



HM Government

CONTEST  
The United Kingdom's  
Strategy for  
Countering Terrorism  
Annual Report



# CONTEST

## The United Kingdom's Strategy for Countering Terrorism

### Annual Report

Presented to Parliament  
by the Secretary of State for the Home Department  
by Command of Her Majesty

April 2014



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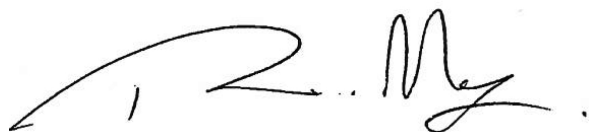
## Foreword by the Home Secretary

2013 was a sobering year for everyone involved in countering the terrorist threat to this country.

We saw the first terrorism-related fatalities in Great Britain since 2005 and appalling terrorist violence against British nationals overseas. Every day we have continued to make difficult decisions about how to manage the risk posed by several thousand extremists in this country who plan or facilitate the majority of homegrown terrorist plots. And we witnessed an unprecedented concentration of the terrorist threat in and from Syria, even as we confronted threats emanating from other countries where it is equally difficult for our national security agencies and departments to operate.

The extraordinary work of our security and law enforcement agencies has continued, much of it unreported and unrecognised except by those of us privileged to work alongside them. I will continue to ensure that they have the powers, capabilities and public trust necessary to detect, disrupt and prosecute those who mean us harm. If we are to stay ahead of the threat from terrorism, we must also make further progress in strengthening our terrorism prevention programmes following the recommendations of the Extremism Task Force and do more to bolster our border security.

In my previous annual report on the CONTEST strategy, I warned there was no room for complacency. So it has proved. There is no reason to believe that 2014 will be any less demanding but I am confident that everyone involved in implementing the strategy will rise to the challenge.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Theresa May', with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

Theresa May MP  
Home Secretary

# PART 1: INTRODUCTION

**1.1** In July 2011, the Government published a new version of the UK's counter-terrorism strategy, CONTEST. The Government committed to providing an annual update on the delivery of that strategy and this report covers the period from January to December 2013. This report does not cover domestic terrorism in Northern Ireland, responsibility for which lies with the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

## The Threat

**1.2** The global threat from terrorism remains high: in 2012 (the latest year for which published statistics are available) there were nearly 8,500 terrorist attacks in 85 countries, causing nearly 15,500 deaths.<sup>1</sup> The numbers of attacks and fatalities are both increasing.

**1.3** In the UK, the threat from international terrorism (assessed by the Joint Terrorism Analysis Centre) remained at 'SUBSTANTIAL' throughout 2013, meaning that an attack was assessed to be a strong possibility. The principal threat to the UK continues to be from militant Islamist terrorists. Although some terrorist plots here are developed entirely by British nationals living in this country, many of the threats we face continue to have significant overseas connections.

**1.4** Two terrorist incidents caused two fatalities, the first in Great Britain since 2005. In April 2013 Mohammed Saleem was murdered in Birmingham as he walked home from a mosque. A man was arrested in July and admitted to the murder and three subsequent attempted terrorist attacks against mosques; he was sentenced to life imprisonment in October. In May 2013 British soldier Lee Rigby was murdered in the street near Woolwich barracks. Two men were subsequently charged in relation to the attack; both were convicted of murder in December. In February this year both men were sentenced to life imprisonment, one receiving a whole life term and the other a recommended minimum sentence of 45 years.

**1.5** Thirteen British nationals were killed in terrorist attacks by Al Qa'ida linked groups overseas, the highest number since 2005.<sup>2</sup>

**1.6** The most significant development in connection with global terrorism during 2013 has been the growing threat from terrorist groups in Syria, where several factions of Al Qa'ida are active. Terrorist groups fighting in Syria have been supported by rapidly increasing numbers of foreign fighters, including numbers in the low hundreds from this country (many more than travelled to Iraq) and thousands from elsewhere. Dealing

<sup>1</sup> Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START). <http://www.start.umd.edu/news/despote-fewer-attacks-western-world-global-terrorism-increasing>

<sup>2</sup> Six British nationals were killed at the In Amenas attack in Algeria, six were killed at the Westgate attack in Nairobi and one was killed in Nigeria after being kidnapped with six other foreign nationals.

with terrorism in Syria is a very significant challenge due to the numbers of people fighting with the many Syria based terrorist groups, their proximity to the UK, ease of travel across porous borders and the ready availability of weapons. We are concerned about the threat to the UK from Syria based groups and the threat from foreign fighters returning to this country.

**1.7** Although depleted, the Al Qa'ida senior leadership in the border areas of Pakistan and Afghanistan continues to call for global jihad, supports other local terrorist networks and has provided terrorist training for British nationals. Al Qa'ida affiliates have continued to pose a significant threat to the UK and UK interests, notably in Yemen, North and West Africa (where an Al Qa'ida splinter group conducted a significant attack against a gas facility in Algeria) and in Somalia. In Iraq terrorist attacks linked to Al Qa'ida have increased sharply, leading to over nine thousand fatalities in 2013. Across North Africa a growing number of smaller terrorist groups have emerged to pose an increasing threat to UK interests.

**1.8** The terrorist threat to the UK comes from an increasingly wide range of countries and groups, many of which are new. This has created new challenges for our counter terrorist work.

## PART 2: OUR RESPONSE

**2.1** Our CONTEST strategy is intended to deal with all forms of terrorism and continues to be based around four main areas of work:

- **Pursue:** the investigation and disruption of terrorist attacks;
- **Prevent:** work to stop people becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism and extremism;
- **Protect:** improving our protective security to stop a terrorist attack; and
- **Prepare:** working to minimise the impact of an attack and to recover from it as quickly as possible.

**2.2** We consider this wide range of activity is appropriate for the threats we face and the strategy has been proven over many years. But aspects of our strategy have to evolve to respond to changing threats.

### PURSUE

**2.3** In the twelve months to September 2013, there were 257 terrorism-related arrests in Great Britain; 48 people were charged with terrorism offences and 73 with other offences. These figures are comparable to any other twelve month period since 2001. 28 of the people charged with terrorism-related offences have already been prosecuted; 25 have either pleaded or been found guilty. The number of successful prosecutions and foiled plots over the past year demonstrates the skill and professionalism of the police and the security and intelligence agencies and the

strength of the systems and structures which have been developed for our counter terrorist work over many years.

**2.4** Trials in connection with four major terrorist plots which were disrupted over 2011-12 were concluded during 2013 with a further 24 people pleading or found guilty, a 96 per cent conviction rate. 50 per cent of those convicted received sentences of over ten years' imprisonment.

**2.5** Conviction in a court is the most effective way to stop terrorists. But where a prosecution is not possible, full use is made of other powers to disrupt terrorist activity. Amongst these powers Terrorism Prevention and Investigation Measures (TPIMs) have been used to assist the police and the security and intelligence agencies to manage the risk from people believed to be engaged in terrorism, but who cannot be prosecuted. The police and the Security Service assess that TPIMs have been effective in reducing the national security risk posed by those subject to TPIM notices and their former networks. The Government continues to take the view that TPIMs cannot be put in place indefinitely and a two year time limit was set when they were introduced in 2011. Plans are in place to manage people when their TPIMs expire (as they have always been in place to manage people convicted of terrorist offences and released from prison). On 1 November 2013 Mohammed Ahmed Mohamed absconded from his TPIM notice. The Home Secretary announced that a review of the circumstances surrounding the abscond



would be carried out. That review process is currently ongoing.

**2.6** We have also made use of immigration powers. In 2013 we used these powers to:

- deport three foreign nationals suspected of involvement in terrorism, using diplomatic assurances to protect their human rights, including Abu Qatada;
- exclude ten foreign nationals on national security grounds and 14 on grounds of 'unacceptable behaviour' including extremist speech; and
- deprive 22 dual nationals of British citizenship on national security grounds or where citizenship had been obtained fraudulently.

**2.7** We have updated the criteria for using the Royal Prerogative to refuse or withdraw a British passport on public interest grounds, improving our ability to disrupt British nationals travelling to engage in terrorism and training overseas, notably in Syria. This power has been exercised fourteen times since the criteria were updated in April 2013. We have amended Schedule 7 to the Terrorism Act 2000, which enables police officers to stop and question, and where necessary detain and search people travelling through ports to determine whether they appear to be involved in terrorism. Provisions within the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act will reduce the maximum time a person can be examined from nine to six hours; clarify detained individuals' right to legal advice; and introduce statutory reviews of detention. These changes are intended to ensure that our powers strike an appropriate balance between protecting national security and safeguarding individual liberty.

**2.8** The Home Secretary also proscribed three terrorist organisations: Boko Haram in Nigeria; the UK-based Minbar Ansar Deen;

and Imarat Kavkaz in Russia. Name change orders were also laid before Parliament, including one recognising the Al Nusrah Front in Syria as part of Al Qa'ida; and EU Foreign Ministers agreed to designate Hizb'allah's Military Wing, resulting in an EU-wide asset-freeze which has made it more difficult for that organisation to operate.

**2.9** The latest communications technology is increasingly being used by extremist and terrorist groups (and by other criminal organisations) to evade detection and investigation. Under existing legislation it is no longer always possible for law enforcement and the security and intelligence agencies to obtain domestic communications data from communications companies (i.e. data which indicates when and where an electronic – e.g. an internet – communication was made and by and to whom). Communications data is often an important part of an investigation and can be used as evidence in court. Draft legislation requiring communications companies to retain more data was published in June 2012 and scrutinised by a Joint Committee of both Houses and the Intelligence and Security Committee (ISC), who both published reports in December 2012 which recognised that action is required. The Government is considering what other technical capabilities can be delivered under existing legislation, and investing in the training required to ensure that law enforcement officers have the skills and knowledge they need to do their job.

**2.10** The UK has a rigorous system of safeguards, independent scrutiny and Parliamentary accountability on intrusive powers of the kind often needed for counter-terrorism. The Justice and Security Act, which received Royal Assent in April 2013, extended the remit of the Intelligence and Security Committee of Parliament, strengthening its oversight of the security and intelligence agencies and clarifying its independence.

During 2013, the ISC published a special report on the use of communications data by the security and intelligence agencies (which highlighted the vital role communications data plays in investigations) and its Annual Report. A further detailed report on the terrorist attack in Woolwich on 22 May 2013 will be published before the summer.

**2.11** The Act also introduced new procedures allowing sensitive intelligence to be examined by an independent judge in closed proceedings of a civil court. This means that people now have the right to have allegations against the intelligence agencies fully heard and determined; and the agencies have the opportunity properly to defend themselves where previously this was not possible without harming national security by revealing sensitive information in open court. We have so far used the new legislation to successfully apply for a ‘closed material procedure’ in one case in which allegations have been made of UK involvement in the mistreatment of detainees held overseas, and which the Government is defending robustly. The Protection of Freedoms Act 2012 also came into force in 2013, establishing a new Biometrics Commissioner to oversee police retention of biometric material on national security grounds.

**2.12** David Anderson QC, the Independent Reviewer of Terrorism Legislation, published reports on the operation in 2012 of the Terrorism Act 2000; on the Terrorism Prevention and Investigation Measures Act 2012; and on the Terrorist Asset Freezing etc Act 2010. David Anderson has been clear that he considers UK anti-terrorism laws to be strong and UK capabilities to be broadly appropriate to the current threat. He has welcomed the steps this Government has taken to rebalance some of our most far-reaching powers, including terrorism stop and search powers, and continues to keep other key areas under careful review. He has

undertaken to report on the use of port and border powers in Schedule 7 to the 2000 Act and on the use of diplomatic assurances in deporting people resident here who are suspected of terrorism.

**2.13** Authorisations to intercept the content of an individual’s communications are subject to independent scrutiny by the Intelligence Services Commissioner and the Interception of Communications Commissioner, both of whom must have held high judicial office and report directly to the Prime Minister. The current post holders, respectively Sir Mark Waller QC and Sir Anthony May QC, review the way these decisions are made to ensure that they are fully compliant with the law. The Chief Surveillance Commissioner, Sir Christopher Rose, oversees the use of covert surveillance. They published reports in July 2013 which emphasised the value of the use of intrusive powers in crime and national security cases and the integrity and professionalism of those who apply them.<sup>3</sup>

**2.14** Because many terrorist threats to the UK continue to originate overseas, the integration of our domestic and overseas operational counter-terrorism work is an essential aspect of CONTEST and a significant strength. We maintain very close cooperation with a wide range of countries across all aspects of CONTEST.

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<sup>3</sup> Report of the Intelligence Services Commissioner for 2012, The Rt Hon Sir Mark Waller, published 18 July 2013 – <http://isc.intelligencecommissioners.com/docs/Intelligence%20Services%20Commissioner%202013%20V8%20WEB.pdf>  
2012 Annual Report of the Interception of Communications Commissioner, Sir Paul Kennedy, published 18 July 2013 – <http://www.official-documents.gov.uk/document/hc1314/hc05/0571/0571.pdf>  
Report by the Chief Surveillance Officer, the Rt Hon Sir Christopher Rose, published 18 July 2013 – <http://www.official-documents.gov.uk/document/hc1314/hc05/0577/0577.pdf>

But international counter-terrorism work is becoming harder as the terrorist threat spreads through more countries, many of which do not have effective law enforcement and security agencies operating to our standards of human rights and the rule of law. That is why we are developing Justice and Human Rights Partnerships with countries where the threat to the UK's security interests is greatest. These are not one-off initiatives, but rather a systematic process to build the counter-terrorism capabilities of our partners consistent with our standards for human rights and the rule of law. This is being coordinated where appropriate with our development programmes and with other international partners.

**2.15** During the UK's Presidency of the G8 we led work to stop the practice of paying ransoms to terrorist groups (some fifty foreign nationals were kidnapped by terrorist groups in 2013 who we estimate received at least 45 million USD in ransom payments, enabling significant recruitment and operational activity); in January 2014 the United Nations Security Council adopted its first standalone resolution, tabled by the UK, calling on member states to prevent terrorists from receiving ransom payments.

**2.16** Following recommendations set out in the February 2012 White Paper entitled National Security through Technology we have increased support to the UK's security industry in overseas export markets, where trade is vital to both our security and our prosperity.

**2.17** From 5 June 2013 onwards classified material stolen from both GCHQ and the NSA in the United States was published in the media in this country and overseas. The Prime Minister stated on 25 October 2013: "The point is, what Snowden is doing and, to an extent, what the newspapers are doing in helping him is signalling to people

who mean to do us harm how to evade and avoid intelligence, and surveillance and other techniques. That is not going to make our world safer; it's going to make our world more dangerous." The Prime Minister also made clear that he was "satisfied that our intelligence agencies are properly governed, properly run, act under the law and are subject to parliamentary scrutiny." At a time when our law enforcement and security agencies are facing new challenges in dealing with multiple terrorist threats, exposure of their methods and techniques has made their task much harder.

## PREVENT

**2.18** Effective work to stop people being drawn into extremist and terrorist activity remains a vital part of our counter-terrorism strategy. Since the revision of the Prevent strategy in 2011 and the Prime Minister's Munich speech,<sup>4</sup> Prevent work has focused on tackling all forms of extremism, including non-violent extremism. Prevent includes programmes which counter widespread terrorist and extremist propaganda and disrupt those responsible for it and interventions programmes which support people at risk of being recruited into terrorist activity. Prevent work depends not only on the police but also a very wide range of Government departments, the devolved administrations in Scotland and Wales, local authorities and in particular community and faith-based organisations. Following the terrorist attack in Woolwich in May 2013 the Prime Minister convened the Extremism Task Force (ETF) to consider the Government's approach to extremism. The Task Force reported back in December 2013 with recommendations. These are reflected below.

<sup>4</sup> Munich Security Conference, 5 February 2011 – <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/pms-speech-at-munich-security-conference>

**2.19** Increasing volumes of terrorist and extremist propaganda are available online, often aimed at young or vulnerable people and very often inspired by militant Islamism. A dedicated police team have removed over 21,000 pieces of illegal online terrorist content since 2010 working very closely with community groups and the communications industry. We have continued to collaborate with industry to ensure filtering products take account of terrorist material. The ETF concluded that more should be done in this area and we should seek the assistance of the sector in further restricting UK Internet users' access to the large amount of terrorist material which is illegal under our law but hosted overseas. Similar arrangements already apply for illegal child abuse images. We are also working with industry to include unpleasant, but nonetheless legal, extremist material in family-friendly filters for harmful content and to make it easier for the public to report material they find offensive.

**2.20** Although online radicalisation is a significant threat the radicalisation process very often depends on contact between vulnerable people and extremist propagandists. We continue to exclude from the UK people who are engaged in extremist activity. We also seek to disrupt extremist speakers in this country. The ETF concluded that further legislation may be required to deal with groups and individuals who promote extremist views but who deliberately and carefully stay within the existing hate speech and terrorist legislation. This is under consideration.

**2.21** Community based action against extremism and extremists and against terrorist propaganda are all vital. Community groups work well with police teams able to deal with illegal online material. But we continue to fund local projects in Prevent priority areas to alert young people and frontline staff to extremism and explain how

to respond to it. We have given civil society groups training from communications sector specialists to campaign online against extremism and terrorist propaganda. The ETF confirmed that more work was needed in this area and we shall be expanding support for civil society organisations.

**2.22** The basis for most of our work with young vulnerable people is the multi-agency Channel programme run by local authorities, statutory agencies and the police in cities across England and Wales. Channel identifies and then provides tailored support (often from non-government organisations) to people at risk of radicalisation. The ETF concluded that Channel should be expanded and that delivery of Channel be made a legal requirement in England and Wales. Prior to national roll-out in April 2012, over 400 people had received support through Channel. Between national roll-out and the end of December 2013 approximately 1,600 referrals were received, 300 of whom have so far gone on to receive support.

**2.23** Many sectors are important for our work to deal with extremist propaganda and to support young people who may be at risk of radicalisation. We have recruited dedicated co-ordinators to work with universities and colleges and Universities UK (UUK) have launched a website to share best practice on managing external speakers in higher education institutions. Ofsted will take account of Prevent related risks in their inspection programme. The ETF agreed that the Department for Education should consult on a voluntary code of practice setting out standards for religious supplementary schools, including policies to protect children and young people from harm. We have been giving more support to the Charity Commission to better enable action to be taken in England and Wales against charities who are misusing their status for extremist purposes and to support terrorist activity

(here or overseas). The ETF concluded that the Charity Commission required new and stronger powers to stop the abuse of charities and the Government is currently consulting on this.

**2.24** As of 30 September 2013, there were 120 terrorist and extremist prisoners in Great Britain, including 10 people on remand awaiting trial for terrorism-related offences. There is a significant threat that people in prisons for terrorist offences and some other prisoners will engage in radicalisation inside prison itself. This threat requires a specific and tailored response which we have been developing in recent years in conjunction with other countries, including through international fora such as the Global Counter Terrorism Forum and the EU's Radicalisation Awareness Network. The ETF stated that further steps would be taken to control activities of terrorist prisoners (notably their access to extremist material) and to continue Prevent prisons programmes.

## PROTECT

**2.25** Effective protective security is both a significant deterrent to terrorism and a means of disrupting terrorist activity. We have continued to prioritise borders and aviation security, busy urban areas (known as 'crowded places') and our Critical National Infrastructure (CNI).

**2.26** Border security is multi-layered and needs to include our visa system, arrangements to determine who is coming into and leaving the country and physical controls on arrival. It needs to address passenger and cargo movements. It requires rapid and comprehensive data analysis and close collaboration between agencies operating at our border and overseas.

**2.27** We continue to modernise border agencies, notably the new Border Force

established in March 2012 with a remit to protect and secure the UK border by carrying out immigration and customs controls for people and goods entering the UK. The National Crime Agency, established in October 2013, includes a new Border Policing Command with a remit to increase security at the border and deal with serious, organised and complex crime.

**2.28** The UK has been at the forefront of work to develop systems to collect and process passenger data. This data enables us to stop some people coming into this country and to take action against others on their arrival (e.g. where they have an outstanding arrest warrant). Data is critical to maintaining a secure border. We have significantly improved issues about the quantity and timeliness of collection of passenger data from airlines. We have not been able to reach agreement inside the EU to acquire additional data (known as Passenger Name Records or PNR) as we would like, even though this data is provided to third countries, and the relevant EU directive is stalled. We will negotiate bilateral agreements wherever possible instead.

**2.29** Our Pre-Departure Checks Scheme prevents people who pose a terrorist threat from flying to or from the UK through a system of semi-automated data exchange between our interagency National Border Targeting Centre and carriers. We have stopped the travel of a small number of people whom we have judged may pose a threat to aviation security. These measures are particularly important in the light of the developing terrorist threats we face and the determination of some groups to attack civilian aircraft.

**2.30** The focus of cargo work continues to be effective implementation of an EU Inbound Cargo Regime which we were instrumental in having agreed in 2012. We have continued

to expand our own systems for detecting the illicit importation of radiological or nuclear material (known as Cyclamen).

**2.31** We have made further changes to our airport security screening technology to keep pace with the evolving threat, increasing the roll-out of security scanners across UK airports; and we have been satisfied that the current threat level justifies continued restrictions on liquids. Our own aviation security depends on the physical security of airports overseas and we have also continued to fund airport security programmes in high threat areas. We have invested further in our own network of aviation security officers overseas.

**2.32** We need to continue to make it harder for terrorists to get access to materials in this country that may be used to make explosives. This is particularly relevant as we deal with the threat from lone terrorists operating here. We have worked with industry to successfully reduce their use of potentially lethal materials by providing specialist scientific advice on less hazardous alternatives. In 2014 we will be restricting the availability of other substances, using an EU regulation on the marketing and use of explosive precursors.

**2.33** The UK has an established programme to protect the CNI which provides essential services such as communications, energy, emergency services, finance, food, government, health, transport and water. Historically, terrorism has posed a threat to CNI and we have provided advice and set standards for physical security systems. This continues. Cyber attacks are an increasing threat and funding has been allocated from the National Cyber Security Programme to deal with it. Coordination of our work on terrorist and cyber threats is a priority: at this stage we have seen little evidence of a significant cyber terrorist threat in its own right.

**2.34** We continue to improve protective security in crowded places through a large dedicated police team. Throughout this year the police provided further specific security advice to Muslim organisations and mosques facing threats from the extreme right.

## PREPARE

**2.35** Terrorist methods and tactics are changing. Our programmes for responding to a terrorist attack also need to change to remain effective. We have continued to develop the capabilities required to deal with an attack by a terrorist group using firearms and intended to last for a significant length of time – an attack methodology seen in 2013 at both In Amenas in Algeria and the Westgate Shopping Mall in Nairobi (in each case causing very significant numbers of fatalities, including British nationals). Having previously completed a re-equipping of police forces we have extended training through 2013 to hundreds of other staff in the emergency services.

**2.36** Work to respond to a terrorist incident needs to be coordinated with other Government programmes to deal with all kinds of civil emergencies. The Cabinet Office Emergency Planning College (EPC) trained over 4,000 people, including emergency responders, chief executives and other resilience officials. The EPC is also now working with the private sector, notably major shopping mall and transport operators.

**2.37** We have a long standing programme to provide an emergency response to a terrorist related chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear (CBRN) incident. We have developed new programmes to better enable non-specialist emergency responders to take immediate live-saving actions.

**2.38** Lessons learned from work to deal with CBRN and a firearms attack have informed a much wider and more ambitious programme to improve emergency service cooperation and collaboration after other major incidents. The Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Programme (JESIP) was established in September 2012 and through 2013, launched the largest joint emergency service training programme ever undertaken in the UK. We expect JESIP to deliver real long term change to the ability of the emergency services to work effectively together.

# CONCLUSION

CONTEST provides a sound strategic framework for our counter terrorist work. It needs to adapt to keep ahead of changing terrorist threats.

The Government has continued to provide the police and the security and intelligence agencies with the powers and capabilities they need to do their job. These powers are necessary and proportionate and subject to close oversight and scrutiny. We have a sustained cross-Government effort to deal with the new and wider range of terrorist threats we now face overseas.

We have increased the pace and range of our Prevent work. We are making our borders and our aviation sector even more secure. We are reshaping our emergency response to deal with new terrorist methods and techniques.

The UK counter terrorist response is widely regarded as among the most effective in the world. The Government is committed to maintaining the safety and security of the public.



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