

SUPPORTING THE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL: THE CENTRAL NATIONAL SECURITY AND INTELLIGENCE MACHINERY

The establishment of a National Security Council was one of the earliest decisions of this Government and represents one of the most significant changes to the national security and intelligence machinery at the centre of British Government in the recent past. The NSC brings together, in a weekly meeting, the full range of national security departments alongside military and intelligence chiefs, supported by a senior permanent secretary as the Prime Minister's National Security Adviser.

Intelligence plays a vital role in the work of the National Security Council, with the heads of all three intelligence services, the National Security Adviser and the Chairman of the Joint Intelligence Committee attending its meetings. To that end the establishment of the NSC has had a profound and positive impact on the way Ministers interact with the UK intelligence community and use intelligence product, going very much with the trend of reforms since the Butler report of 2004. The National Security Adviser now acts as the coordinator for intelligence, responsible to the Prime Minister as Minister for the Intelligence Services. This has enabled him to engage with Ministers on the priorities for intelligence in the context of the spending review, and also to support the NSC in its detailed consideration of policy issues affecting the services.

Now that the NSC is an established and vital part of the central machinery, it is timely to look at how its creation has affected some of the long-standing key questions about how to maximise the effectiveness of the central national security and intelligence structures. This study is not a review of the NSC, but will include looking at how the central national security and intelligence machinery can best support its work. To that end, a brief further study is timely.

The study, building on the Butler report of 2004 and further internal reviews since then, will examine:

- i. The relationship between the Joint Intelligence Committee and the National Security Council:** how assessed intelligence best supports the work of the new NSC and properly reflects its priorities;
- ii. The National Security Council and wider Government intelligence assessment analysis capabilities:** how best to deliver the commitment in the Strategic Defence and Security Review to align better the wider capabilities of the Government's intelligence assessment and analytical capabilities, including, for example, defence intelligence, with the strategic priorities set by the National Security Council;
- iii. Flows of intelligence, including operational intelligence:** how to ensure Ministers get the right intelligence in the right way, including, given the continued importance to Ministers of counter-terrorism, how

best to bring together fast changing intelligence and security information to Ministers to inform decision taking, planning, preparedness and response;

- iv. **Organisation of the central machinery:** in the light of the above, what mechanisms and structures might need be put in place within the centre of Government to ensure that the strategic framework for and resources allocated to the different parts reflect better the requirements of Ministers.

Process

The Prime Minister and Cabinet Secretary have asked the National Security Adviser and the Chairman of the JIC jointly to supervise this further study.

An initial analysis period will be followed by expert consultation, before recommendations are put to the Prime Minister. A summary of the conclusions will be made public. The process should be completed by early summer.