

Supporting the National Security Council (NSC):
The central national security and intelligence machinery

The establishment of a National Security Council (NSC) 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 recent years.

In January 2011, the Prime Minister and the Cabinet Secretary asked the National Security Adviser and the Chairman of the Joint Intelligence Committee to review how the central national security and intelligence machinery and structures can best support the NSC, building on the Butler report of 2004. The terms of reference for the review can be found on the Cabinet Office website.

In summary, the **key recommendations** from the review are:

On the role of the Joint Intelligence Committee:

- i. **The NSC's priorities should be the lead driver of the JIC agenda**, following as closely as possible the NSC's agenda and timetable. The NSC(Officials) meeting (NSC(O)) is best placed to oversee the tasking of the JIC, in line with its core role of setting strategic direction for the NSC. The NSC(O) should therefore task the JIC. However, the JIC must retain the latitude to provide early warning on issues outside of the immediate cycle of the NSC agenda.
- ii. **The needs of the NSC are best supported by the JIC meeting in two formats, at a Principals and a Sub-Principals level.** This will better balance high level strategic judgments on NSC priorities with those less immediately before the NSC, of importance to policy Departments or more tactical short term assessments. So senior JIC members should meet monthly as "JIC Principals" to focus on key NSC issues, judgements and papers. Otherwise the JIC should meet at a Sub-Principals level to agree papers in between.
- iii. **The JIC should produce a wider range of tailored intelligence products. The number of full JIC papers should be reduced, and replaced by more current briefs and summaries**, making them more focussed and more accessible to the Prime Minister/Ministerial readership.

On the UK's wider assessment capability:

- iv. **The wider assessment capability, including Defence Intelligence (DI) and the Joint Terrorism Analysis Centre (JTAC), should be put more directly at the disposal of the NSC where appropriate.** The Cabinet Office's Chief of Assessment (CoA) should be responsible for commissioning materials from the wider assessment capability to support NSC discussions and those of its sub-committees, as well as signing off, or 'kitemarking', the product to go to the NSC.
- v. **The leadership of the Joint Intelligence Organisation should be charged with ensuring that the collective business plans of HMG's assessment bodies align with the NSC's priorities.** This is in line with the SDSR

commitment on assessment. It will need to be done in a way that respects the operational independence and links to other organisations of those assessment bodies.

- vi. **In supporting the NSC, the policy implications of analytical judgements should be identified in significant assessments given to Ministers.** This could be achieved through closer working between assessment and policy expertise in the Cabinet Office while respecting the independence of intelligence assessment from policy.
- vii. **The Joint Intelligence Organisation should implement the recommendations of its open source audit.** This includes recruitment of a dedicated information specialist to improve the way that the JIO exploits open source, and its ability to support the use of open source material across the intelligence community.

On briefing intelligence to Ministers:

- viii. **Clearer processes should be established to ensure that Ministers receive timely, well-chosen and auditable intelligence reports consistent with the principles set out in Lord Butler's report of 2004.** These should also enable everyone handling intelligence for Ministers to understand what sets it apart from other reporting, to understand the range of intelligence products, and to know where to go to for training and guidance.