



**Joint Committee
on the National
Security Strategy**

23 June 2026

**Rt Hon Darren Jones MP
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster
Cabinet Office**

[By email]

Dear Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster,

Government response to the Committee's report on the National Security Strategy

Thank you for providing the Government's response to the Committee's report on the National Security Strategy. The Committee was pleased to see that the Government, in principle, agrees with the majority of its conclusions and recommendations. However, the Committee is disappointed that there are no new commitments off the back of our recommendations, and certain elements of the report have not been addressed.

With this in mind, I would be grateful if you could provide responses to the following questions:

National Security Strategy consultation

In our report, we found that there were gaps in how the Government consulted on the National Security Strategy (NSS). We recommended that the Government should review its consultation and engagement approach with industry stakeholders, civil society and the wider public on matters of national security (NSS report, para 22). In response, the Government stated it had "engaged a broad spectrum of stakeholders, considered assessments and analytical products". However, witnesses to the inquiry told us the consultation which had been undertaken was not sufficient.¹

1. Can you confirm that there is no plan for the Government to review its consultation approach on matters of national security, despite the gaps highlighted in our report?

¹ Civil society organisation Rethinking Security told us the external engagement undertaken by the Government "consisted only of a few roundtables of experts" from think tanks and universities and that civil society organisations were "otherwise absent", representing a missed opportunity to bring stakeholders along with the formulation and delivery of national security objectives ([TNS0015](#)). Trade body techUK told us there had been a "shortage of formal engagement with the private sector and notably the tech industry" and that the Government should "conduct widespread engagement with industry" to help rectify this ([TNS0020](#)), a point echoed by defence companies Roke ([TNS0026](#)) and Cuning Running Software Ltd. ([TNS0028](#)).



Implementation and governance of the NSS

The Government response contained no commitment to update the Committee on an annual basis regarding the implementation of the NSS and stated that the Government will only update the Committee on progress “where appropriate.”

2. How frequently does the Government intend to update the Committee on the implementation of the NSS, noting the Committee’s request that these updates should be delivered at least annually?

a. Will these updates will be provided in the form of public evidence, in the interest of advancing the national conversation, or in private?

The way in which responsibilities for delivering the NSS has been split across Government departments and Ministers remains entirely opaque, and our recommendation to provide clarity was not addressed (NSS report, para 41).

Departmental confusion over responsibilities was demonstrated in practice during this very inquiry, when the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology declined to put forward a Minister to appear alongside you and the then-Security Minister.

3. Please outline in your response where responsibilities lie for delivering the different elements of the NSS commitments, both at a departmental and Ministerial level.

Funding UK national security spending

The Committee recommended that the Government should resist further cuts to the Official Development Assistance (ODA) budget that could have a damaging effect for UK strategic interests (NSS report, para 33), but this was not addressed in the Government response.

4. Can you confirm definitively that ODA will not be cut further, where cuts can be demonstrated to have negative impacts on the UK’s national security interests?

The 2026 NATO summit in Ankara is fast approaching, where the UK and allies’ defence, security and resilience spending will be at the forefront of discussions. With added uncertainty caused by ongoing delays to the publication of the Defence Investment Plan, it is imperative that the Government make clear the progress it is making in meeting the commitment to spend 1.5% of GDP on security and resilience by 2035. You also told us in oral evidence that the spend would not represent additional capabilities beyond spending which had been already agreed in existing budgets.² The Government response said that spending lines would be shared with NATO ‘shortly’.

² [Q119](#)



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- 5. Can you provide detail on specific resilience and security projects which will be included within the 1.5% spend, and update us on how discussions with NATO allies have been progressing on how the target will be hit?**

Managing international relationships

The Government's response to the Committee's recommendations on managing international relationships with regards to national security risks, for example with China and the US, largely parroted the content of the NSS. In particular, our recommendation to publish accompanying statements when signing new treaties and agreements which make clear how national security considerations have been accounted for (NSS report, para 105), was ignored.

- 6. Beyond the existing mechanisms re-iterated in the Government response for dealing with managing national security risks from China and the US, we ask that you respond to our specific report recommendations to a) publish accompanying statements at the signing of new treaties and agreements to make clear how national security considerations have been accounted for and b) prepare with European NATO allies for a 'worst-case scenario' where Europe can no longer rely on the US in support of a crisis.**

Sovereign capabilities

The Committee acknowledges the Government's position that publishing a static list of sovereign capabilities which require development risks telegraphing potential vulnerabilities to our adversaries. However, the terms 'sovereign capability' or 'sovereign capabilities' are mentioned upwards of 15 times in the NSS, but nowhere in the document does it define what the Government means by the term.

- 7. Will the Government commit to briefing the Committee in private on its assessment of which areas the UK needs to develop sovereign capabilities, and the way in which the Government is working with industry to ensure that development takes place?**

Naturally the Committee understands the Government's need to balance what information it puts in the public domain with potential risks to the UK's national security interests. With that in mind, the Committee would welcome fuller responses to the above questions in private if required. We would welcome this session being held in a secure meeting space so that confidentiality can be allowed.

The Committee also requests that you appear before us again in the early autumn to update us on NSS implementation work more broadly. I will ask the Clerks to work with your officials to identify a suitable date for this session to take place.



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I would be grateful for your response to this letter by Wednesday 8 July. In line with usual practice, I will be publishing a copy of this letter and your response (as appropriate) on the Committee's website in due course.

Best wishes,

Matt Western MP
Chair, Joint Committee on the National Security Strategy