

NATIONAL COUNTER PROLIFERATION STRATEGY TO 2020

Summary

The Counter Proliferation Strategy to 2020 provides a framework for the United Kingdom's counter proliferation activity. Our overall aim is to prevent the spread or further development of chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear (CBRN) capability or advanced military technology which could threaten UK interests or regional stability. The new strategy focuses UK action around three strands:

- influencing intent: encourage all states to adhere to norms on the possession and use of particular weapons, and to demonstrate the consequences of breaching those norms;
- controlling access: control access to materials and knowledge globally to make it as hard as possible for states or terrorists to acquire or develop capabilities;
- disrupting networks: disrupt illicit attempts to circumvent controls

The Counter Proliferation Strategy to 2020 will be delivered by the cross-Government counter proliferation community. At the heart of this will be the new Counter Proliferation and Arms Control Centre and the Export Controls Joint Unit announced in the Strategic Defence and Security Review 2015. The Foreign Secretary will retain overall Ministerial responsibility for the Strategy.

Introduction

The 2012-2015 Counter Proliferation Strategy¹ guided the UK's work during the last Parliament, with progress reported through the Annual Reports on the National Security Strategy and Strategic Defence and Security Review². The National Security Council agreed an updated strategy to set the direction to 2020. Many of the challenges remain, but the new Counter Proliferation Strategy takes as its starting point the 2015 Strategic Defence and Security Review and National Security Risk Assessment.

The Strategic Defence and Security Review states:

“Rules and norms to counter the proliferation of illicit arms and weapons of mass destruction play a vital role in our security. The UK has consistently been at the forefront of international efforts to tackle proliferation. We devote substantial efforts to this and will continue to do so.”

¹ https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/36194/counter-proliferation-strat.pdf

² https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/267808/Annual-report-on-NSS-and-SDSR.pdf & <http://qna.files.parliament.uk/ws-attachments/171350/original/Annual%20Report%20on%20the%20National%20Security%20Strategy%20and%20Strategic%20Defence%20and%20Security%20Review.pdf>

The National Security Risk Assessment has two proliferation-related risks. Both are highlighted as risks which may become even more likely and/or more impactful over the longer term:

- *CBRN attacks: attack using chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear weapons;*
- *Weapons Proliferation: increase in either advanced conventional armaments or CBRN technology.*

In the period 2012 to 2015 there has been progress against the previous Counter Proliferation Strategy in a number of important areas: a deal has been agreed with Iran on their nuclear programme; the declared Syrian chemical weapons stockpile has been destroyed; and the Arms Trade Treaty has entered into force. The UK has played a leading role in all of these important achievements. But some of the issues identified in the 2012-2015 Counter Proliferation Strategy remain of concern, highlighted most recently by the nuclear test on 6 January and continued launches using ballistic missile technology conducted by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Other developments, such as credible reports that Daesh has used chemical weapons in attacks in Syria and Iraq and technological advances such as the proliferation of advanced conventional weapons and 3D printing, have added to the challenge.

The Strategy guides our work to disrupt, mitigate and limit the spread of the capabilities that increase the proliferation-related risk to national security. We seek to ensure that we have the right controls and security in place domestically and to work internationally through the rules-based international system.

The Strategy complements other government strategies which address elements of the challenge. These include the UK's counter-terrorism strategy CONTEST, the UK Biosecurity Strategy and the UK Cyber Security Strategy.

Aim

The overall aim of the Counter Proliferation Strategy to 2020 is to prevent the spread or further development of CBRN capability or advanced military technology which could threaten UK interests or regional stability.

Objectives

The Strategy structures our effort around three strands. First, we seek to influence the intent of others, as the most effective way of controlling capabilities. Second, we seek to control global access to the materials and knowledge that would allow a hostile state or terrorist group to act on that intent. And third, we seek to identify and disrupt illicit attempts to circumvent those controls.

In particular:

- We will continue to support the implementation of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action with Iran. The international safeguards regime, which underpins Iran's commitment to enhanced verification and inspections, will give the international community confidence whether Iran's nuclear programme is, and will remain, exclusively peaceful. If at any time Iran fails to meet its commitments under the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, international sanctions will be re-imposed.
- We will maintain pressure on Syria to comply fully with its obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention. We will support the mechanisms established by the UN Security Council and Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons to ensure that all those responsible for the use of chemical weapons in Syria are held to account, and that the chemical weapons programme is fully disclosed and destroyed.
- We will focus our efforts at the final Nuclear Security Summit in 2016 on reducing the risk of nuclear material and information falling into the hands of terrorists and criminals by working towards the full implementation of global standards for maintaining the security of nuclear material. We will continue our efforts under the Global Threat Reduction Programme to improve global long-term nuclear and radiological security in a sustainable manner. We will also continue to support the International Atomic Energy Agency as they take on a greater leadership role after the Summit has concluded.
- We remain committed to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, and to the creation of a Middle East Zone free from nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction. We will continue to campaign for successful negotiations on a Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty in the Conference on Disarmament, the entry into force of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty and universal membership of the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention.
- We will campaign to increase the number of countries that have ratified and implemented the Arms Trade Treaty so it can deliver the expected step-change in the rules-based international system governing the trade in conventional arms.

The UK contribution

The extent to which the UK takes responsibility for a global threat such as counter proliferation flows from the policy as reflected in key Strategic Defence and Security Review decisions about the UK's role in the world. Some threats may specifically target or affect the UK, but on most we share the risks and the burden with allies and relevant international organisations.

We work closely with allies, deploying our diplomatic, intelligence, law enforcement and scientific expertise to tackle these challenges. The UK is at the heart of the international architecture on counter proliferation. We are an active member of the UN, International Atomic Energy Agency, Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and other organisations which develop rules and guidance, and assist and verify compliance across counter proliferation and CBRN security. The UK provides direct assistance to countries to

strengthen implementation of key international resolutions and to improve nuclear security. As active members of the key export control regimes, we seek to strengthen and harmonise controls.

The delivery of the Counter Proliferation Strategy is a cross-government effort led by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office with other departments contributing; this includes our security and intelligence agencies. The new Counter Proliferation and Arms Control Centre and the Export Controls Joint Unit announced in the Strategic Defence and Security Review will be at the heart of this work.

We will evaluate and report progress as part of the implementation of the Strategic Defence and Security Review.

The Foreign Secretary will retain overall Ministerial responsibility for the Strategy, with the National Security Council, chaired by the Prime Minister, ultimately overseeing its implementation.

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