



Defence Committee

Oral evidence: [Towards the next Defence and Security](#)

[Review: Part Two: NATO](#), HC 358

Wednesday 9 July 2014

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Written evidence from witnesses:

- [Ministry of Defence](#)

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Members present: Ms Gisela Stuart (Chair); Mr Julian Brazier; Mr James Gray; Sir Bob Russell; Rory Stewart; Derek Twigg

Questions 314-387

Q314 Chair: Welcome to the Defence Committee, Secretary of State. We are expecting a vote at 4 o'clock, so I think it would be in everybody's interest if we aimed to finish by 4. However, should you delight us with such interesting paths that we wish to pursue them, we may change our minds. To put our meeting into context, this is the fourth evidence session in the Committee's inquiry, Towards the Next Defence and Security Review. We are trying to look at the world in a strategic way that will take us beyond 2015. Can I just ask Mr Wyatt and Mr Watkins to introduce themselves very briefly?

Peter Watkins: I am Peter Watkins and I am the director general of security policy. I succeeded Tom McKane, who gave evidence to you on 9 April.

Paul Wyatt: I am Paul Wyatt. I succeeded Ed Ferguson, whom you have spoken to previously on this subject. I am Head of Strategy and Priorities in the MOD.

Q315 Chair: When we took evidence this morning and in some other sessions, all our witnesses said that events in Ukraine and Russia's behaviour towards its near neighbours has fundamentally changed the world, and we have to challenge some of our assumptions as to who our enemies and allies are, and the kinds of threats we face. What assessment has the MOD made in light of the events in Ukraine?

Mr Hammond: I think it is important not to overstate the extent to which what has happened in Ukraine has come as a surprise to us. Clearly, it has focused attention on the way Russia is prepared to use the power of the state in all its shapes and forms in pursuit of its own interests as it sees them and without regard to the norms of international behaviour. But we have seen this behaviour before in Georgia, and those who spend their lives looking in

detail at these things are not surprised by the way we have seen the Russians engage in Ukraine. They are not surprised by the tactics and doctrine that has been employed, and in answer to my questions, they have indicated to me that it is a known and understood Russian doctrine that is being applied here. I think it has, however, presented a challenge to NATO, which, of course, is the absolute cornerstone of our defence. Many of our eastern European NATO partners have been saying for some time that they feel NATO should be more focused on the challenges to the East and perhaps a bit less focused on out-of-area operations.

My own view is that the big challenge that the events in Russia and Ukraine present to us for the summit in September is to demonstrate that NATO has the bandwidth and the flexibility to handle multiple situations simultaneously: the continuing commitments in Afghanistan, the threat from the Middle East and north Africa—and now, sadly, that definition of north Africa extends quite a long way down into west Africa—and also the recognition that the old threat from the East has not gone away in the way that perhaps many of us hoped it would. We have to be able to demonstrate the bandwidth to address all those issues simultaneously, and to be agile and flexible enough to manage multiple areas of threat at the same time.

Q316 Chair: But has the relationship between NATO and Russia not changed?

Mr Hammond: Yes, undoubtedly the relationship between NATO and Russia has changed, and whatever now happens, we cannot go straight back to business as usual with Russia. The Russians have demonstrated very clearly a contempt for the rules of the international community. They have demonstrated very clearly that they do believe international boundaries can be changed by coercion, by force of arms and by subversion, and that is an unacceptable position. That behaviour by Russia cannot go unanswered, so while we hope that there will be a negotiated solution between Russia and Ukraine and that the tension will de-escalate, we cannot simply go back to business as usual. As the Foreign Secretary has said, we have to recognise that our relationship with Russia over the next few years is likely to be different from that which we have been trying to build over the past few years.

Q317 Chair: And in light of that, who are our most significant strategic partners?

Mr Hammond: Clearly, the United States is our single most significant strategic partner and will remain so in any foreseeable circumstance. But the strategy we set out in the 2010 SDSR was to build on our partnerships and alliances and, in particular, to build our partnership with France into a more robust working bilateral military relationship, which we have done with extraordinarily good progress over the past few years. That will also be an important part of this architecture.

Q318 Chair: Before I hand over to James Gray, I have one quick question. *The Sun* reported that we intend to withdraw all our forces from Afghanistan by the end of October, rather than by the end of the year. Would you like to comment on that?

Mr Hammond: Our plan is to have a sustained presence in Afghanistan after 31 December in the form of our continued commitment to the Afghan National Army Officer Academy and the supporting forces that will be needed for that continued engagement. However, we do not yet have a President of Afghanistan clearly elected and we certainly do not have a clear route to an inauguration, and therefore we do not have either a strategic partnership agreement or a status of forces agreement for NATO.

If there is no status of forces agreement, we have to be able to take every last one of our people out of Afghanistan on or before 31 December 2014 and, until that agreement is signed, we must have a plan which allows us to get everyone—including every last logistics person—out by 31 December. To do that, we would have to have the bulk of the current force out by the end of October to deal with the logistics tail, packing up the last kit and extracting our last presence in the Kabul and Kaga area. That is not a course of action that we hope or expect to have to take, but precautionary military planning requires that we are able to get everyone out by 31 December if we have to, and we will stand that plan down only when the Afghan Government has signed the status of forces agreement.

Q319 Chair: What is the date by which you have to make the decision on activating the precautionary plan?

Mr Hammond: It is a rolling—I think when we first asked the question we were told that June 2013 was the cut-off date, but, as always when you push against these things, the plan has evolved to allow more flexibility. If we get to the middle of September and we still have not got clarity that the SOFA will definitely be signed, it will start to become very difficult.

Q320 Mr Gray: Secretary of State—and possibly Mr Watkins might be interested in this—what would you say are our greatest strategic vulnerabilities?

Mr Hammond: The Chair suggested that the Russia-Ukraine issue over the past few months had changed the debate. To some extent it has focused us on our strengths and, at the same time, our weaknesses. If I can put it in a nutshell, it is our democracy. Democracy is our great strength: it gives us the moral high ground and resilience. But democratic systems are also less agile and certainly less quick at decision making.

In the course of the Russia-Ukraine situation we have seen decision making on one side concentrated in the hands of a single person, able to make complex decisions literally in a split second, and, on the other side, the challenges of not only making decisions at 28 in NATO, but, before we even get to NATO to make decisions, having had to carry 28 separate Parliaments, 28 separate sets of media, 28 separate sets of public opinion, in order to get to the positions that we adopt in the North Atlantic Council. Inevitably, we are slower to respond than an autocracy—

Q321 Mr Gray: I did not express my question terribly well. While we are on this subject, if I may I will deviate from the agenda for one second on to a topic of great personal interest to

me. What is the Government's current thinking on the Foreign Secretary's commitment to write into law a requirement for the House of Commons to vote prior to any military deployment?

Mr Hammond: The Government has made it clear that it believes that the current constitutional arrangements are adequate, as we saw demonstrated in the case of the Syria vote last October. The House of Commons has the appropriate power. The convention is clear. It was asserted by the last Government. It has been restated by the current Government. The position remains thus.

Q322 Mr Gray: I won't press you further as it is off our topic for today, but it was something that sprung to mind. I didn't really express my question properly. It was not so much about our national vulnerabilities in the sense of the decision-making process and the things you described; what I meant is, what is our strategic—

Mr Hammond: Capability—

Mr Gray: No, strategic vulnerability is the word. What are we scared of? What are the worries that we have, facing the world?

Mr Hammond: I think the No. 1 threat to UK national security remains terrorism, whether state-sponsored or not. That is why we should not be tempted to take our focus away from the very dangerous space that is opening up from Iraq across to the west coast of Africa where extremist Islam is organising and training for terrorist attacks on western targets without any doubt. That remains the principal threat. We also have, of course, the challenges of potential rogue nuclear states in the case of North Korea and in the case of Iran, hopefully subject to the current negotiations resolving that situation. We have been reminded with the Russia-Ukraine stand-off that Russia remains a very significant power which is very significantly misaligned with the interest of ourselves and many of our western allies, and is re-arming at a significant rate and maintaining a significant strategic nuclear arsenal.

Q323 Mr Gray: Okay, certainly the Russian part of that answer, but also to a significant degree the Middle East part, are new, since the last National Security Strategy.

Mr Hammond: The extent of it may be different. The geographical location may be different but the principle of Islamist extremists organising in ungoverned space in order to attack the West was central to the last SDSR analysis.

Mr Gray: Syria hadn't happened. Certainly Iraq hadn't happened in the way that we are seeing it today. Our withdrawal from Afghanistan had not yet been decided on. Most of the Arab Spring had not yet occurred. Most of those things have occurred after the last NSS.

Mr Hammond: You asked about the threat to the UK. The threat to the UK is from Islamist extremist terrorists organising in ungoverned space created by failed states. The identity of the failed states and the geographical location of that ungoverned space have changed and are changing over time. But that does not mean that the threat has changed.

Indeed, in many cases, even the individuals have not changed. They have simply moved from one bit of ungoverned space to another bit of ungoverned space.

Q324 Mr Gray: Certainly, Ukraine, the threat to the Baltic states—all these things are since the last NSS. These are new things. They are not the same as they were four or five years ago.

Mr Hammond: That is a different question. You were asking me about—

Mr Gray: I am allowed to do that. I can ask as many questions I like.

Mr Hammond: You are indeed. Certainly, at the time of the last SDSR, the central guiding proposition, I think, was that we were trying to build a constructive relationship with Russia and to draw Russia into the orbit of nations in the international community. We were not expecting to be allied or aligned with Russia perfectly, but expecting to have an increasingly constructive relationship. Sadly, the events of the last few months suggest—

Q325 Mr Gray: I beg your pardon—I don't mean to keep interrupting but we're allowing ourselves to be diverted. Perhaps I'm being too Delphic, if that's the right expression. What I'm driving at is this. It has been said repeatedly that the last NSS requires only "mild tweaking", I think was the Prime Minister's precise expression: that it really doesn't need rewriting but just a very small update, and that, broadly speaking, the same therefore applies to the SDSR. The point I was trying to drive at, perhaps in a rather roundabout way, was, would you not agree with me that, because of developments in the world since the last NSS, we actually need not just a mild improvement, but a fundamental rewrite and reorganisation of it?

Mr Hammond: No, I don't think so. In terms of the threat to the UK, the situation has changed but I don't think it has changed fundamentally. We need to be clear that we will have a different relationship with Russia in the future, and that that will challenge us in certain respects. Peter, if you want to, step in. But my assessment would be that there is no existential threat to the security of the UK that we have seen emerge as a result of these events. Clearly, some of our NATO neighbours feel a more direct threat from the events of the last few months, but looking at this from a UK perspective, it is certainly something we need to take account of, but in my view it is clearly the case that international terrorism remains the single, principal threat to UK security.

Q326 Mr Gray: Do you still stick by the NSS needing merely a little tweaking, with no significant change to our strategic positioning?

Mr Hammond: That will be a decision for the next Government to make. The NSS will be done after the general election, so that will be a decision for them.

Q327 Chair: Because all these sessions are aimed at informing this very document, after 2015, it would be very helpful to get some sense of the thinking in the MOD on the direction we need to go in. And of course, the SDSR is slightly wider than purely the threats to the UK.

Mr Hammond: It is. It is probably fair to say that events which may strike outside observers as dramatic may appear less dramatic to those who are monitoring the situation very carefully inside the MOD and other organisations that have a professional interest. I repeat what I said earlier: I have gained the very strong impression from my military and strategic colleagues that what I, as a person, am perhaps inclined to see as a major development is in fact an evolution of something that we've been very much aware of for a period of time, and the roots of which we can trace.

Q328 Mr Gray: Hang on. This morning, we had sitting in the very chair you are sitting in a serving General—this is all public, so it will all become known shortly—Sir Richard Shirreff, who will be leaving the Army shortly. He said that we want to see a significant—

Mr Hammond: He's retired.

Mr Gray: No, he remains so for another month, to be absolutely accurate. He is a serving General at this moment and is being paid as a General by the British Army. But you are right in saying that, a month from now, he will be gone, which is why he is free—he said this morning, sitting in that very chair, that he thought we ought to have a significant NATO and therefore UK presence in the Baltic states. That is not in the SDSR or the NSS.

Mr Hammond: No, and it is not the Government's view and it is not NATO's view. He is a retiring General on resettlement leave. He can speak for himself, but he does not speak for the Department.

Q329 Mr Gray: You are slightly stonewalling on this. You've said before, and you keep saying it, that the world is the same as it was five years ago and the NSS is the same, and therefore the SDSR, which is what we are actually here to talk about, equally, will be the same it was. It needs a bit of tweaking—

Mr Hammond: No, I didn't say that, but there is a big difference between saying the world is exactly the same as it was five years ago, and saying that everything has changed, everything has been thrown up in the air and it is fundamentally different. There are different challenges and degrees of change in those challenges, but I don't think the picture has changed quite as fundamentally as you are seeking to—*[Interruption.]*

Chair: I get the sense that Mr Watkins would quite like to add to this debate.

Peter Watkins: I just thought it might be helpful to go back to the words of the National Security Strategy, which said that in an age of uncertainty, the unexpected will happen. The unexpected has happened, but within a boundary that, as it were, our posture could cope with. If you also look at the national security risk register and the tier 1 risks—international terrorism, cyber-attack and an international military crisis—we did foresee that many of these things would happen. We deliberately in the SDSR adopted a posture that would enable us to respond to them.

Q330 Mr Gray: If you don't mind my saying so, those words could mean that the National Security Strategy would remain in stone for the next thousand years, because saying we must expect the unexpected—that goes right back to the Greeks—does not mean that you foresaw anything.

I have a last, slightly technical question. Should the NSS and the SDSR be produced at the same time, as they were last time round, or are you yet persuaded that the two ought to be separate documents?

Mr Hammond: I am sorry to say that that will be a decision for the next Government to make, whether the NSS should precede the SDSR.

Q331 Mr Gray: If it is a Conservative Government, which it may not be, what would you be advising your successor?

Mr Hammond: No decision has been made at present about that. Could I just add something?

Chair: Can we tempt you to a view, even if you have not arrived at a decision yet?

Mr Hammond: No, I am not tempted to volunteer a view. The Cabinet Office is the lead Department on the structure and form of the NSS and the SDSR. The Ministry of Defence will operate within whatever architecture the Cabinet Office decides to mandate for the NSS and SDSR after the general election.

Can I come back to something? It is perhaps a second-order issue but it could be driving the line of questioning that Mr Gray was following. If I had seen anything that suggested to me that because of what we have seen around Russia-Ukraine, there might be a need for a fundamental rethink about the nature and structure of our armed forces and their posture, I might take a slightly different view. It is clear to me that nobody who is studying and analysing these issues believes, for example, that anything that has happened in the past six months calls into question the view that there will be less call for large armoured formations and more call for flexible, highly mobile forces supported by ever-increasing levels of intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance capability. The way in which we will need to structure our forces will be the same whether we are dealing with international terrorism or asymmetric warfare originating from Russia or other state players.

Q332 Sir Bob Russell: Secretary of State, may I ask one quick question? One certainty is that President Putin will not go on for ever. Does any of your thinking take into account what happens to Russia post-Putin?

Mr Hammond: I don't know if Sir Bob knows something that we don't, but every time I look at Mr Putin he shows every sign of looking as though he might go on for ever. Seriously, of course there will be a post-Putin era. There will be a post-Soviet-era-politician era in Russia, when we have a generation of politicians who did not grow up through the KGB or the party apparatus. I think we could be some time away from that. Realistically, we have to plan on the next decade being informed by Soviet-era political thinking in the

Russian leadership. We may find it is better than that, but I think that would be a sensible precautionary principle.

Q333 Sir Bob Russell: Is he a one-man band?

Mr Hammond: In so far as we can determine, there is an extraordinarily centralised decision-making process within the Kremlin.

Peter Watkins: Under the current Russian constitutional arrangements, it is conceivable that Mr Putin could stay in office until 2024.

Chair: Until he changes the constitution and can stay even longer.

Q334 Mr Brazier: Coming back to your point, Secretary of State, on intelligence gathering. However many people may have been able to rationalise it afterwards, there was the unexpectedness of the events in Ukraine. We used to have, until four years ago, a world-class centre of excellence—it changed its name three or four times, but its last name was the Advanced Research and Assessment Group. It brought together a cross-section of top experts—in fact, I think Mr Watkins might have been a member of it at one stage—from the military, the academic world and other walks of life. It was relatively low-budget, but it was world-class. It was disbanded four years ago. Some of those people would doubtless tell you that it was all perfectly predictable, because they looked at history as well as looking forward, so they looked at it in a long context. No doubt, some of the people who tell you that we should not have been surprised by the Ukraine business worked in that group at one time or another. Do we need something like that back again?

Mr Hammond: I will ask Mr Watkins to answer that question.

Peter Watkins: I should really declare an interest, because I was previously the director general of the Defence Academy, of which the ARAG was part. The decision to disband the ARAG was made by my predecessor for a number of reasons. As you say, it included some good people and it produced some good work, but towards the end there was a number of issues within the team and the conclusion was reached that they were no longer adding as much value as they previously did. We do, of course, have an array of other sources of advice and information in the Department, whether from our own defence intelligence staff or from academia, think-tanks, etc. Therefore, we are not deprived of input on the sorts of issues you raised.

Q335 Mr Brazier: But although we have a small group that does doctrine and produced a good document in the past week, we no longer have an example that brings history together with intelligence appraisal and implications for doctrine. It is fragmented now.

Peter Watkins: It has been fragmented, but we recognise—this Committee has made this point, as have others—that we should be able to learn more readily from history. We are doing some work in the Department to ensure we have access to historical advice. The DCDC, to which you referred, is extremely well positioned to get historical advice. It has

good links with a number of academic faculties, not least in Oxford university, which is not far away from it. Therefore, I think we can get the historical input that, as you say, we should seek.

Q336 Mr Brazier: Can I put to you the mischievous suggestion that you won't have any idea where it came from? The reason why ARAG was disbanded is that it gave uncomfortable advice. It was an alternative centre of thinking within MOD that produced uncomfortable truths. Had we had ARAG four years on, we would have had at least a clearer idea that Ukraine, or something like it, was brewing, rather than everybody afterwards rationalising what happened.

Peter Watkins: I think we sometimes get uncomfortable advice from many quarters, not just from ARAG. As I said, a number of factors at the time led to the disbandment, and we do have other sources of advice.

Q337 Mr Brazier: But no plans to bring it together again.

Peter Watkins: No.

Q338 Chair: Do we have enough Russian speakers in the MOD?

Peter Watkins: Very good question. I suspect that we will need to increase the number of Russian speakers.

Mr Gray: Do you have any?

Peter Watkins: We do have some. In fact, we have some very good Russian speakers. Whether we have the number we will need in the future is something we will need to look at.

Mr Gray: How many have you got?

Mr Hammond: I don't think we would be able to answer the question of how many Russian speakers there are across the whole of the MOD and the Armed Forces, and what qualifies as a Russian speaker. I will probe if you are interested.

Mr Gray: We heard that you have none.

Mr Hammond: No, that is clearly not true.

Q339 Chair: I remember going to Afghanistan in 2004 and being told by the MOD that it takes two years to train a Farsi speaker, which is why they haven't got any, but they said the same in 2006, 2008 and 2010. It is best to start getting these language skills, even if it takes a bit of time.

Mr Hammond: If I may say so, there are many capabilities that we would like to have, and we have to prioritise. The essence of managing any organisation is not saying that it would be great to have Farsi speakers, Chinese speakers and Russian speakers; it is about working out what priority we want to give to those things. Every time we take somebody out to train them in a language, we are taking them out from doing something else, so it is about getting the balance right. The organisation is constantly in tension deciding how much time we devote to building the capacity of individuals, as opposed to deploying them in an effective action. We do have to build language capabilities. Right now, one of my biggest challenges is that we do not have enough French speakers to fill all the French exchange posts that are available to us under our Lancaster House arrangements.

Q340 Derek Twigg: Secretary of State, may I clear something up? I may have made a mistake, and I apologise if I did, but I think you said that what the Russians have done in and around the Ukraine—that whole scenario—is not as bad as everyone thinks it is because you have talked to your military and strategic advisers and they have given you a different view on it. Did you say that?

Mr Hammond: I didn't say it is not as bad as everyone thinks it is. What I said was that I don't think it is as dramatic a change as perhaps the public has perceived.

Q341 Derek Twigg: What is the difference between a bad and a dramatic change then?

Mr Hammond: Because we've seen similar behaviour in terms of the doctrine that has been applied and the methodology that the Russians have used in Georgia. We did not—the West collectively—choose to react to it in quite the same way. We perhaps did not collectively draw the lesson from it, but we have now had a second example of it. I am simply sharing with the Committee two questions that I have posed to my experts around this new Russian doctrine. The answer I invariably get is, "We can tell you about it, but it isn't a new Russian doctrine; it's a Russian doctrine that we've been very much aware of as being under development for some time and which we've seen examples of, such as in Georgia."

Q342 Derek Twigg: Is there a difference between, "Not as bad as we thought," and, "Not as dramatic a change as we thought"? Is there a difference? I am trying to work that out.

Mr Hammond: I am sorry, but I'm not quite sure where you are going with this.

Derek Twigg: I am just trying to work out what the difference is.

Mr Hammond: The behaviour of Russia has been unacceptable in relation to another sovereign country. The separate question is: were we surprised to see deniable involvement; were we surprised to see what the Russians call ambiguous warfare concepts being employed; and were we surprised to see subversion via ethnic and language-based groups within the target country? Many of the public may have been, but the answer from my experts is, "No, we were not surprised," because we have understood very well that that is an established Russian operating doctrine.

Q343 Derek Twigg: Have the actions by Russia caused you to rethink your policy of cuts to the Armed Forces and the current problems of recruiting enough Reserves? Has that made you rethink, given the developments that have taken place in the Baltic and particularly in Ukraine?

Mr Hammond: No, I don't think there is anything that we have seen happen over the last six months that would change our view as to the appropriate configuration of the Armed Forces. As I said earlier, if NATO or a neighbouring country to NATO had suffered a massed armour attack, it might pose some other questions, but in terms of the kind of activity that we have seen, I think everything would point us towards exactly the sort of highly flexible and highly mobile forces, heavily supported with things like cyber-capability and ISR capabilities, that we are in fact building to be agile enough to respond to the terrorist threat as well.

Q344 Derek Twigg: And that will not detract from our need to focus on the jihadist threat and developments in the Middle East, Iraq and elsewhere. Do you feel that that has not changed our ability to provide whatever national security we need to deal with those separate areas of the globe?

Mr Hammond: I think that's right. You are asking the kind of questions that I was asking people inside the MOD three or four months ago.

Derek Twigg: I never made it to Secretary of State, just Under-Secretary of State, so there must be a difference. That's why you are asking them.

Mr Hammond: Right. I ask these questions and I have listened to the answers, and the answers are that the kind of behaviour we are seeing from Russia, as a state actor, would not necessarily lead us to a conclusion that we need different kinds of forces to be well defended against it. We will need to think about some of the tactics that we are seeing employed and our approach to handling and responding to those tactics.

Q345 Derek Twigg: Can we go back to the question in terms of the territorial protection of Europe and our ability to respond to that, given what you have said? For instance, is the MOD currently working on mobilisation times for a significant force, if need be, to go into that area? We used to do that in the Cold War days. Is this work being done? Do you have any sort of view now about what time it would take to mobilise a division, for instance, if we needed to do that?

Mr Hammond: Our—

Derek Twigg: That acts as a deterrent as well, knowing that we can mobilise a lot of people quickly.

Mr Hammond: Yes. And our position as set out in the SDSR remains unchanged: to be able to fight a sustained brigade-level engagement; to be able to mobilise a divisional-strength operation on a best-effort basis. Clearly our time to deliver effect in Europe will

change as our draw-down from Germany progresses. At the moment, we still have 15,000-odd troops stationed in Germany, but by 2018 that will be down to a very small number indeed.¹

Q346 Derek Twigg: Have you actually worked out internally what time it would take to mobilise a force of that size?

Peter Watkins: We have a range of forces at a range of readiness levels, and those remain unchanged. What we have done over the last few months is to deploy certain forces into the Baltic area—for example the Baltic air policing with the four Typhoons, which we have deployed very quickly. We have also deployed people to take part in exercises and so on to send a message of resolve and reassurance.

Q347 Derek Twigg: But you have not actually done the scenario—worked it out in terms of the time it would take for a brigade or division to be deployed into that area?

Peter Watkins: We have long-standing plans, which the Secretary of State has referred to.

Q348 Derek Twigg: Are there any plans to have any training exercises to do that?

Mr Hammond: NATO is preparing plans for a more enduring pattern of exercises in the Baltic states and Poland, and in the Baltic itself. We have taken action in the short term to provide reassurance, but we will be looking across NATO to make that a more regular and continuing activity to provide ongoing reassurance.

Q349 Derek Twigg: Of the level we are talking about.

Mr Hammond: No. I don't think we will be talking about divisional-level operations.

Derek Twigg: Brigade-level.

Mr Hammond: I am afraid you are asking the wrong person. It will be for SACEUR—Supreme Allied Commander Europe—to make proposals.

Q350 Derek Twigg: You will be having discussions with your counterparts, as do your military advisers.

Mr Hammond: Of course. These will be multinational exercises, so it would not be a question of a UK brigade or a UK division; it would be a question of a multinational NATO operation.

¹ Note by witness: At the end of 2013—13,500 Service Personnel stationed in Germany.

Q351 Derek Twigg: No. But if needed, the UK could be asked to do that.

Peter Watkins: Any response we make should be proportionate to the risk and threat that we are facing, and as the Secretary of State has said, we are not looking at divisions and so on, if you like, from Russia. We are looking at a different pattern of activity and our response has been calibrated to match that.

Q352 Derek Twigg: I am just trying to get at where you are. Basically you do not think there is ever going to be a threat, certainly in the near future, where we would need to mobilise a brigade or even a division. You do not think that is ever going to be necessary, certainly in the near future.

Mr Hammond: Well, I don't think—

Derek Twigg: I am sorry, but with respect, Secretary of State, Mr Watkins just said that they do not envisage that.

Mr Hammond: We don't envisage doing the exercise; I think that was what Mr Watkins said.

Q353 Derek Twigg: So you do envisage it as a potential threat.

Mr Hammond: There is a vast range of potential threats. I am not going to have words put in my mouth that then suggest that we see a threat that we don't actually see right at the moment. Of course we have to be able to respond to a wide range of threats but, frankly, I think to suggest that what we have seen in Ukraine requires us to be looking at how we would mobilise divisional-strength responses is to miss what we have actually seen. It is to misunderstand the challenge that we should be reading from the asymmetric, ambiguous, deniable-type activity that has been going on in Ukraine—a level of activity that public opinion in this country would probably find insufficient to justify the sort of responses that you are talking about.

Q354 Derek Twigg: And don't assume, based on that, that there would be any additional expenditure needed as a result of what is going on in Ukraine and in the Baltic area.

Mr Hammond: I am sorry; I missed the first part.

Derek Twigg: Currently, defence forces are capable of meeting any perceived threats, and the work they are currently doing—

Mr Hammond: The cost of the additional reassurance deployments that we have undertaken and an allocation for an additional programme of exercising in the Baltic states, the Baltic sea and in Poland over the rest of this financial year has been allowed for in the DMAP—²

Peter Watkins: The defence military activities programme.

Mr Hammond: No, it stands for something else—it is our contingent fund, which is half Defence money and half Treasury money, that is used for activity that was not planned, but is required at short notice. It is directed by the NSC and is below the threshold for funding from the Treasury reserve as an operation.

Q355 Derek Twigg: So that is contingency money from the Treasury to be able to deal with that.

Mr Hammond: It is a contingency specifically for low-level military operations.

Q356 Derek Twigg: The logistics and management contract should have a preferred bidder identified in the autumn. The original requirement was based on an expeditionary stance. Has that now been changed or partly changed to take account of territorial protection need in Europe?

Mr Hammond: I don't believe that the specification for the defence logistics partnership has changed.

Q357 Derek Twigg: So it has taken no account of the developments in Ukraine.

Mr Hammond: I am sorry to have to say this again—Mr Watkins has said it already—but the whole point and centre part of SDSR 2010 was a flexible, adaptable and responsive posture. That means that we do not have to rebuild everything every time something changes in the threat architecture. I will go away and look at the defence logistics package now that you have mentioned it, but I would expect to find that it is structured in such a way to be agile enough to deal with different responses—a Baltic situation compared with an out-of-area situation. I am happy to write to you once I have looked at it.

Q358 Mr Brazier: Just to round off Mr Twigg's question, we were told at SHAPE that the Russians can get 150,000 troops together in a matter of days for a conventional operation. We saw in Georgia that they can start with a very unconventional operation, including cyber and all the rest of it, and then literally overnight turn it with the massing of troops into a very conventional operation. Do you envisage NATO—we obviously have the conference with us in the chair—trying to devise some sort of counterpart? Would you see Britain making a significant contribution to it?

Mr Hammond: Just to be clear, we are hosting the NATO summit, but that does not mean that we chair it or set the agenda—we simply host it.

There are obviously a number of NATO European partners that have large standing armies and would be geographically well positioned to mobilise and provide forces if such a

² Note by Witness: DMAP—Deployed Military Activity Pool.

thing were required. The 150,000 you mention seems to me, if we look across northern and eastern Europe, not to be a figure that would be unmatched in any way.

Q359 Chair: Can I just make an observation, because we are running against a slight divergence of views here? So far our witnesses would have argued that the world has fundamentally changed, because for the first time since world war two has a major power not just threatened but redrawn national boundaries. All the evidence that we have had so far suggests to us that that does change the world just a little.

Mr Hammond: And no one is wishing to act as an apologist for Russian behaviour, but it has not done so by force of military arms; it has done so by an asymmetric approach, using subversion and using proxies—using all these types of approach—which presents a set of challenges to us. But we also need to understand two things: Russia operating in a piece of territory which was once part of the Russian empire, if you like, offers opportunities for subversion and the use of proxies that operation in other territories wouldn't so readily offer, and we mustn't draw incorrect extrapolations from what is happening in one place to assume that the same tactics could be deployed successfully in another place. So I think we've got to be just a little bit careful about drawing lessons that are not valid from the activities there.

Q360 Derek Twigg: Do you think that moving a large number of troops to the border of Ukraine is not a military action? Do you think that, in the Cold War days, the West would have moved a large number of our troops to the border as well? Do you think that is not military action?

Mr Hammond: Look, all countries retain the right to move their own forces within their own borders, and we've seen the Russians—

Q361 Derek Twigg: Isn't that intimidation?

Mr Hammond: Well, intimidation is a part of the approach that Russia has deployed.

Q362 Derek Twigg: Isn't that military action?

Mr Hammond: Well, it's not military action in the sense that tanks rolling across the border would be.

Q363 Mr Gray: I think you're absolutely right to be very careful about definitions, and the asymmetric, proxy, unconventional type of actions that we saw in Ukraine are indeed a sort of new approach to warfare. If they occurred, and some have begun to occur, in a NATO member or an EU country, would that trigger Article 5?

Mr Hammond: Clearly, all NATO member states benefit from the Article 5 guarantee, and if they were attacked, any NATO member state would expect the other NATO member states to come to their assistance.

Q364 Mr Gray: That wasn't the question. The question was: if a group of men in green uniforms of platoon strength appeared in a wood 25 miles inside that Latvian border, or if the Russians started, for example, closing down the Latvian banks—as, of course, they did very successfully in 2006—or took part in a whole variety of other activities that fell short of conventional invasion, would that or would that not trigger an Article 5 moment?

Mr Hammond: I can't give a clear and unambiguous answer to that, and I suspect, in strategic terms, neither should we. This is an emerging challenge, not just for NATO but for all nations, to define the boundaries of warfare in an era when it is becoming ever more complex. We have seen cyber-attacks on many nations, and defining the point at which a response is triggered in the way that a conventional military attack would have triggered a response is challenging. It is challenging ethically; it is challenging legally.

Q365 Mr Gray: But, Secretary of State, in your previous answers, you have broadly speaking been seeking to argue that things are, “Steady as she goes,” “Evolving rather splendidly,” “Don't worry too much about the SDSR or our trade,” “We don't need to deploy large numbers of troops to the Baltics,” and so on and so forth. Now what you are saying really is happening today. I visited the Baltics a couple of weeks ago, and the Russians are doing these things. It could be within days—it could be today, for all I know, when it's happening on the news—that there could be Russians in green uniforms crossing the Latvian border, testing NATO's resilience. Now, just to say, “I can't tell you whether it would trigger a response from NATO,” I am afraid, will lessen the level of security that the people of the Baltics—

Mr Hammond: No, I am sorry; you are asking me to define something that, firstly, it is impossible to define a priori; and, secondly, that it would be most unwise and unhelpful to define. But I go back to the comments I made at the very beginning of this session: strategic weakness and strategic strength. Our strategic weakness and our strategic strength is that we are a democracy. In the end, we can sit in this room talking about what will or will not trigger an Article 5 response, but we have to carry our public opinion with us. We have to explain to public opinion why we want to put our people in harm's way.

Q366 Mr Gray: That is an entirely separate issue, although it does make an interesting point, which is that you are actually suggesting that an Article 5 moment could be triggered, NATO could decide to do something, but we here in Britain, a democracy, would decide not to do it. That in itself is quite an interesting constitutional discussion to be had, but it is not the nature of the question I was asking. The question I was asking is a simple one. The people of the Baltics are depending on us to deter Russia from doing these things. They saw them being done in Ukraine. They think it is very likely to happen there, and the Russians are already broadcasting all sorts of rubbish over the Russian stations. One third of the population is Russian-speaking and intellectually, and all those things. They are looking to NATO for

reassurance that, if those things start happening to them, NATO will stand strong. Indeed, the credence of NATO depends on NATO standing strong. If what we are saying is, “Well, some of those things that happened in Ukraine could happen in Lithuania and I cannot tell you whether we would react in a military sense to it”, then we are fundamentally undermining the strength of NATO.

Mr Hammond: No, I disagree. It is disingenuous to suggest that one can define in advance a hard boundary between what is and what is not the trigger that would constitute an attack. It is impossible to do that in advance. You cannot define a number of people. How do we validate those people? How do we identify those people? It will be a question of evaluating the evidence at the time. For what it’s worth, my judgment, having visited the Baltic states shortly after we deployed our aircraft to support Baltic air-policing and talked to politicians there, is that the situation is different. The response that NATO has delivered in reassuring the Baltic states, by deploying assets, by planning additional rotations of forces into the Baltic states over the coming months, has sent a signal that NATO member countries are very different from non-NATO member countries. It is my judgment that the Kremlin understands very well the red line that surrounds the NATO member states, and the different freedoms of action that there are in such countries compared with NATO member countries.

Q367 Mr Gray: Your lack of clarity about what does or does not constitute an Article 5 moment; everyone is asking the same question and everyone is puzzling over it—

Mr Hammond: That is true. Everyone is puzzling over that. It is not just the front-line states. The United States, the United Kingdom have the same challenge.

Mr Gray: We are all puzzling over it, which is why I thought that by asking you in this public forum, it might take the debate further forward, which I am afraid to say it hasn’t done. Everyone is puzzling over it. The forum in which perhaps that debate should crystallise would be the summit. So would you like to see greater clarity of the definition of Article 5, and Article 4 to some degree as well, emerge from the NATO summit?

Mr Hammond: No, I would not. If you don’t mind me saying, the search for greater clarity—everything in black and white—is completely unhelpful. Strategic ambiguity is a strength, not a weakness. Keeping the other side guessing a little bit about where the boundary line is, is a positive thing.

Q368 Mr Gray: I agree with you. In that case, let me ask you one final question. At the moment, Article 5 uses the word “armed”. That, therefore, is extremely specific. There is no ambiguity. There is no lack of clarity. Only an armed aggression against a NATO member state will result in Article 5 being triggered. If you are indeed in favour of ambiguity and lack of clarity in decision making and things you are describing, would you agree that removing the word “armed” from Article 5 might be quite helpful?

Peter Watkins: I would be very wary about changing a form of words that has existed for a long time and which—

Mr Gray: Warfare has changed.

Peter Watkins: Yes, it has and it hasn't, as the Secretary of State has said. Many of the techniques and tactics that we have seen used are not particularly new at all. They go back hundreds if not thousands of years. But we have a very clear statement of principle which we are basing our position on. We have reinforced that message with the reassurance measures that we have taken. So everybody knows what it means. But as the Secretary of State says, you wouldn't want to define precisely how you would interpret it on the day.

Q369 Mr Gray: If you are saying you don't want the word "armed" removed, then information warfare and many of the other asymmetric things that we were talking about a moment ago plainly do not trigger Article 5 because they are not "armed". So the Secretary of State's refusal to answer that question is incorrect. Now you are saying that you want Article 5 to be absolutely specific and precise: it means that armed intervention against a member state triggers an armed response. I was suggesting that other things should, too.

Mr Hammond: Let me make an observation about, again, public opinion. We are in a democracy. We have to be mindful of public opinion. I am pretty clear in my mind that if we were subject to a major cyber-attack, the public would expect us to be able to respond in kind. That is one of the reasons why we have announced that we are developing an offensive cyber-capability. But I do not think the public is in the position yet—it might never be—where it thinks that an appropriate response to a cyber-attack is an armed military strike. That is my personal observation about where we are in terms of consent from our own public.

Although there is a continuum of ways of conducting warfare, which will go from information warfare through cyberspace into conventional armed warfare, we need to recognise that, if we want to carry the public with us, we will always have to be appearing to act proportionately. I suspect the reality is that that means we have to be able to respond in kind to attacks in the information space or cyberspace.

Mr Gray: That is a different point from what the NATO response would be.

Q370 Mr Brazier: Secretary of State, you have made a strong case for defending the shift towards a more balanced force with a higher proportion of unconventional forces in it. Could we focus specifically on information warfare? The weakness of our start point is illustrated by a poll taken immediately after the invasion of Georgia, which suggested that only 35% of people in the UK would have supported an Article 5 defence of the Baltic states, and the bulk of those would have supported it only somewhat, rather than strongly. What are we doing to build our information warfare capability? Because there is no doubt that Russia's is formidable. They have convinced all of their public, and even some in Ukraine, that these Spetsnaz people really are Ukrainian resistance fighters against fascists.

Mr Hammond: In the specific case of the current Russian situation—

Mr Brazier: And more widely, because we have lost the information battle on many occasions in Afghanistan too.

Mr Hammond: We are providing STRATCOM's advice to our Baltic NATO partners and, as Mr Gray mentioned earlier, Russian language broadcasting into the eastern

NATO countries that have Russian-speaking populations. That is now a recognised and identified challenge that NATO has to respond to: getting good quality Russian language broadcasting available to counter what is a very significant stream of propaganda.

Peter Watkins: NATO has just established a centre of excellence in strategic communications in Riga and we have been actively supporting NATO and the Latvian authorities to set that up. We have had some of our own experts there helping to train people, including Ukrainians, on how to deal with the sort of barrage of propaganda that you describe. They can correct misinformation—

Mr Brazier: Where has that been established? I am sorry, I didn't catch it.

Peter Watkins: In Riga.

Q371 Mr Brazier: What is the UK input? Are we are talking about a small number of posts? We are hosting it, but are we making quite a big contribution?

Peter Watkins: No, Latvia is hosting it and it is a NATO centre of excellence. This is an area where the key factor is expertise, not big battalions, and we do have considerable expertise within the Ministry of Defence in strategic communications. We have a relatively small number of people, but it is quality not quantity that counts. They have been working in that centre alongside their NATO colleagues.

Q372 Mr Brazier: Right. Just moving on from strategic communications to cyber, we have heard quite a lot about the commitment to cyber: in fact, it is one of the small areas that were meant to see an increase rather than a reduction as a result of the SDSR. How is recruitment for that going? The numbers are challenging for getting cyber-specialists in from the civilian world to build the Reserve capability—

Mr Hammond: Specifically on Reservists?

Mr Brazier: Yes, and more widely.

Mr Hammond: We draw capability from across the Armed Forces into the cyber-area, which is part of Joint Forces Command. When you go to the locations where we are doing this work, you will see uniforms of all three colours as well as many civilians. Because this is one of the most exciting, cutting-edge areas, I do not think that attracting people is the big challenge at the moment.

In the Reserve space, we have seen a surge of applications for cyber-Reservists, not least because we have been able to relax some of the age and fitness requirements that we would otherwise have. If people are going to be delivering their Reserve service sitting at a computer screen in Corsham, it is not necessary for them to meet all the fitness and age requirements that we would otherwise have.

Q373 Mr Brazier: Can I push you a little further on a point of detail? That is a welcome answer, obviously. Although there is clearly room for compromise on physical fitness requirements, the largest proportion of breaches of cyber-security are inside jobs—people getting through the wicket gate, rather than battering the fortress down. Are you still keeping up all the same security checks and the processes of training up? When I met the cyber-unit during the Reserves review were clear about the fact that the officer posts had to go through the normal officer training package that a medical or another specialist would go through. Has that all been kept in place?

Peter Watkins: Yes. I am not aware that we are relaxing those sorts of requirements. We are putting in place an enhanced programme of cyber-awareness information management and information assurance training for personnel across Defence.

Mr Hammond: We have relaxed some of the fitness and age requirements where people have specialist skills. I was told, anecdotally, that the oldest Reservist we have recruited in the current campaign is over 60—recruited into the cyber-Reserve because he has a unique set of skills that we can use. Clearly, we would not expect to put him through the same kind of physical training that we would put a 25-year-old recruit through.

Q374 Mr Brazier: Just one further question: the issue of deniable proxies is particularly an issue with cyber-warfare but can be an issue in other areas. There are all these obvious Spetsnaz people running about, pretending that they are Ukrainian resistance. How much thought are we giving to the whole question of how to identify the source of cyber-attacks and, more widely, how to cope in a terrorist context with every issue from legal through to operational and the rest, deciding who the originator is but, even more difficultly, having decided who the originator is, how to cope when the host state denies that it is anything to do with them?

Mr Hammond: I think that cyber-space is a different challenge, where the answer is technical, and that is where the frontier is in identifying and tracing, in real time, the origin of attacks. You would not expect me to go into the detail of what we are doing in that space. In terms of individuals and their origin and to whom they belong, it is a much more complicated situation in a place such as Ukraine, where there are large, cross-border populations and many Ukrainian nationals will have served in the Russian armed forces in the past. It is an ambiguous situation, and it may be that there are people who are currently serving in the Russian forces. There will be many more who have served in the Russian forces and are now, conveniently, no longer serving but belong to some other organisation. That is a challenge that is very much present in an area such as eastern Ukraine and would be less easy for Russia to replicate in other areas where there was not an indigenous Russian-speaking population.

Q375 Mr Brazier: But you could easily have a parallel with the diaspora of people here from various parts of the furthest eastern parts of Europe. One can imagine a parallel situation here very quickly. We have a significant Serbian community, for example. Some of them are excellent members of the Armed Forces, but some are also very strongly pro-Russian in their thinking.

Mr Hammond: In terms of our national security, the role—both positive and negative—that the communities within the UK can play is a very important factor that we should not lose sight of.

Q376 Chair: Before I hand over to Sir Bob, I just have one quick question on something we haven't quite covered. I am not asking that we consider reconstructing the British presence on German soil, but have you given any thought to Germany as a geographical location and as part of a strategic path, in case we need to respond quickly to a threat to our borders?

Mr Hammond: Germany as a strategic route?

Chair: As a strategic pathway.

Mr Hammond: Yes, and I believe that we will be making a deployment later this year to an exercise in the Baltics using road-rail across Germany. Germany obviously remains a route to that part of the world but our decision to relocate our forces to the UK and to concentrate our armoured force on Salisbury plain is one we stick by.

Q377 Sir Bob Russell: Can I return to a question that Julian Brazier put to you? You told us that there will be specialist people, possibly at advanced years in some cases. Will they be wearing uniform? Will they be subject to all the military ethos and disciplines?

Mr Hammond: They will certainly be subject to discipline. It is not always the practice that Reservists in the cyber-Reserve routinely wear uniform.

Q378 Sir Bob Russell: Would they be members of Her Majesty's Armed Forces?

Mr Hammond: Yes. They would be members of the Reserves.

Q379 Sir Bob Russell: What additional role do you think the Armed Forces should play in strengthening national resilience?

Mr Hammond: Homeland resilience?

Sir Bob Russell: I am thinking of the lessons from the floods earlier this year, so, yes, homeland resilience.

Mr Hammond: This is a subject we are actively considering in the National Security Council at the moment. We are very proud of the role that the Armed Forces played, not just in terms of the practical assistance they delivered but in the reassurance they were able to provide on the ground. Our focus is on creating mechanisms that do not undermine the principles of the Civil Contingencies Act and the civilian first-responder principle, but allow the Armed Forces to be deployed more quickly and on a greater scale in the kind of emergency we saw with the floods, where it is clear we have gone beyond a local situation to something of national significance.

Q380 Sir Bob Russell: Are you looking at fine-tuning the military aid to the civil authority—all those rules and regulations?

Mr Hammond: Yes.

Q381 Sir Bob Russell: I ask you and your officials to look back to an organisation which the Wilson Government disbanded in the 1960s—I am of an age that I can remember it—called the Civil Defence Corps. It could well be that you have the blueprint there; civilians working with the civil agencies and with the military.

Mr Hammond: I think that is outside the remit of the Ministry of Defence, but I will certainly pass it on to the civil contingencies secretariat.

Sir Bob Russell: This is a serious point: it is called joined-up Government. The silo mentality is a problem in this country.

Mr Hammond: No, I think there is a significant difference between a civilian volunteer force that could be used to augment the uniformed services—civilian and military—in an emergency, and the military force. We are clear that the civilian first responders must remain the first responders. We want to make it easier for them to call on the military to provide resilience and specialist support. That is mainly about addressing how the costs are borne, in order to make civilian responders feel more comfortable about drawing on military support. But there is also a role for civilians and for the community to support itself. Getting them properly organised to do that is an important response but is not a Ministry of Defence challenge.

Sir Bob Russell: No, I recognise that.

Mr Hammond: Wearing a different hat, as the Prime Minister's ministerial envoy for flood response in the Thames valley, I think it is very important that we have a properly organised civilian flood warden response system, so that people know who the civilian and local community responders are with the authority and the direct line of communication to the Silver Command in the event of a repeat.

Q382 Sir Bob Russell: I am grateful for that last response, because at least what I have said is now on the record, and let others pick it up if they so wish. My final question, Secretary of State, is: what is the role of the MOD in developing resilience across the UK to cyber-attack?

Mr Hammond: The Cabinet Office is the lead agency for the cross-Government cyber response. Mr Brazier talked earlier about the MOD's cyber-budget having been increased. More importantly, the cross-Government budget for cyber response has been significantly increased, and MOD is a big contributor to that both in terms of cash and manpower and skills.

We play a major role. The Vice-Chief of the Defence Staff is the key MOD participant in the cross-Government body that deals with our national cyber-resilience

programme. Inevitably, when a new cross-Government programme gets started there is an element of jockeying between Departments but we are very comfortable with the way that this has bedded down, with a significant military role in a civilian-led operation.

Sir Bob Russell: Thank you.

Chair: I think Mr Brazier wants to say something.

Q383 Mr Brazier: I have a tiny point. As a result of the responses to the Green Paper, the MOD decided quite rightly that they should never—

Mr Hammond: The Future Reserves Green Paper?

Q384 Mr Brazier: Yes. The MOD decided that they should never call Reservists out without political sanction. That is something that people like me strongly support. I put it to you that the one exception that would be acceptable to everybody—wider communities, individual Reservists, employers—is this: to give local commanders a power to call Reservists out for up to 48 hours in a crisis. At the moment it is a little ridiculous that if there is flooding or something, you personally have to sign off calling out a local unit where life is at risk. That should be the one exception to the rule—it's just a thought.

Mr Hammond: Yes, you are right. Being able to get locally based Reserve units directly engaged in community resilience activity in an emergency is an important part of our military-civilian link-building as well. We are absolutely supportive of that. The precise mechanism for doing that is a detailed question and I am happy to write to you about that.

Q385 Chair: Just to clarify something that came up earlier about the strategic communication unit in Riga, am I right to understand that we do not have permanently based UK staff there? Are they currently on secondment, or are they permanent posts?

Peter Watkins: I don't think we do, but I will check that. I don't think we have somebody there full time. We have had people rotating through it.

Mr Gray: We met her. There was one girl—a lady.

Chair: But I think it is not a permanent role. That was the question.

Peter Watkins: There is a permanent person in the cyber centre in Tallinn.

Q386 Chair: We have come to the end of our questions. Is there something you would like to tell us in the remaining two minutes before the bell goes?

Mr Hammond: I can tell you what a pleasure it is to have had the opportunity of this discussion. I absolutely understand the line of questioning—that the situation in Ukraine has changed a great deal. I realise that it may be counter-intuitive to answer that by saying that a

lot of what we are seeing that is new and shocking to the public and many of us is in fact a piece of well understood Russian doctrine going back quite a long way—something that the MOD has always had in its understanding of the way that the Russians work. That does not mean to say that we won't have to fine-tune our response to deal with the way that it has been used. My information is that it is not quite as revolutionary as I first thought it was when I saw it in action.

Q387 Chair: I think it would be useful. As you were saying these things, I was not the only one thinking that you saw it coming but what did you do as a result? That fine tuning—what are you doing differently now?

Mr Hammond: There are two levels of response here. We have to know how we would deal with the kind of asymmetric attack that we are seeing, if it were an attack on us or on a NATO member. When it is an action in a third state, the parameters are slightly different. Our room for manoeuvre and ability to respond are slightly different, so I think those are two different questions.

Chair: I am very grateful. Thank you very much.