

Written evidence submitted by Sir Stephen Lovegrove, National Security Adviser

1. Thank you for your letter of 11 June. I am writing to update you on our approach to IR implementation and governance, in advance of my appearance in front of the committee with the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster on 5 July.

Implementing the Integrated Review: approach

2. The IR has set the UK's overarching national security and international objectives to 2025. It is designed to be a living document that guides an ongoing process of strategy-making and delivery through the lifetime of this Parliament. This will require a sustained focus on implementation, underpinned by enduring and robust government machinery.
3. Since my letter of 26 April, I have continued to review national security structures and processes to ensure effective implementation of the IR. My terms of reference are to deliver a new operating model that is optimised for agility and integration, and which: a) ensures strong ministerial oversight of the implementation process; b) establishes a more consistent identification of major threats and trends; c) strengthens strategic analysis leading to actionable decisions; and d) puts in place effective delivery and implementation frameworks.
4. This is an ambitious remit, which aims to transform the Government's approach to national security and international policy: enabling strategy to be developed and implemented in a more integrated and adaptive manner; bringing greater expertise and challenge into HMG's strategic thinking; embedding a stronger connection between strategy development and capability requirements; and adopting a more programmatic and accountable approach to delivery.
5. In designing the operating model, we are drawing on:
 - Lessons from the IR process, including the policy and drafting process, ministerial involvement, and the use of evidence and challenge;
 - The systems reform work strand of the IR, which concluded that the national security system as a whole needed to become more innovative, adaptive and integrated;
 - External consultation with international partners, think tanks and academics, including on historical precedents on successful implementation of strategic resets; and
 - Consultation with the Prime Minister, NSC Ministers and senior officials across government.
6. We have made significant progress towards establishing the new operating model, but it remains a work in progress. We will want to put in place an adaptive system so that

we can respond to the rapidly-evolving strategic context as well as the lessons we learn as we move forward.

IR sub-strategies and delivery framework

7. We are building a system for delivery designed around a set of geographic and thematic IR sub-strategies, which collectively deliver the intent of the IR strategic framework, and will translate its objectives and goals into actionable programmes of work. Sub-strategies will be led by an SRO who will convene the relevant officials across government to develop and deliver their objectives. SROs will be charged with coordinating an integrated approach, owning and managing risk, and they will be overseen by the National Security Council.
8. This system will replace the existing NSIG structure - and will build on the lessons we have learned from that model. A set of priority deliverables flowing from the sub-strategies, to ensure pace and focus in delivery, will also be reviewed quarterly.
9. We intend to integrate the sub-strategies and priority deliverables into the existing Government Planning and Performance Framework. This will embed IR implementation in Outcome Delivery Plans, and bring national security and international activity into the same reporting process as the government's domestic priorities. This will improve monitoring and evaluation and domestic-international join up, and will ensure that ministers and permanent secretaries can be held accountable for departmental contributions to IR implementation.
10. To support this effort in the Cabinet Office, we are establishing a new central strategy development and delivery function within the National Security Secretariat, responsible for strategy development and capabilities, delivery (including programme management, monitoring and evaluation for NSC), and a new Strategic Advantage Cell tasked explicitly with bringing sustained and rigorous challenge to our grand strategy.

Role of the NSC & NSA

11. The NSC will continue to exercise overall ministerial oversight of our implementation of the IR, providing collective agreement for sub-strategies, monitoring implementation, and considering the overall balance and direction of UK strategy. Attendance at NSC will be tailored to the agenda with the core permanent membership representing the key security departments and others invited to attend as is relevant (reverting to the original design of the NSC, in fact). Ministerial implementation will be refocused below the NSC to allow for strategic focus at the NSC itself.

12. You also asked about my responsibilities as NSA and Secretary to the NSC. I am responsible to the NSC for ensuring overall implementation of the IR's ambition and objectives and am charged with:

- Providing advice to the Prime Minister and Cabinet on issues relating to national security;
- Providing advice on the NSC agenda, ensuring that it drives IR implementation and strikes the correct balance on matters relating to national security, foreign policy, defence, international relations and development, resilience, energy and resource security; and
- Leading the wider national security community across Whitehall and our overseas network, and cultivating and maintaining a network of international relationships with relevant counterparts, businesses, industry and civil society groups.

13. I have written separately on your specific points relating to the NSC.

The role of the Joint Intelligence Committee

14. The Joint Intelligence Committee continues to be a crucial part of the national security machinery and the JIC Chair will continue to deliver all-source assessment briefings to both NSC and NSC(O) - both in and out of committee.

15. The JIC Chair commissioned a board effectiveness review in 2020, gathering views from Members on the effectiveness of the JIC as a Committee and as a meeting, and how it could work better. The JIC and JIO continue to work to implement the review's recommendations. The Professional Head of Intelligence Assessment is also working to identify opportunities to increase capability across the intelligence assessment community, in line with the IR's ambition to invest in all-source assessment.

Situation Centre

16. The National Situation Centre (SitCen) forms part of the Cabinet Office Civil Contingencies Secretariat. It is a key part of the work to reform and improve HMG's crisis response infrastructure. Sitting alongside the COBR facilities, SitCen will add both capacity and capability to the Cabinet Office's existing crisis management architecture. It will be operational 24/7 and will provide data, analysis and insights to support situational awareness, horizon scanning and crisis-response across the full range of national security risks - from civil emergencies to national security issues.

17. The SitCen is not an operations centre or a replacement for departmental facilities. Instead, by working with colleagues across government to combine data and expertise, it will help senior decision makers navigate complex data landscapes and shorten development times to produce insights into crises and events. We are

developing and testing the centre's capability and expect it to be operational from September.

18. The SitCen will sit alongside an extended and refurbished COBR facility, creating a larger and more flexible crisis management facility in the Cabinet Office. This change directly reflects the lessons of previous emergencies, and will better equip the Cabinet Office to take a leadership role in future crisis.

Risk management

19. The National Security Risk Assessment (NSRA) is a classified cross-government product that assesses the likelihood and impact of the most serious risks facing the UK or its interests overseas. As reflected in the public 2020 National Risk Register, the 2019 NSRA contains a wide range of the most significant risks to the UK. These include natural hazards; large scale accidents and emergencies; human and animal health risks; and threats from malicious actors, such as terrorist and cyber attacks. Tiers were removed for the 2019 iteration. We are presently reviewing the methodology we use, focussing on improving independent challenge and better communication of risk; the next revision will issue in early 2022.
20. Since 2019, national resilience exercising has run at a higher tempo than ever before, but focused principally on EU Exit and Covid risks. This has included a series of cross-Whitehall exercises at both official and ministerial level to test contingency plans and validate and rehearse capabilities and arrangements. The flexibility, sophistication and pace of exercising has been improved substantively. From 2022 the Civil Contingencies Secretariat will re-establish a comprehensive National Exercise Programme to reflect the NSRA priorities, with an explicit role in assuring both departmental and cross-government resilience capabilities and arrangements, and permanently incorporating the improved approaches to exercising we have developed over the last three years.
21. Finally, thank you once again for your helpful 'Biosecurity and National Security' report. We agree with the Committee on the importance of revising our strategic direction for biological security and as we exit and learn lessons from COVID-19, and will factor your recommendations into future planning.
22. I hope this is helpful as pre-reading prior to the 5th July, where I look forward to setting out further detail on some of the work outlined here.

Sir Stephen Lovegrove

29 June 2021