

International Defence Engagement Strategy

“we need to draw together, and use, all the instruments of national power, so that the sum of the British effort is much bigger than its component parts.” UK National Security Strategy 2010

International Defence Engagement is the means by which we use our defence assets and activities short of combat operations to achieve influence.

1. The National Security Strategy 2010 (NSS) states that we must use all of our national capabilities to build our prosperity; extend our influence in the world; and strengthen our security. The United Kingdom has unique defence and security assets which already play an essential role in contributing, both directly and indirectly, to our security and prosperity. The Defence contribution to UK influence is one of the seven Military Tasks as defined by the Strategic Defence and Security Review 2010 (SDSR).
2. The Strategic Defence and Security Review (SDSR) set out a vision for an integrated approach to meeting our international objectives. The Government aims to focus its efforts where our national interests are most at stake and where we can achieve the greatest effect, and Defence Engagement is an essential part of this integrated approach. Our Defence capabilities and assets can be used more strategically to maximise their benefit to the UK as a whole. This International Defence Engagement Strategy, commissioned and approved by the Foreign and Defence Secretaries, will provide coherent strategic direction for our international Defence Engagement.

Context

3. Using the 2010 National Security Strategy and Strategic Defence and Security Review as the baseline, this Strategy will ensure that we are shaping our Defence Engagement over a longer horizon of up to 20 years, and developing the relationships and influence that we will require to achieve our objectives in a period of significant uncertainty and change. Our interests will continue to shift geographically, as will our ability to use longstanding relationships and the traditional institutions of global governance. We will have to work harder, and in different ways, to advance and protect British interests. This strategy is complementary to the FCO's recently announced network shift.

International Defence Engagement in practice

4. Defence assets contribute to the achievement of our international objectives well beyond the use, or threat of use, of hard power. Our Defence Engagement tools work through both bilateral defence relationships and multilateral engagement.
5. The scope of International Defence Engagement includes: treaties and alliances; senior level visits; our Defence Attaché network; civilian defence advisors; loan service personnel; overseas exchange and liaison officers; overseas training teams; security sector reform; international defence training; conventional deterrence and reassurance; overseas joint exercises; ship, unit and aircraft visits; and support to UK defence sales and international defence industry cooperation.
6. The effectiveness of this engagement and the way in which it can help achieve our international goals depends upon our ability to understand its impact, focus its use, and integrate it with our other levers of influence.

7. The UK enjoys many advantages in our ability to achieve influence from the effective use of our defence assets and activities. Our network of alliances and agreements, including NATO and the EU, and our historical connections, including with the Commonwealth, provide a basis from which to develop international relationships. The professional reputation of our Armed Forces contributes to a unique UK defence brand. We have national comparative advantage in niche areas such as defence intelligence, our Defence Attaché network, Special Forces, capacity building and International Defence Training. Our expanding diplomatic network and political expertise gives us extensive access across the globe.

International Defence Engagement's contribution to HMG objectives

International Defence Engagement contributes to the achievement of the following HMG objectives:

- Defending the UK, its Overseas Territories and interests: securing international support for the military task of defending the UK and its Overseas Territories; building contributions to and political support for current and future operations involving UK Armed Forces, including through enhanced interoperability, as well as access and basing rights; securing access to key technologies and capabilities and building defence capability at affordable cost;
- Protecting UK citizens abroad: contribution to consular protection of UK citizens, particularly through developing relationships that support Government assistance to UK citizens in times of crisis, including through joint contingency planning, NEOs and maritime security operations;
- Influencing in support of UK national interests: defence relations are an important constituent of broader bilateral relationships – both with close allies and emerging and regional powers. They can be particularly important in countries where the military plays a prominent role in government;
- Promoting and protecting UK prosperity: the promotion of UK defence and security sector exports as a coherent and supportive part of our bilateral relationships and in line with our regional stability interests, and UK defence contribution to the protection of international trade, energy and shipping routes on which our prosperity depends;
- Understanding other nations' security objectives, capabilities and intent: Defence will contribute to HMG's wider information gathering in support of horizon scanning and early warning;
- Building international capability, capacity and will: enhancing international capabilities and interoperability, both multilaterally and bilaterally. Helping to prevent conflict and provide security overseas including through security sector reform, arms control engagement, regional stabilisation and maritime security. Improving peacekeeping operations, tackling terrorism and proliferation, combating illegal narcotics and piracy at source, and their trafficking/supply routes;
- Deterring threats to UK interests: maintaining the international profile of UK defence capability and our political will to use it if necessary.

Achieving successful International Defence Engagement

International Defence Engagement works to achieve these ends through four broad areas of activity:

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- Security and 'Non-Combat' Operations – including conventional deterrence and reassurance; embargoes and interdictions; security operations (e.g. maritime security, counter-terrorism capacity building); Special Forces; information operations; cyber security, and planning for Non-Combatant Evacuation Operations (NEOs);
- Defence Diplomacy – direct engagement, including through senior level visits; our Defence Attaché network; treaties and international arrangements; alliances and partnerships; civilian defence advisors; overseas and UK-based training and capacity building; work with multilateral organisations, including NATO, the EU and the UN; loan service personnel, exchange and liaison officers and intelligence personnel working overseas; ship, unit and aircraft visits;
- Defence and Security Exports – support to British Industry alongside UK Trade and Investment (UKTI) and FCO for the export of defence and security training, advice and materiel manufactured in the UK or by UK companies, in support of UK security objectives; and
- Regional Stability, Conflict Prevention, Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Stabilisation – including counter-proliferation; arms control; peacekeeping; security sector reform; stabilisation; conflict prevention and reduction, – frequently funded by the Conflict Pool in support of the Building Stability Overseas Strategy (BSOS)

Resources

8. This Strategy implements the goals of the National Security Strategy and the Strategic Defence and Security Review, and is bound within the existing Ministry of Defence Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) settlement. Defence Engagement activities and assets are funded from a range of sources both within MOD, and from outside, including the tri-Departmental Conflict Pool and the FCO-managed CT Programme Fund.

Prioritisation

9. We will assess the need for UK bilateral defence engagement with each country against the objectives set out above. However, we recognise that in some countries UK Defence Engagement efforts are likely to be much more effective than in others. We will therefore also measure our ability to achieve influence through Defence Engagement by country. This form of prioritisation will ensure that we are able to direct our most significant Defence Engagement efforts into those countries which are most important to our national interests, and where we are most likely to achieve the desired effect.
10. We also recognise the value of engaging with multilateral organisations. The UN, EU, NATO, Commonwealth, Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN), African Union, Five Power Defence Arrangements (FPDA), and other international and regional players may provide us with opportunities to use Defence Engagement to achieve our ends more efficiently than through bilateral channels, especially where we can combine efforts with like-minded countries.

Implementation

11. In implementing this prioritisation system we recognise the regional and indirect impacts that International Defence Engagement can have; the opportunities to maximise the benefit from engagement where the actual cost to UK is marginal; and the opportunities from sharing capabilities with other countries. In a number of regions we can also benefit from our historical relationships, and we recognise the need to continue to invest in those important relationships.
12. We also recognise the very significant role that Defence Engagement can have in pursuit of particular and discrete ends in countries where our overall requirement for Defence Engagement may be low (e.g. Counter Terrorism work). In these cases we will continue to invest in focussed and targeted engagement work.
13. We will rigorously re-evaluate all activities, rebalance our effort accordingly, and identify and invest in our most effective Defence Engagement tools recognising the value they provide across UK interests.

Risks

14. Much of the effectiveness of UK Defence Engagement relies upon the historical legacy of the Armed Forces. Through our International Defence Engagement activity we contribute to ensuring that this reputation is upheld.
15. We are clear that the main aims of International Defence Engagement are to enhance our prosperity, our influence and our security. In pursuing these aims we will have on occasion to engage with those who do not share our values. We will do so in a manner consistent with the applicable UK legal obligations. HMG's guidance on Overseas Security and Justice Assistance provides a framework for assisting us to comply with applicable obligations.
16. Our ability to conduct directed military operations as necessary to protect UK territory and interests is the first priority for Defence. While ensuring we retain the capacity and capability to maintain that commitment, we will also take advantage of the opportunity afforded by the end of UK combat operations in Afghanistan to seek to commit greater effort to upstream prevention activity, in line with the SDSR and the Building Stability Overseas Strategy (BSOS), and other defence engagement activity in support of the objectives set out in this document.

Skills and Capabilities

17. Achieving successful International Defence Engagement will rest upon developing a sufficiently wide skills base within both MOD and FCO, and more widely across government. Consequently, both Departments will increase the visibility, understanding and experience of Defence Engagement amongst their staff. Both Departments will seek to take advantages of the opportunities of joint training and development to enhance the awareness, expertise and professionalism of staff, and to increase the level of interchange for staff involved in International Defence Engagement and Pol/Mil activities.

Governance for International Defence Engagement

18. We will establish a new governance structure for International Defence Engagement which will reflect its contribution to our wider HMG objectives. Accordingly, we have established a new senior level Defence

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Engagement Board with strategic responsibility to agree International Defence Engagement priorities, both geographically and thematically and to decide in broad terms how available resources should be allocated, and what capabilities are required. It will set the strategic direction, and ensure that prioritisation and delivery remain in step with the funding available. The Board will be jointly chaired by senior MOD and FCO officials, and include representatives from DFID, BIS and Cabinet Office, and other Departments as required. The Board will consult with and take guidance from FCO and MOD Ministers, the National Security Council and the National Security Advisor, and provide updates to them as appropriate.

19. The Defence Engagement Board will provide the strategic context which should govern, and allow relative prioritisation of, the use of defence assets in pursuit of the wide range of thematic strategies which also exist. These strategies include the Building Stability Overseas Strategy (BSOS), Counter Terrorism (Overseas CONTEST), Counter Proliferation, Cyber Security, Organised Crime, Overseas Territories, Countries at Risk of Instability, Prosperity, Consular and Emerging Powers. All International Defence Engagement and other activities will come together in the FCO-led Country Business Plans in line with the direction of the SDSR.

Measurement and Evaluation

20. While inputs to International Defence Engagement can largely be quantified, the outcomes and impact from work intended to achieve influence are much more difficult to measure. The results may be secondary or may be due to other contributory factors. Similarly the return on investment may accrue many years after the event – for example with defence training and education.
21. We will set measures against which programmes of International Defence Engagement can be judged, monitor progress against them, and regularly review the benefits of activity. This will help inform future resource allocation and activity prioritisation. We will systematically review our defence footprint overseas. We will also examine ways to reduce the costs of delivery, improving the cost to benefit ratio of activity.
22. We will assess the return on our investment in International Defence Engagement activities to identify areas where we could most successfully concentrate our resources, and, conversely, those areas which achieve fewer benefits.

Conclusion

23. The implementation of this Strategy will ensure closer working between the MOD and FCO, and across government, and ensure that the allocation of non-operational Defence assets and activities takes proper account of wider Government objectives. This will be secured through the joint FCO-MOD governance mechanism. It will also ensure that, during a period of severe resource constraints, we maximise the value to HMG of our Defence Engagement in concert with our other tools of international influence.