down its offices outside Moscow.

50. In the same Report we also reviewed the BBC World Service's activities over the past financial year.²⁴ We welcomed its performance, in particular its record audience figures, achieved against increasing worldwide competition, and better distribution. However, we noted that there are areas where improvement is required, including scheduling and marketing in Africa and partnerships in Latin America and parts of Eastern Europe (including Russia, an issue on which we also commented in our Global Security: Russia Report).²⁵ We also welcomed the confirmation under CSR07 of £15 million annual funding for the Farsi language television service and an extra £6 million to extend the BBC Arabic television service, but concluded that the World Service should have received additional funding in CSR07 for its planned new investments and redundancy costs.

Financial scrutiny

51. As in previous years, our scrutiny of the FCO's expenditure and resources is undertaken mainly – but not exclusively – in the context of our annual inquiries into its departmental reports. In 2007 we held our evidence sessions in June and July, when negotiations on the settlements and related new targets under the Comprehensive

²² Foreign Affairs Committee, First Report of Session 2007-08, *Foreign and Commonwealth Office Annual Report 2006-07*, HC 50, paras 230-80

²³ Foreign Affairs Committee, Second Report of Session 2007-08, *Global Security: Russia*, HC 51, paras 132-37

²⁴ Foreign Affairs Committee, First Report of Session 2007-08, *Foreign and Commonwealth Office Annual Report 2006-07*, HC 50, paras 281-322

²⁵ Foreign Affairs Committee, Second Report of Session 2007-08, *Global Security: Russia*, HC 51, paras 125-31

Spending Review for the FCO, the BBC World Service and the British Council were well underway. Details of the final settlements and targets were announced in October 2007.

52. Within the three-year CSR period, we calculated the annual real-terms budget growth year on year on the FCO's baseline budget for 2007-08 of £1.6 billion will be 3.4%, -1.2%, and -2.8% respectively. On our analysis, the FCO settlement therefore represents an average real annual reduction of 0.2% in its Departmental Expenditure Limit against the baseline. This compares poorly to the settlements of other departments where the average real increase of DEL is 2.1% per annum over the CSR period. Our conclusion, published in November 2007, was that the CSR07 settlement for the FCO, one of the tightest in Whitehall, risks jeopardising the FCO's important work.²⁶

53. In our report we also discussed the FCO's operational efficiency, including issues such as ICT savings, workforce changes, shared services and efficiency monitoring.

54. We have corresponded with the FCO about its Supplementary Estimates, in which it seeks parliamentary approval for changes in the spending plans already agreed, and about its Autumn Performance Report.²⁷

Scrutiny of major appointments

55. We have previously announced our intention of scrutinising any major diplomatic or consular appointment of a person from outside the diplomatic service. In our last annual report we noted that the only such appointments to be made in recent years were made during the period when there was no Committee in existence, at the time of the 2005 general election. As the appointments were *faits accomplis* by the time the Committee was nominated, we did not hold hearings with the individuals concerned.²⁸ However, in August 2007, the Government announced that it intended to appoint Scottish Labour leader and former First Minister Jack McConnell MSP as British High Commissioner to Malawi when the current High Commissioner's posting ends in 2009. We plan to hold an evidence session with Mr McConnell in March 2008.

²⁶ Foreign Affairs Committee, First Report of Session 2007-08, *Foreign and Commonwealth Office Annual Report 2006-07*, HC 50, paras 12-20

²⁷ See *ibid.*, paras 10-11.

²⁸ See Foreign Affairs Committee, First Report of Session 2006-07, *The Work of the Committee in 2005 and 2006*, HC 206, para 54

7 Departmental response

56. In 2007, the FCO has maintained its generally very good record of responding to our Reports on time, and has continued to issue its responses as full Command Papers.

57. In our last annual report, we commented on what we described as “the continuing problem of eliciting information from the FCO”.²⁹ Unfortunately, this problem has affected our work in 2007 also.

58. In our report on *Global Security: The Middle East*, we noted that the FCO’s failure to provide us with a timely response to basic administrative questions had hampered our ability to scrutinise the Government’s approach to the Middle East. We also concluded that the FCO needs to reconsider its approach towards confidentiality of documents, observing that in one instance –

It [...] appears that the sensitivity of one category of data caused the FCO to classify a whole range of information in its original letter. This has served to confirm our view that the FCO too often classifies material unnecessarily and in ways which, even if they are not calculated to avoid public scrutiny, certainly have that effect.³⁰

We accordingly recommended that, when parts of a document can be released without classification, a crude blanket approach should not be applied to that document. In its reply to our Report, commenting on this recommendation, the Government stated that it “will consider how we can do so [release part of a classified document without classification] in future in order to help meet the Committee’s needs”.³¹

59. In our Report on the FCO’s departmental report, we commented that we were very disappointed by the previous Foreign Secretary’s decision to withdraw a commitment to send us the FCO’s quarterly management reports. We welcomed the fact that under the new Foreign Secretary this decision has been overturned. We also reminded the FCO that the other aspect of the previous commitment made to the Committee was an assurance that we would be sent information, particularly key management papers, on a systematic basis.

8 Assisting the House

60. Our Report on foreign policy aspects of the Lisbon Treaty was listed on the House’s Order Paper as relevant to the debate on Second Reading of the European Union (Amendment) Bill on 21 January 2008. Our Reports on East Asia and on the FCO’s Human Rights Annual Report 2006 were debated in Westminster Hall in February and October 2007 respectively.³²

²⁹ *Ibid.*, para 58

³⁰ Foreign Affairs Committee, Eighth Report of Session 2006-07, *Global Security: The Middle East*, HC 363, para 8

³¹ Eighth Report of Foreign Affairs Committee, Session 2006-07, *Global Security: The Middle East: Response of the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs*, Cm 7212, p 5 (para 10)

³² HC Deb, 1 February 2007, cols 147-192WH; HC Deb, 11 October 2007, cols 141-182WH

9 Looking ahead

61. We intend to take further evidence on the Overseas Territories and to publish reports on this subject and on Iran in the Spring. We hope to announce our programme for work for the period to July 2008 by mid-February.

Annex 1

Relevance of the core criteria to work carried out in 2007

	Government and Commission policy proposals	Examination of deficiencies	Departmental actions	Associated public bodies	Major appointments	Implementation of legislation	Draft legislation	Expenditure	Evidence from Minister	Public Service Agreements
Global Security: The Middle East	√	(√)	√		(√)			(√)	√	(√)
Global Security: Russia	(√)	(√)	√	√					√	(√)
Developments in the European Union	√	(√)	√					(√)	√	(√)
Foreign Policy Aspects of the Lisbon Treaty	√	(√)	√		(√)		(√)	(√)	√	(√)
Strategic Export Controls	(√)	(√)	√			√		(√)	√	(√)
Visit to Guantánamo Bay	(√)	√	√			(√)				(√)
South Asia	(√)	(√)	√	√				(√)	√	(√)
Visit to Turkey and Cyprus	(√)		(√)							(√)
Foreign Policy Aspects of the Detention of Naval Personnel by the Islamic Republic of Iran	(√)	√	√						√	(√)
Human Rights Annual Report 2006	√	(√)	√						√	(√)
FCO Annual Report 2006–07		√	√	√	(√)			√	√	√
Iraq (evidence only)	(√)	(√)	√						√	(√)
Iran (evidence only)	(√)	(√)	√						√	(√)
Overseas Territories (evidence only)		(√)	√			(√)				(√)

√ = the work of the Committee on this inquiry fulfils the criterion
 (√) = the work of the Committee on this inquiry is relevant to the criterion

Annex 2

List of Committee visits in 2007, with relevant inquiries

Destination	Dates	Relevant inquiry
Brussels, Berlin, Cyprus, Turkey (in 2 groups)	15-18 January 2007	Developments in the EU
Egypt, Jordan, Israel, Occupied Palestinian Territories, Syria, Lebanon (in 2 groups)	25-29 March 2007	Global Security
Russia, Azerbaijan, Austria (in 2 groups)	3-8 June 2007	Global Security
Portugal, Spain, Gibraltar, Serbia, Kosovo (in 2 groups)	9-12 July 2007	Developments in the EU
UN (New York) and USA (Washington DC)	14-19 October 2007	Global Security
Iran	11-16 November 2007	Global Security

Annex 3

Informal meetings held by the Foreign Affairs Committee in 2007

Wednesday 17th January 2007

Mr Marek Jurek, Speaker of the Polish Parliament

Tuesday 30th January 2007

Delegation from The Republic of Korea

Tuesday 30th January 2007

HE Mr Zvi Heifetz, Israeli Ambassador

Thursday 1st February 2007

Mr Adrian Vierita, Deputy Foreign Minister and Minister of European Affairs, Romania

Thursday 1st February 2007

HE Mr Berhanu Kebede, Ethiopian Ambassador

Tuesday 20th February 2007

Dr Peter Gooderham, Director, Middle East and North Africa, FCO

Monday 19th February

Dr Maleeha Lodhi, Pakistani High Commissioner

Tuesday 20 February 2007

Foreign Affairs Committee of Slovenia

Monday 26th February

Mr Stewart Eldon CMG OBE, UK Permanent Representative to NATO

Tuesday 27th February

Dr Shai Feldman, Brandeis University

Tuesday 27th February

IPU delegation of Lebanese MPs

Tuesday 6th March

Senator James Wright, High Commissioner of Canada

Tuesday 6th March

Ms Frances Guy, HM Ambassador to the Lebanese Republic

Wednesday 7th March 2007

HE Akin Alptuna, Turkish Ambassador

Tuesday 13th March 2007

HE Ms Borbála Czakó, Ambassador of the Republic of Hungary

Thursday 22nd March 2007

George Baramidze, Georgian Deputy Prime Minister and State Minister for Europe

Thursday 22nd March 2007

Dr John Jenkins, HM Ambassador to Syria

Tuesday 13th March 2007

The Iraqi Foreign Affairs Committee

Thursday 19th April 2007

Ruprecht Polenz, Chairman of the German Bundestag's Committee on Foreign Affairs

Wednesday 2nd May 2007

Ian McCartney MP, Minister of State for Trade, FCO

Tuesday 8th May 2007

Consular Crisis Centre

Thursday 10th May 2007

HE Mr Zvi Heifetz, Israeli Ambassador

Tuesday 22 May 2007

Mr Jonathan Rugman, Channel 4 News Diplomatic Correspondent

Wednesday 23rd May 2007

Rt Hon the Lord Robertson of Port Ellen KT, GCMG, former Secretary General of NATO

Tuesday 12th June 2007

Brazilian Parliamentarians

Tuesday 12th June 2007

Mr Igor Radojicic, President of the National Assembly of Republika Srpska, Bosnia-Herzegovina

Tuesday 19th June 2007

British Council

Wednesday 20th June 2007

Sven Mikser, Chairman of the Estonian Foreign Affairs Committee and Marko Mihkelson, Chairman of the Estonian European Affairs Committee

Tuesday 21st June 2007

Rt Hon Geoff Hoon MP, Minister for Europe

Tuesday 26th June 2007

HE Ms Barbara Tuge-Erecińska, Ambassador of Poland

Wednesday 27th June 2007

Lamar McKay, Senior Group Vice-President, BP

Wednesday 27th June 2007

Mr John Bellinger, Legal Adviser to the State Department, United States

Tuesday 2nd July 2007

Members of Parliament from Kyrgystan

Tuesday 3rd July 2007

Mr Andrei Orlov, Vice-President Business Development, SNC-Lavalin Inc.

Thursday 5th July 2007

Members of Parliament from Tibet

Monday 16th July 2007

Sir Emyr Jones Parry, UK Permanent Representative to the United Nations

Tuesday 17th July 2007

Mr Alexander Sternik, Senior Counsellor and Head of the Political Section, Embassy of the Russian Federation

Wednesday 18th July 2007

Sir John Sawers, the next UK Permanent Representative to the United Nations

Wednesday 18th July 2007

Members of Parliament from Egypt

Thursday 19th July 2007

Ms Pamela Tremont, First Secretary, US Embassy

Wednesday 25th July 2007

Rt Hon Lord Malloch Brown, Minister of State, FCO

Thursday 19th July 2007

Australian Parliamentarians

Thursday 16th August 2007

Israeli Ambassador and Deputy Ambassador

Tuesday 21st August 2007

Mr Muhamed Halili, Chargé d'Affaires, Embassy of Macedonia

Tuesday 18th September 2007

Mr Vuk Jeremic, Serbian Foreign Minister

Thursday 27th September 2007

HE Sam Kutesa, Foreign Minister of Uganda

Wednesday 3rd October 2007

Sir Peter Ricketts KCMG, Permanent Under-Secretary, and officials, FCO

Wednesday 10th October 2007

Foreign and Commonwealth Office officials

Tuesday 23rd October 2007

UKvisas, Foreign and Commonwealth Office

Tuesday 30th October 2007

Foreign and Commonwealth Office officials

Wednesday 7th November 2007

Geoffrey Adams, HM Ambassador to Iran

Thursday 8th November 2007

Representatives from the Bahá'í community

Wednesday 14th November 2007

The Speaker, House of Assembly, Turks and Caicos Islands

Tuesday 20th November 2007

Leader of the Opposition, Turks and Caicos Islands

Tuesday 27th November 2007

Inter-Parliamentary Union delegation from the Gabonese Republic

Tuesday 4th December 2007

Senators Javed Ashraf Qazi and Tariq Azeem, special envoys from Pakistan

Tuesday 4th December 2007

Adrian Cioroianu, Romanian Foreign Minister

Tuesday 4th December 2007

HE Jan Winkler, Ambassador of the Czech Republic

Wednesday 5th December 2007

Ambassador Francesc Vendrell EU Special Representative for Afghanistan

Wednesday 5th December 2007

Overseas Territory government representatives

Thursday 6th December 2007

National Council of Resistance of Iran

Thursday 6th December 2007

Mr Igor Radojičić, President, Republika Srpska National Assembly; Perica Rajčević, Member, Republika Srpska National Assembly; Gordan Milosevic, Chief Advisor to the Prime Minister of Republika Srpska; HE Dr Tanja Milasinovic, Ambassador of Bosnia-Herzegovina

Monday 10th December 2007

HE Mr P W Waldeck, Ambassador of the Netherlands

Annex 4

Oral evidence sessions

During 2007 the Committee held 26 oral evidence sessions. The evidence listed below is available on the Committee's website, www.parliament.uk/facom.

11 January 2007	<i>Iraq</i> Rt Hon Margaret Beckett MP, Foreign Secretary, and Mr Nigel Casey, Head of Iraq Policy Unit, Foreign and Commonwealth Office; and Rt Hon Des Browne MP, Secretary of State for Defence and Air Chief Marshal Sir Jock Stirrup GCB, Chief of Defence Staff, Ministry of Defence
23 January 2007	<i>South Asia</i> Rt Hon Margaret Beckett MP, Foreign Secretary, Richard Codrington, Head, Afghan Group, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, and Antony Stokes, Head, South Asia Group, Foreign and Commonwealth Office
24 January 2007	<i>Human Rights</i> Kate Allen, Director, Amnesty International UK, Tom Porteus, London Director, Human Rights Watch
31 January 2007	<i>South Asia</i> Dr Matthew J Nelson, School of Oriental and African Studies; Dr Gareth Price, Chatham House; and Mr Michael Griffin, journalist and author
7 February 2007	<i>Human Rights</i> Ian McCartney, Minister of State for Trade, Investment and Foreign Affairs, Susan Hyland, Head, Human Rights, Democracy and Governance Group and Stuart Adam, Head, Public Policy and Licensing Team, Foreign and Commonwealth Office
26 February 2007	<i>Foreign and Commonwealth Office Annual Report</i> Sir Peter Ricketts KCMG, Permanent Under-Secretary and Head of the Diplomatic Service, Dickie Stagg, Director-General Change and Delivery, Keith Luck, Director General Finance and David Warren, Director Human Resources, Foreign and Commonwealth Office
28 February 2007	<i>Global Security: The Middle East</i> Simon McDonald CMG, Director, Iraq, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Dr Peter Gooderham, Director, Middle East and North Africa, Foreign and Commonwealth Office
7 March 2007	<i>Global Security: The Middle East</i> Nadim Shehadi, Chatham House, Patrick Seale, Author, Consultant and Syndicated Columnist, Dr Ali Ansari, St Andrews University and Professor Anoush Ehteshami, Durham University
14 March 2007	<i>Global Security: The Middle East</i> Dr Kim Howells MP, Minister of State for the Middle East, Simon McDonald CMG, Director, Iraq and Dr Peter Gooderham, Director, Middle East and North Africa, Foreign and Commonwealth Office
28 April 2007	<i>Global Security: Russia</i> Dr Roy Allison, London School of Economics and Political Science, Professor Margot Light, London School of Economics and Political Science, Dr Alex Pravda, St Antony's College, University of Oxford, Dr

	Derek Averre, University of Birmingham, Katinka Barysch, Centre for European Reform and Jackie Gower, Kings College London
2 May 2007	<i>Global Security: Iran</i> Sir Richard Dalton KCMG, Ambassador to Iran 2002-06, and Dr. Rosemary Hollis, Director of Research, Chatham House
16 May 2007	<i>Global Security: Russia</i> Anne Aldis, Head, Conflict Studies Research Centre, UK Defence Academy, Professor Yury Fedorov, Chatham House, John Roberts, energy security specialist, Platts, Professor Bill Bowring, School of Law, Birbeck College, University of London, David Clark, Chairman, Russia Foundation and Andrew Monaghan, Senior Research Associate, Conflict Studies Research Centre, UK Defence Academy, and consultant to NATO Defence College, Rome
23 May 2007	<i>Global Security: Iran</i> Dr. Ali Ansari, Reader, School of History, University of St Andrews, Dr. Frank Barnaby, Nuclear Issues Consultant, Oxford Research group, Lord Triesman of Tottenham, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, and Neil Crompton, Iran Co-ordinator, Foreign and Commonwealth Office
19 June 2007	<i>Developments in the EU</i> Rt. hon. Margaret Beckett MP, Foreign Secretary, Patrick Reilly, Head, Future of Europe Group, Anthony Smith, Director, European Union, Foreign and Commonwealth Office
27 June 2007	<i>Foreign and Commonwealth Office Annual Report</i> Lord Kinnock, Chair, Martin Davidson, Chief Executive and Margaret Mayne, Director of Finance, British Council
4 July 2007	<i>Global Security: Iran</i> Lord Archer of Sandwell QC
17 July 2007	<i>Foreign and Commonwealth Office Annual Report</i> Lord Ashdown of Norton-sub-Hamdon, GCMG KBE, Sir Ivor Roberts KCMG, Diplomatic Service (1968-2006)
18 July 2007	<i>Global Security: Russia</i> Mr Jim Murphy MP, Minister for Europe, Michael Davenport, Director, Russia, South Caucasus and Central Asia Directorate and Damian Thwaites, Deputy Head, Russia Section, Russia, South Caucasus and Central Asia Directorate, Foreign and Commonwealth Office
12 September 2007	<i>Developments in the EU</i> Mr Jim Murphy MP, Minister for Europe, Ms Shan Morgan, Director, EU and Ms Shelagh Brooks, Legal Adviser, Foreign and Commonwealth Office
10 October 2007	<i>Developments in the EU</i> Rt Hon David Miliband MP, Foreign Secretary, Shan Morgan, Director EU, Foreign and Commonwealth Office and Mr Mike Thomas, Legal Counsellor - Europe, Foreign and Commonwealth Office:
21 November 2007	<i>Developments in the EU</i> Mr Graham Avery, St Antony's College, University of Oxford, Professor Christopher Hill, University of Cambridge and Professor Richard G. Whitman, University of Bath
28 November 2007	<i>Global Security: Iran</i> Dr Kim Howells MP, Minister for State, Antony Phillipson, Iran Coordinator and Paul Arkwright, Head of Counter Proliferation, Foreign and Commonwealth Office

3 December 2007	<p><i>Overseas Territories</i> The Hon Ralph O’Neal, Premier, British Virgin Islands and The Hon Kurt Tibbetts, Leader of Government Business, Cayman Islands, Councillor Mike Summers OBE, Falkland Islands, Leslie Jaques OBE, Commissioner, Pitcairn Islands, and The Hon Brian W. Isaac, Member of the Executive Council, St Helena; and The Hon Osbourne Fleming, Chief Minister, Anguilla, Dr The Hon Lowell Lewis, Chief Minister, Montserrat, and Dr The Hon Michael E Misick, Premier, Turks and Caicos Islands</p>
5 December 2007	<p><i>Developments in the EU</i> Rt Hon the Lord Owen CH</p>
12 December 2007	<p><i>Developments in the EU</i> Rt Hon David Miliband MP, Foreign Secretary, Shan Morgan, Director Europe, Paul Berman, Legal Adviser and Martin Shearman, Head of CFSP, Europe Directorate, Foreign and Commonwealth Office</p>

Formal minutes

Wednesday 23 January 2008

Members present:

Mike Gapes, in the Chair

Sir Menzies Campbell
Mr Fabian Hamilton
Mr Eric Illsley
Mr Paul Keetch
Andrew Mackinlay
Mr Malcolm Moss

Sandra Osborne
Mr Greg Pope
Mr Ken Purchase
Sir John Stanley
Ms Gisela Stuart

The Committee deliberated.

Draft Report (*The Work of the Committee in 2008*), proposed by the Chairman, brought up and read.

Ordered, That the Chairman's draft Report be read a second time, paragraph by paragraph.

Paragraphs 1 to 61 read and agreed to.

Annexes agreed to.

Resolved, That the Report be the Fourth Report of the Committee to the House.

Ordered, That the Chairman make the Report to the House.

The Committee further deliberated.

[Adjourned till Wednesday 30 January at 2 p.m.]