

NATIONAL COUNTER PROLIFERATION STRATEGY 2012-2015

WHY DO WE NEED A NATIONAL COUNTER PROLIFERATION STRATEGY?

1. The proliferation of chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear (CBRN) weapons and their delivery systems is a huge challenge which poses several serious risks to the UK's national security. These include a CBRN attack on the UK by terrorists or a threatening state, or an international military crisis. Conventional weapon systems also present the clearest threat to the UK's Armed Forces deployed on operations. Reducing these risks requires a comprehensive approach to counter proliferation.

2. The National Counter Proliferation Strategy sets the framework for this activity. Much of our approach is internationally focussed; in priority countries, with partners, or through the rules-based international system. Ensuring that we have the right controls and security in place domestically is also a key element.

A risk-based approach

3. The National Security Strategy takes a risk-based approach to prioritise the government's national security response. Counter proliferation work is critical to reducing several of the most serious national security risks identified:

RISK 1: A terrorist chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear (CBRN) attack on the UK or its interests, including UK Armed Forces.

4. Al Qaeda has a long-held desire to obtain and use CBRN devices. Without continued global efforts to reduce vulnerabilities in the security of material and information, there is a significant likelihood that terrorists will at some point acquire CBRN capability.

RISK 2: An international military crisis

5. The proliferation of CBRN and conventional military technologies to countries, and the enhancement by countries of their existing capabilities, have the potential to increase instability and precipitate an international military crisis, or exacerbate the consequences of such a crisis, including for UK deployed forces.

RISK 3: A state (or proxy) CBRN attack on the UK or its overseas territories

6. While there is currently a low threat of CBRN attack on the UK, it is still important that we retain our ability to monitor – and where possible prevent – CBRN weapons advancements by other countries, maintain our defences against attack, and lead global efforts to strengthen the rules-based international system that has helped to limit the number of CBRN possessor states thus far.

Our objectives

7. We are working to reduce proliferation risks by:
 1. Denying access to CBRN materials and expertise by terrorists;
 2. Preventing acquisition by states of capabilities and their means of delivery (whether conventional or CBRN) which would threaten stability and UK vital interests, including our armed forces overseas; and
 3. Supporting, strengthening and extending the rules-based international system of counter proliferation treaties, regimes and organisations that underpins global security and prosperity.

WHERE WE SEEK TO FOCUS

8. We are focusing activity on four broad groups of actors:
 - states which may have **vulnerabilities** in the security of their CBRN information and materials;
 - states which may have the **capability or intent** to develop CBRN or advanced conventional weapons;
 - states which may actively or inadvertently **supply or transit** CBRN weapons, delivery systems and conventional weapons, or related technologies, to actors of concern; and
 - partners and multilateral organisations with whom we can **effect change**, including the UN, G8, NATO and the EU.

States with CBRN security vulnerabilities

9. Many countries possess significant quantities of CBRN material or expertise, or have a significant CBRN technological base; some countries have CBRN weapons. In several of these we assess that security weaknesses could make such capabilities easier for non-state groups to acquire or exploit for malicious purposes.

States with the capability or intent to develop CBRN or advanced conventional weapons

10. A number of states have active CBRN and advanced conventional weapons and delivery system programmes – either to acquire a new capability or to improve an existing one. The existence of either can be destabilising for a region and can lead to an arms race or a military response by a regional or global power. This would increase the risk of a state threat to the UK and its overseas interests.

11. Despite Iran's claims that its nuclear programme is peaceful, serious concerns about a military dimension remain as a result of Iran's actions over recent years. We continue to

follow the dual track strategy of engagement and sanctions. We also have continuing concerns about North Korea's proliferation activities. We continue to urge North Korea to refrain from further provocative actions and to re-engage in dialogue with the international community.

12. Alongside our commitment to prevent the spread of such weapons, we are promoting the peaceful use of nuclear energy, the right to which is enshrined in the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

States which may supply or transit material and technologies which threaten security

13. Where states admit to, or are judged to, have a nuclear weapons capability, or chemical or biological technologies and materials, controls are essential to prevent more states from acquiring CBRN weapons. We want all states with these dual use technologies to have the will and ability to prevent leakage.

14. Globalisation has increased the flow of trade and knowledge making it harder to identify cargoes and technologies destined for weapons programmes of concern. We cannot stop this trade on our own, so we need to work with trading hubs to improve policing.

Partners and multilateral organisations with whom we can effect change

15. We are working with our closest international partners and in the multilateral environment, including in the UN, G8, NATO and the EU, to effect change in both specific countries and the rules-based international system.

WHAT WE SEEK TO CHANGE

16. The rules-based international system is a network of organisations, ad hoc groups, treaties and regimes that has been built up over the last 80 years and has over that period successfully limited, and even helped to reduce, the number of states with – or looking to acquire – WMD or their delivery systems, or advanced conventional capabilities. In developing the rules-based international system, we seek to:

- Strengthen international commitments to non-proliferation treaties such as the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention and the Chemical Weapons Convention;
- Lead in groups such as the Nuclear Security Summit or G8 Global Partnership which are delivering CBRN security improvements on the ground;
- Provide financial, technical and diplomatic support to the international bodies that monitor and verify compliance against these commitments, such as the International Atomic Energy Agency and the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons;

- Strengthen enforcement of existing obligations and export control regimes, and adoption of non-obligatory guidelines, while developing and implementing new ones such as the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, an Arms Trade Treaty, and a Fissile Materials Cut-off Treaty;
- Lead by example internationally in terms of our own domestic security practices and export controls;
- Identify, and seek consensus to mitigate, any gaps in the international architecture.

17. To complement this, we are:

- Working to encourage states to **improve nuclear and biological security**, and ensure that **sensitive science** is not misused for hostile intent;
- Aiming to **disrupt proliferation networks**, through helping others to enforce sanctions and export regimes more rigorously;
- Supporting the international community in **tackling proliferation finance** by working with banks to identify front companies and freeze assets;
- Tackling the supply of **delivery systems**;
- Promoting the **peaceful use of nuclear energy**.

HOW WE ARE EFFECTING CHANGE

18. We are using the **diplomatic network** to increase our understanding of and influence on the drivers of policy in priority countries including government, industry and civil society. Our missions to international institutions and organisations – especially in Vienna, New York, Geneva and the Hague – are playing a crucial role in developing, strengthening and upholding the rules-based international system.

19. Our **export controls and enforcement capability** enable us to reduce the risks of material getting into the wrong hands. We are acting to maintain a robust and effective national export control regime, and to improve international export controls. We are at the forefront of efforts to gather international support for a legally binding Arms Trade Treaty to regulate the global trade in conventional weapons.

20. We have prioritised our objectives to ensure that we make best use of available resources. We are providing **technical and financial support** to deliver concrete improvements in the security of materials and know-how in partner countries; **facilitating debate and delivering training** to help build partners' engagement and capacities; and **maintaining our own technical and scientific expertise** in counter proliferation, arms control and CBRN security.

21. The National Security Council, chaired by the Prime Minister, ultimately oversees implementation of this strategy. We will **measure, evaluate and report progress** on its delivery at regular intervals, including through reports to Parliament on implementation of the Strategic Defence and Security Review.