

## **Correspondence from Sir Stephen Lovegrove, National Security Adviser**

I am writing in response to the questions submitted on 7 April by the Joint Committee on the National Security Strategy as part of your inquiry in national security machinery.

I recognise the importance of this Committee's work on these issues. Ensuring we have the right machinery in place is essential for the successful delivery of the Government's national security priorities and is a top priority for me as National Security Advisor. I welcome the Committee's focus on these important questions.

The Prime Minister has asked me to review the existing national security processes and structures, in line with the commitments contained within the Integrated Review (IR). The purpose is to ensure they facilitate effective ministerial decision-making across the spectrum of national security issues and provide a strong foundation for the effective implementation of the IR.

There are a number of questions submitted by the Committee which fall into the scope of this review and I look forward to discussing the findings of this work with the Committee soon.

Responses to the Committee's questions have been divided across four thematic areas in Annex A. The first of these addresses questions related to the review that is underway and to which we have provided some additional detail that builds on the IR. For the proceeding thematic areas – Resilience, Cyber, and Skills – you will find tailored answers to each question.

I very much look forward to discussing these issues in more detail with the Committee in due course.

*27 April 2021*

### **ANNEX A: Responses to Committee's questions**

#### **1. IR implementation and national security machinery**

*(Qs 1,2,3,4,5,10,12,14,15,19 [Annex B])*

The IR defines our international and national security policy objectives, and the National Security Council (NSC) – chaired by the Prime Minister – is responsible for its implementation. As National Security Advisor, I am responsible for the processes, systems and structures that support Ministers in the NSC and am currently undertaking a review to ensure we are set up effectively to deliver.

This review will consider the optimum arrangements for effective implementation, including reporting requirements, governance structures, and the mechanisms for ministerial oversight. It is clear that this will need to be underpinned by a more integrated approach, one which allows us to tackle effectively the challenges we face in the world today and one which facilitates a greater degree of collaboration between departments, across all nations of the United Kingdom, and with external experts in pursuit of our collective security.

We are working closely with the Treasury, the Prime Minister's Implementation Unit and No10 to embed the IR within the new planning and performance framework. The new framework will provide a more integrated approach to the delivery of Government's objectives. Summary versions of Outcome Delivery Plans will be published later this year and departments will continue to report on performance as part of the 2021/22 Annual Reports and Accounts process.

The Prime Minister has made clear that our immediate focus should be on getting the most out of 2021, including the UK's COP26 and G7 Presidencies this year, and our first Carrier Strike Group deployment. I look forward to updating you on the progress of this work and our longer term goals.

## **2. Resilience** (*Qs 6,7,8,9a,9b,16,17,18 [Annex B]*)

**[Q6]** Chapter 4 of the IR sets out some of the challenges that a new Resilience Strategy will need to address, including the nature of different threats and hazards. We recognise that risks are usually considered in silos, often focusing on acute or malicious problems to the detriment of chronic or non-malicious issues, with funding allocated accordingly. The strategy will, therefore, need to address how we can balance our approach, focusing first on improved situational awareness and assessment structures. The Situation Centre will help us address some aspects, but it is only one part of the solution.

The IR explains [p88] that the Government will start developing a comprehensive national resilience strategy in 2021. This document will articulate the 'new approach', but implementing and embedding the necessary cultural change will naturally require longer time horizons.

**[Q7]** As set out in the IR, one of HMG's priority actions for building national resilience is to consider threats and hazards in the round including for low- probability, catastrophic-impact events. Responsibility for resourcing and overseeing levels of preparedness to the potential consequences of each risk is assigned to the Lead Government Department (LGD), whose Secretary of State is ultimately accountable. LGDs work with relevant sectors and partners to improve their security and resilience to these risks. The Cabinet Office is currently in the initial scoping stage to define requirements and remit for a programme to review readiness from the centre, across the Government, for the highest tier risks.

**[Q8]** Review of the National Security Risk Assessment (NSRA) methodology is routine between assessments. The current review will address all aspects of the NSRA by drawing on a broad range of expertise from within and outside Government. The review will consider lessons identified in light of COVID-19 and will draw on recommendations made by the House of Lords Risk Assessment and Risk Planning Committee. Work will be ongoing throughout 2021 to review the NSRA methodology and deliver the next assessment.

The Cabinet Office is coordinating the NSRA methodology review, part of which will be delivered by external partners. This work will see participation from across Government and a broad range of external expertise. The current NSRA, and the methodology underpinning the assessment, contain sensitive information and as such are classified documents. I am reluctant to pre-empt the outcome of the methodology review and

decision around commitments to publishing future NSRA documentation have not yet been taken.

**[Q9a]** Important lessons continue, and will continue, to emerge from this pandemic. There was an initial insights exercise conducted by NSS for the Government's first response to the pandemic, and the Government continues to consider emerging lessons. In particular, lessons learnt will inform the development of the new Resilience Strategy, as well as the review of the National Security Risk Assessment methodology.

**[Q9b]** The IR [p88-89] explains some of the key issues that a resilience strategy will need to address, including, a better understanding of the risk landscape and managing uncertainty; a renewed whole-of-society approach; the capabilities, as well as the professional skills to apply and adapt to the circumstances.

The structure of the strategy has not yet been determined. It is likely to act as an overarching strategy, bridging existing strategies which tackle individual risks and aiming to make the whole government approach greater than the sum of its parts. The IR commits us to start developing the strategy in 2021, the publication of which will happen in late 2021 or early 2022.

**[Q16]** The Government recognises the critical role that local responders play in the preparation for, response to and recovery from emergencies. Lessons from recent events will inform our consideration of the role of responsibilities of Local Resilience Forums (LRFs). This work will be undertaken alongside the wider work on a National Resilience Strategy, which was also announced and the Cabinet Office's regular review of the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 and Contingency Planning Regulations 2005. The statutory review must be undertaken every five years, which means the Cabinet Office must complete a further review by 2022.

Work to consider the role and responsibilities and to support the improvement of capacity and capability at the local level is already underway, led by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government working in close collaboration with the Civil Contingencies Secretariat. This includes ensuring that LRFs can fully engage with and contribute to the National Resilience Strategy. I am reluctant to pre-empt the outcome of the National Resilience Strategy or CCA Review.

**[Q17]** As mentioned in the Government's response to the JCNSS 'Biosecurity and National Security' report published in December 2020, the Government's priority is the response to the current pandemic. We understand the importance of revising our strategic direction for biological security. In light of the JCNSS December report, the wider context of the IR, and the cross-cutting nature of biological security, the Cabinet Office is currently reviewing how the strategy can be overseen more centrally. At an appropriate time, and in consultation with relevant experts and stakeholders, the UK Biological Security Strategy will be reviewed in light of lessons learnt from responding to the COVID-19 pandemic.

**[Q18]** Although many supply chains proved robust given the pressures, the pandemic demonstrated some fragilities, especially for products where there was a massive and rapid demand shock. Covid-19 resulted in unprecedented growth in the demand for

certain medical items including Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). Many countries responded by restricting exports of these goods, impacting existing channels of supply.

It is important that we learn what has worked well in this time and where we can build upon the momentum of positive change at the domestic and international level. To that end, we are bringing together insight from across Government to be better prepared for future disruption to supply chains. We are working closely with our global partners – both bilaterally and in multilateral fora - to establish greater international cooperation, understand supply chain vulnerabilities, share diagnosis and inform a coordinated response to our shared challenges.

### **3. Cyber** (Q11 [*Annex B*])

**[Q11]** The Ministerial Cyber Steering Group is chaired by the First Secretary of State. Other members are the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (currently delegated to the Paymaster General), the Home Secretary, the Defence Secretary and the Culture Secretary. Other ministers are invited to attend depending on the topics being discussed, and senior officials from intelligence and law enforcement also attend. The meeting is supported by the NSS in the Cabinet Office. The Steering Group makes recommendations to the Prime Minister for consideration.

### **4. Skills** (Q13 [*Annex B*])

**[Q13]** There is a diverse range of efforts underway to improve skills across the national security community. This includes formal leadership training provided by Royal College of Defence Studies and the Security, Defence & Intelligence faculty of the International Academy, and also informal networks aimed at sharing expertise.

The outline business case for the College for National Security suggests that, despite all that has been achieved, there remains a gap which the College could fill and include opportunities such as post-graduate level training in national security on topics like data science and cyber security. The curriculum would bring science and technology, including digital and cyber skills, to the fore of thinking and practice. The purpose would be to ensure the Government, its partners in business, industry and academia, and allies overseas develop the skills necessary to deliver its national security objectives. Further development of the business case for the College will continue in order to support consideration of funding in the next Spending Review.

## **ANNEX B: Questions from Joint Committee on the National Security Strategy**

Q1	Who, if anyone, has been made responsible for implementation of the Integrated Review, how (and how frequently) will progress on implementation be reported, and to whom?
Q2	The Integrated Review states that the Strategic Framework will inform future spending reviews [Integrated Review, pp12, 18]. What is the timetable for setting such funding settlements, and to what extent might the Defence budget be further revised in the process?
Q3	The Integrated Review states that “more flexibility and agility is needed in the

	<p>way in which departments tackle cross-cutting challenges, with clearer accountability for delivery under stronger ministerial oversight. [...] More emphasis needs to be placed on effective implementation, including in reporting to and review by the NSC. The National Security Adviser will therefore review national security systems and processes to ensure that Integrated Review objectives and priority actions, as well as future policy decisions, are implemented swiftly and effectively, and to establish systems that better support the NSC” [Integrated Review p97].</p> <p>a) What are the Government’s plans, or current thinking, on how it intends (a) to increase flexibility and agility in tackling cross-cutting challenges, and (b) to increase accountability and ministerial oversight?</p> <p>b) What is the scope and timetable for the NSA’s review of national security systems and processes, and what plans are there to publish or share the results of his review?</p>
Q4	<p>The Integrated Review envisages “deeper integration across government, building on the Fusion Doctrine” [Integrated Review p19].</p> <p>a) What is intended by this in terms of changes to process and/or structures?</p> <p>b) To what extent is it intended that more areas of policy than before will be subject to Fusion-type processes?</p> <p>c) To what extent will ‘more integration’ involve more interaction/interfaces between departments, and what new processes are envisaged to deliver this?</p> <p>d) How is the NSC’s role expected to change to make more integration a reality?</p>
Q5	<p>The Integrated Review commits the Government “to do more to adapt to China’s growing impact” and to “invest in enhanced China-facing capabilities” [Integrated Review p22]. What is intended to deliver this, in terms of changes to process and/or structures?</p>
Q6	<p>The Government states that it will “adopt a new approach to preparedness and response to risks, which fully recognises that natural hazards and other risks can cause as much disruption to the UK’s core interests as security threats” [Integrated Review p87]. What will this entail, and in what timescale?</p>
Q7	<p>The Government Response to our earlier report on <i>Biosecurity and national security</i> stated that the Cabinet Office was “now setting up a programme to review readiness across HMG for the highest tier risks” [<a href="#">Biosecurity and national security: Government Response to the Committee's First Report of Session 2019-21</a>, page 9]. If this is not the same exercise as that cited in (6) above, what are the scope and timescale of this exercise?</p>
Q8	<p>The Integrated Review notes that a review of the National Security Risk Assessment (NSRA) methodology is currently underway [Integrated Review p89]. (a) What is involved by this review, (b) in what timescale, (c) who is undertaking it, and (d) what plans are there to publish or share the results of the review?</p>
Q9	<p>The Integrated Review refers to “learning the lessons of COVID-19, we will</p>

	<p>also seek to build a better understanding of the UK’s strengths and weaknesses” and starting to develop “a comprehensive national resilience strategy” [Integrated Review p88].</p> <p>a) Has there been an exercise specifically to identify the national security related lessons of the pandemic, and if so what plans are there to publish or share the results of such a review?</p> <p>b) What will be the remit, timetable and format of the planned work on a national resilience strategy?</p>
Q10	The Integrated Review refers to “the responsible use of new data platforms, digital tools and participative processes to support policy-making and improve inclusivity and transparency” [p98]. What is envisaged by this commitment, and what will be the role in this of the Central Digital & Data Office and the National Cyber Security Centre?
Q11	The Integrated Review notes the formation of a “ministerial small group to cohere cyber decision-making across government” [Integrated Review p40]. What is the composition of this group, and how are its deliberations fed into the NSC system?
Q12	What plans are there to introduce ‘red-teaming’ into national security decision-making [Integrated Review p98]?
Q13	The Integrated Review notes that the case for a dedicated College for National Security will be reviewed [Integrated Review p99]. What other (alternative or complementary) options are being considered to increase skills levels in this area?
Q14	What processes and structures will be involved in the new Performance & Planning Framework; and what will be the remit and timescale of the Evaluation Taskforce [Integrated Review p99]?
Q15	What will be involved in the proposed Outcome Delivery Plans [Integrated Review p99]? Will these be a specifically national security focussed process, or will they also encompass wider policy areas of Departments’ responsibilities?
Q16	In what particular areas or activities might the Government strengthen the role and responsibilities of local resilience forums (LRFs) in England [Integrated Review p88]?
Q17	When does the Government expect that the proposed ‘revised biosecurity strategy’ will be produced, and what consultation process will precede that [Integrated Review p94]?
Q18	What is involved in ‘scenario analysis and contingency planning’ to ensure the resilience of medical supply chains, and in what timescale [Integrated Review p94]?
Q19	19) The Integrated Review emphasises the ‘shared values’ of the Union and states that “it will be essential to take a whole-of-society approach to resilience across the Union” [pp13, 22]. In practical terms, what changes does the

	<p>Government envisage in the national security machinery in order to further this aim? How will the UK Government seek to ensure that the whole-of-society approach to resilience is pursued across the Union?</p>
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