



HM Government

CONTEST
The United Kingdom's
Strategy for
Countering Terrorism:
Annual Report for 2015

Cm 9310



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The United Kingdom's Strategy for Countering Terrorism:

Annual Report for 2015

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

July 2016

Cm 9310



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Foreword by the Home Secretary

We face a significant and changing threat from Daesh. In 2015, there were almost 60 attacks – from Paris to Sydney – as well as over 200 attacks carried out by Daesh branches including those in Libya and Egypt. Al Qa'ida's senior leadership may have been weakened, but that threat has not gone away. Its affiliates in Yemen and in North Africa remain a serious concern. We continue to face an ongoing threat from Northern Ireland Related Terrorism.

The attack on tourists in Tunisia in June 2015 was the largest single loss of British life to terrorism since the London bombings in 2005. In 2015, 34 British citizens were killed in attacks in Tunisia, France and Afghanistan. The threat to the UK and our interests continues to be driven largely by the situation in Syria and Iraq and, in particular, by Daesh.

Throughout 2015, the UK threat level remained at 'SEVERE', meaning an attack is highly likely. Six plots in Great Britain were successfully disrupted in 2015 by the police and the security and intelligence agencies. I pay tribute to their professionalism and commitment.

The UK Government counter-terrorism strategy, CONTEST, has proven to be successful over a number of years. Our approach is world leading. But the threat from terrorism continues to adapt and change. It is vital, therefore, that we continue to ensure our counter-terrorism effort in the UK is complemented by work overseas with our international partners.

Commitments announced in the National Security Strategy and Strategic Defence and Security Review in November include an increase in counter-terrorism resources, which will ensure the police and the security and intelligence agencies continue to have the powers and capabilities they need to disrupt terrorism.

Our approach needs to continually adapt. That is why we are currently reviewing CONTEST – to ensure the highest priorities are given the right resources, and that government departments and agencies have a unified approach. We will publish an updated strategy later this year.

The horrific attack in Nice this month and attacks earlier this year in Belgium, the US and Turkey remind us all of the challenges we continue to face. Together with our allies around the world, we must continue to act with urgency and joint resolve.

The primary duty of government is to protect the public. This Annual Report demonstrates our continuous efforts in the UK and overseas to ensure that remains the case.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Amber Rudd'.

Amber Rudd MP
Home Secretary

Part 1: Introduction

1.1 In July 2011, the Government published a new version of CONTEST, the UK's counter-terrorism strategy, and committed to provide an annual update on counter-terrorism work. This report covers January to December 2015. CONTEST is a UK-wide strategy which depends on close collaboration with the Devolved Administrations. The report does not cover domestic terrorism in Northern Ireland, responsibility for which lies with the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

The threat from terrorism

1.2 In 2015, there were 11,774 recorded terrorist attacks in 92 countries, a decrease of 13% compared with the 2014 total, largely as a result of fewer attacks in Iraq, Pakistan and Nigeria.¹ In several countries, including Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Egypt, Syria and Turkey, the number of attacks and fatalities increased in 2015.

1.3 Throughout 2015, the UK threat level, set by the Joint Terrorism Analysis Centre, has remained at 'SEVERE', meaning an attack here is highly likely. Islamist terrorism has remained the principal threat. The nature and scale of recent attacks and plots – across Europe, in North America, North Africa and beyond – have demonstrated the threat posed by terrorists inspired or directed by Daesh. The attack on tourists last June

in Sousse, Tunisia, resulted in the deaths of 30 British nationals. The attacks in Paris in November, in which 130 people were killed, including one British national, demonstrated Daesh's ability to coordinate and direct complex mass-casualty attacks. We have continued to see attacks in other parts of the world, including in Bangladesh, Egypt, Kuwait, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia and Turkey.

1.4 Although the Global Coalition² military campaign has helped push Daesh out of significant territory in Iraq and Syria, Daesh still operates in substantial areas there, and is using propaganda to encourage individuals from around the world to travel to the conflict area. Approximately 850 individuals of national security concern have travelled from the UK. Just under half have returned.

1.5 We have seen terrorists using a range of different attack methods, from relatively unsophisticated attacks using knives or improvised weapons to complex and carefully planned attacks, involving guns or explosives at multiple locations, or aimed at civilian aircraft. We have also seen attempted attacks on other forms of transport, such as the Thalys train in France. Terrorist groups are also making use of online communications to plan attacks.

1.6 Beyond Syria and Iraq, Daesh affiliates in a number of countries pose a threat to our interests, most notably in the Middle East and North Africa. Daesh claimed responsibility

¹ National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START) (2015). More information is available at: <https://www.start.umd.edu/news/2015-gtd-data-informs-latest-state-department-country-reports-terrorism-release>

² More information is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/topical-events/daesh>

for the Russian Metrojet crash in Egypt in October, marking a significant development in its tactics.

1.7 Whilst Daesh is currently the predominant terrorist threat to the UK and our interests overseas, it is by no means the only threat. The Al Qa'ida grouping in Afghanistan and Pakistan, and affiliate groups elsewhere such as Al Qa'ida in the Arabian Peninsula in Yemen continue to aspire to attack Western interests, including civil aviation. In February this year, Al Shabaab also claimed responsibility for the bomb placed aboard the Daallo Airlines flight in Mogadishu (believed to have been originally intended for a Turkish Airlines flight).

1.8 Alongside the threat from Islamist terrorists, dissident republican groups also continue to pose a threat in Great Britain, although their focus remains largely on conducting attacks in Northern Ireland. In 2015, there were 16 national security attacks in Northern Ireland and the threat there was assessed as 'SEVERE'. The threat from dissident republicans to Great Britain in 2015 was 'MODERATE' (an attack is possible but not likely). Threat levels in both Northern Ireland and Great Britain from Northern Ireland Related Terrorism are kept under regular review. In May this year, the Security Service increased the threat level to Great Britain from Northern Ireland-related terrorism from 'MODERATE' to 'SUBSTANTIAL' (an attack is a strong possibility). Terrorists associated with the extreme right also pose a threat, though it remains lower by comparison.

Part 2: Our Response

Strategic Context

2.1 CONTEST aims to reduce the risk to the UK and its interests overseas from terrorism so that people can go about their lives freely and with confidence. CONTEST deals with all forms of terrorism and continues to be based around four strands:

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

2.2 The National Security Strategy (NSS) and Strategic Defence and Security Review (SDSR)³ were published in November 2015. The NSS and SDSR set out the Government's vision for a secure and prosperous UK with global reach and influence. Terrorism remains one of the highest priority risks to the UK's national security. Tackling terrorism at home and abroad through CONTEST is one of our priorities under the National Security Objectives set out in the NSS.

³ HM Government (2015) *National Security Strategy and Strategic Defence and Security Review 2015*. Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/478933/52309_Cm_9161_NSS_SD_Review_web_only.pdf

2.3 The SDSR and associated Spending Review pledged to increase cross-government spending on counter-terrorism by 30% in real terms over the course of this Parliament to tackle the latest terrorist threats.⁴ Key commitments include: increasing resources for counter-terrorism police and the security and intelligence agencies; a doubling of our spending on aviation security around the world; and additional investments in our Armed Forces' counter-terrorism capabilities.

2.4 As the terrorist threat has developed since CONTEST was published in 2011, we have continued to update and strengthen our response. The SDSR committed the Home Office to update CONTEST in 2016.

⁴ More information is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-publishes-strategic-defence-and-security-review>

Pursue

2.5 The volume and scale of the threats we face, both to the UK and our interests overseas, have increased. We face an ongoing risk connected to people who have travelled to Syria and Iraq to join terrorist groups, both from those who have returned, and those who remain in the region, where they can inspire and direct attacks. Overseas, we need to be able to find and track terrorists in the hostile environments where they thrive – in unstable states and amid civil wars. We have continued to review and strengthen our response to ensure that law enforcement agencies have the powers and capabilities they need to respond effectively.

2.6 The purpose of *Pursue* is to stop terrorist attacks by detecting and investigating terrorist threats, wherever possible by prosecuting those engaged in terrorism-related activity. During 2015, our law enforcement and security and intelligence agencies disrupted six terrorist plots to attack Great Britain. There were 280 terrorism-related arrests in Great Britain in 2015.⁵ The numbers of women and under-18s arrested for terrorism-related offences both increased compared with the previous year. Of the 280 people arrested in 2015, 83 were charged with a terrorism-related offence, and 13 with other offences.⁶ 40 of the 83 people charged with terrorism-related offences have already been prosecuted; 38 of these have been convicted.⁷

⁵ Home Office (2016) *Operation of police powers under the Terrorism Act 2000, quarterly update to December 2015*. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/operation-of-police-powers-under-the-terrorism-act-2000-quarterly-update-to-december-2015>

⁶ As of 21 January 2016

⁷ As of 21 January 2016

2.7 In 2015, our *Pursue* objectives were to:

- ensure that counter-terrorism powers remain effective and proportionate;
- improve our ability to prosecute and use immigration and nationality powers against people for terrorism-related activity and those involved in extremism and unacceptable behaviours;
- increase capabilities to detect, investigate and disrupt terrorist threats;
- ensure that confidence in the work of partner agencies is maintained through effective oversight; and
- work with other countries and multilateral organisations to enable us to better tackle the threats we face at source.

Effective use of proportionate counter-terrorism powers

2.8 Conviction in court is the most effective way to stop terrorists. But where prosecution is not possible, we continue to exercise a range of powers to disrupt terrorist activity.

Royal Prerogative

2.9 The Royal Prerogative can be exercised against British passport holders to cancel, or refuse to issue, a passport on public interest grounds. It can be used to disrupt individuals who seek to travel to engage in terrorism. Between January 2015 and December 2015, the Royal Prerogative power was used 23 times.

Counter-Terrorism and Security Act

2.10 The Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 (CTSA) was passed last year to ensure that the police and the security and intelligence agencies have the powers and capabilities they need to respond to increased terrorist threats relating to Syria and

Iraq. Measures in the Act provide additional means to disrupt the travel of foreign fighters to and from the conflict area; and to improve our ability to manage them on their return. The Act came into force in February 2015. The previous Annual Report includes a summary of the measures in the Act,⁸ which also strengthened aspects of *Prevent* and *Protect* work.

Schedule 1 powers

2.11 Schedule 1 to the CTSA 2015 enables police officers to seize and temporarily retain travel documents at ports to disrupt immediate travel, where there is reasonable suspicion that a person intends to travel to engage in terrorism-related activity outside the UK. Between February and December 2015, the power was exercised 24 times.

Terrorism Prevention and Investigation Measures

2.12 Terrorism Prevention and Investigation Measures (TPIMs) give the Security Service and police measures to help manage the risk posed by people believed to be engaged in terrorism, but who cannot be prosecuted. Amendments were made to the TPIM Act under the CTSA 2015. These included: raising the legal threshold for imposing a TPIM notice from ‘reasonable belief’ to ‘balance of probabilities’; a new power to relocate a TPIM subject up to 200 miles from their place of residence; and increasing the potential prison sentence for attempting to leave the UK to ten years. In the last quarter of 2015, two TPIM notices were in force.

Immigration and nationality powers

2.13 We continue to seek to remove from the UK those foreign nationals who pose

a threat to our national security, including through the use of Deportation with Assurances (DWA) and wider deportation and removal powers. During 2015, we began DWA proceedings in two new cases. Under other powers, we removed three individuals who had been convicted in the UK of terrorism-related offences.

2.14 In 2015 we continued to use immigration powers to deprive dual nationals of British citizenship on ‘not conducive to the public good’ grounds. We also excluded eight foreign nationals from this country on national security grounds and 16 on grounds of ‘unacceptable behaviour’ including ‘hate speech’.

Capabilities to detect, investigate and disrupt terrorist threats

Increased resources for the police and security and intelligence agencies

2.15 In the SDSR, published in November, the Government announced an increase in resources for counter-terrorism police and for the security and intelligence agencies. This included commitments to enhance their abilities to deal with the growing use of online communications and digital media by terrorists. We committed to increase the numbers of police investigators and police officers based overseas; and to strengthen police capabilities to investigate terrorist activity online and process large amounts of digital data. Investments in the security and intelligence agencies will provide for an additional 1,900 staff at the Security Service, the Secret Intelligence Service and the Government Communications Headquarters.

Interception and Communications Data

2.16 The acquisition of communications data (the ‘who’, ‘when’ and ‘where’ aspects of a communication, but not its content) and the interception of communications remain

⁸ Home Office (2015) *CONTEST Annual Report for 2014*. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/contest-uk-strategy-for-counterterrorism-annual-report-for-2014>

vital tools for law enforcement and intelligence agencies in the fight against terrorism and other serious crimes.

2.17 In November 2015, the Government published the draft Investigatory Powers Bill. This seeks to put all of the powers relating to the acquisition of electronic communications in a single comprehensive piece of legislation. The legislation aims to make it clear who can exercise these powers, and under what circumstances; it also sets out the oversight arrangements that apply to them. Importantly, the Bill sets out strengthened safeguards in regard to the acquisition, use and retention of electronic data, including the introduction of a 'double-lock' for the most sensitive powers in the Bill, so that warrants authorised by the Secretary of State will need to be approved by an independent Judicial Commissioner before coming into force. Following a period of pre-legislative scrutiny, a revised Bill was introduced into Parliament on 1 March this year. The Bill had its Third Reading in the House of Commons and was introduced to the House of Lords on 7 June.

Proscription

2.18 The Government will continue to use the powers available to proscribe organisations, where they are believed to be involved with terrorism and where this is proportionate. There are currently 70 international terrorist organisations proscribed in the UK.⁹ In 2015, four terrorist groups were proscribed (a further four were proscribed in July this year).¹⁰

⁹ The list also includes 14 organisations involved in Northern Ireland related terrorism that were proscribed under previous legislation.

¹⁰ The full list of proscribed organisations is available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/538297/20160715-Proscription-website-update.pdf

2.19 Proscription is subject to review if an organisation or any individual affected by a proscription writes to the Home Secretary requesting that she considers removing an organisation from the proscribed list. In 2015, the Home Secretary received one deproscription application. On 18 March 2016 an Order came into effect amending Schedule 2 to the Terrorism Act 2000 by removing the International Sikh Youth Federation (ISYF) from the list of proscribed organisations.

Terrorist Finance

2.20 The Government seeks to make the UK a hostile environment for terrorist financing by disrupting terrorist fundraising and the movement of terrorist funds into and out of the UK. In October 2015, the Government published an assessment of terrorist finance risks as part of the National Risk Assessment of Money Laundering and Terrorist Finance. Collaboration with the private sector on terrorist finance was also improved through Joint Money Laundering Intelligence Taskforce initiatives. In April this year, we published the Action Plan for anti-money laundering and counter-terrorist finance, setting out how we will address the weaknesses identified in the risk assessment. The Action Plan will deliver significant changes to our anti-money laundering and counter-terrorist finance regimes and puts public-private partnership at the heart of our response.

2.21 International engagement is a key part of our counter-terrorist finance strategy. We work bilaterally and with multilateral institutions to build the capacity of international partners to tackle terrorist finance. Denying Daesh access to revenue and funding is a core part of the Global Coalition's strategy to defeat it. The UK is a member of the Counter ISIL Finance Group (CIFG), which was established in March

2015 and works to understand Daesh's financial and economic activities; share information; and develop and coordinate counter-measures. We have played a key part in helping pass UN Security Council Resolution 2199, which tightens sanctions and requires all states to prevent transfer of economic resources to Daesh, including their infrastructure. In December 2015, the UK helped pass UN Security Council Resolution 2253 which refocuses the sanctions regime squarely on the threat from Daesh.

2.22 We have continued to take part in international efforts to tackle Daesh. The UK is a leading part of the 66 member Global Coalition against Daesh. The Coalition military campaign has helped push Daesh out of significant territory in Iraq and Syria and is hitting Daesh's cash stocks, oil revenues and fighting positions. On 2 December, the House of Commons approved a motion supporting Her Majesty's Government in the conduct of airstrikes against Daesh in Syria. Over the course of the coalition campaign against Daesh in Syria and Iraq, the UK has conducted a total of 942 airstrikes. This military action is also having success in limiting Daesh's oil revenues. The Global Coalition has already damaged or destroyed 1,620 oil infrastructure targets, which has inflicted significant damage on Daesh's illicit oil industry.

2.23 We will act decisively where terrorists pose an imminent threat to the UK and our interests overseas or to our allies. On 21 August 2015, the UK conducted an airstrike in Syria targeting Reyaad Khan, who was planning and directing a series of armed attacks against the UK. The Prime Minister reported this action to Parliament on its return on 7 September.

Effective oversight

2.24 The Independent Reviewer of Terrorism Legislation, David Anderson QC, keeps under review the operation of the UK's counter-terrorism legislation. He publishes an annual report as well as ad hoc reports on other issues, where appropriate. Last year, he undertook an inquiry into investigatory powers and his report, 'A Question of Trust', has helped to shape the Investigatory Powers Bill.¹¹

2.25 In March 2015, the Intelligence and Security Committee (ISC) of Parliament published a report on the range of intrusive capabilities available to UK intelligence agencies, including the legal framework governing their use, and the privacy protection and safeguards that apply.¹²

2.26 The Royal United Services Institute also published, in July 2015, a report on the findings of its Independent Surveillance Review which considered the legality of UK surveillance programmes and the effectiveness of the regimes that govern them.¹³

2.27 Three independent Commissioners, all serving or past senior members of the judiciary, provide oversight of the operation

¹¹ Independent Reviewer of Terrorism Legislation (2015) *A Question of Trust: Report of the Investigatory Powers Review*. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/a-question-of-trust-report-of-the-investigatory-powers-review>

¹² Intelligence and Security Committee of Parliament (2015) *Privacy and Security: A modern and transparent legal framework*. Available at <http://isc.independent.gov.uk/committee-reports/special-reports>

¹³ Royal United Services Institute (2015) *A Democratic Licence to Operate: Report of the Independent Surveillance Review*. Available at: <https://rusi.org/publication/whitehall-reports/democratic-licence-operate-report-independent-surveillance-review>

of specific powers – the Interception of Communications Commissioner, the Intelligence Services Commissioner and the Surveillance Commissioner. Under the proposals in the Investigatory Powers Bill, these three offices will be replaced by a single Investigatory Powers Commissioner who, properly resourced and supported, will provide enhanced oversight over the exercise of investigatory powers. In addition, the Bill provides for a new ‘double-lock’ arrangement whereby the use of the most intrusive powers will be signed off by both the Secretary of State and a judicial commissioner.

their use, and the safeguards and oversight in place to guard against their abuse.

2.28 The Investigatory Powers Tribunal, which investigates complaints about the use of covert techniques by public authorities, has made some important judgments over the past year. Whilst not all of these have found in favour of the relevant public authority,¹⁴ the Tribunal has broadly upheld the lawfulness of the current legislation. Most recently, in February 2016, the Tribunal upheld the lawfulness of the use of computer network exploitation powers by the Government Communications Headquarters.

2.29 In November 2015, the Government published the first Annual Government Transparency Report,¹⁵ ensuring the public are able to access, in one place, a comprehensive guide to a range of disruptive and investigatory powers used to combat threats to the United Kingdom, the extent of

¹⁴ For example, in July 2015, the IPT found that the National Crime Agency’s property interference and surveillance warrants were unlawfully obtained. More information on judgments made by the IPT is available at: www.ipt-uk.com

¹⁵ HM Government (2015) HM Government Transparency Report 2015: Disruptive and Investigatory Powers. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/hm-government-transparency-report-on-the-use-of-disruptive-and-investigatory-powers>

Prevent

2.30 In 2015, we strengthened our *Prevent* programme to safeguard vulnerable individuals in response to the scale of the terrorist threat. We significantly increased our activity online, working with industry to remove more terrorist material and supporting civil society groups to deliver more counter-narrative campaigns. We improved our systems and programmes to prevent those attempting to travel to Syria and Iraq and to safeguard those at risk of radicalisation. We introduced the *Prevent* statutory duty through the CTSA 2015 to establish more consistent delivery across the country and placed the Channel programme on a statutory footing.

2.31 In 2015, our key objectives under *Prevent* were to:

- respond to the ideology of extremism and terrorism and the threats we face from those who promote it;
- prevent people from being drawn into terrorism and ensure that they are given appropriate advice and support; and
- work with specific sectors where there are risks of radicalisation which we need to address.

Challenging extremist and terrorist ideology

Restricting access to and the availability of terrorist material

2.32 We have seen a marked increase in the scale and pace of terrorist communications by groups like Daesh, who use the internet to spread fear; disseminate propaganda; and persuade individuals to join and support them. In response, we have made significant strides in removing illegal terrorist material online. Following referrals from the Counter Terrorism Internet Referral Unit, social media providers removed over 55,000 pieces of

illegal terrorist material in 2015, compared with 46,000 in 2014.

2.33 Industry has taken action to suspend accounts of those propagating terrorist or extremist views, but they can and must go further. Their terms and conditions should be sufficiently robust in relation to terrorist and extremist content and they should provide clear ways for the public to report content. As set out in the Counter-Extremism Strategy, we believe that these companies should set up a body in the style of the Internet Watch Foundation to monitor and flag to industry occurrences of terrorism and extremism on their networks. We continue to work with them on this.

Communications capacity building with civil society groups

2.34 As well as removing terrorist material, we must surpass the pace and the scale of the terrorist narrative online. Through the Research, Information and Communications Unit, we provide advice, support, production capabilities and social media training to civil society groups to help deliver counter-narrative campaigns. Counter-narrative products developed in partnership with these groups generated over 15 million online viewings in 2015, compared with around 3 million in 2014.

Preventing people from being drawn into terrorism

2.35 Reducing the risk from people travelling to, and returning from, the conflict in Syria and Iraq was a major focus of our work in 2015. Approximately 850 individuals of national security concern have travelled since the conflict began. Just under half have returned to the UK and approximately 15% are deceased. Over the course of 2015, fewer people travelled from the UK to the conflict area than in previous years.

2.36 The police and other partners have used a wide range of methods to prevent travel to the conflict. More than 150 attempted journeys to the conflict area were disrupted in 2015. This includes action by the family courts, which have increasingly been taking measures to prevent travel. The courts protected approximately 50 children (from around 20 families) from being taken to the conflict area in 2015. Guidance on using the family courts to protect children at risk has been issued to local authorities, the judiciary, and the police to support this innovative measure.

2.37 Through the CTSA 2015, we placed Channel, our voluntary programme for people at risk of being drawn into terrorism, on a statutory footing. This ensures all local authority areas have a Channel panel. During 2015, there were several thousand referrals to Channel; around 15% of these were linked to far right extremism, and around 70% linked to Islamist-related extremism.¹⁶ Following careful assessment by experts, several hundred people were provided with support in 2015. Success in Channel is when, following the assessment and a programme of support if necessary, there are no remaining concerns that the individual will be drawn into terrorism. The vast majority of cases achieve a successful outcome. We continue to improve the programme through bespoke training and guidance for practitioners.

2.38 We will also be introducing a new deradicalisation scheme, which will be mandatory where the law allows, for those who are further down the path to radicalisation and who need a particularly intensive type of support.

2.39 The National Offender Management Service (NOMS) manages at any one

time over 1,000 prisoners who have been identified as extremist or vulnerable to extremism.¹⁷ NOMS has continued to manage these prisoners through measures such as disciplinary action and transfers within the prison estate, and standard and dedicated programmes. 143 specialist interventions and assessments were completed with this group, based on the level of risk individuals represent, with around 60 interventions underway at any one point.

Working with sectors where there are risks of radicalisation

2.40 The *Prevent* statutory duty has prompted a significant step forward in the delivery of *Prevent* work in sectors. The number of frontline staff who have received training on radicalisation increased significantly. For example, over 150,000 NHS staff received training in 2015. In total, over 400,000 frontline staff received training, more than double the number from the previous year. To reach even more staff, we are expanding our training offer by endorsing more products and developing e-learning modules.

2.41 We published statutory guidance on the duty, setting out that activity should be informed by a risk assessment and should be proportionate to the threat. We also issued specific advice to each sector – for example, we launched the Educate Against Hate online portal with the Department for Education to provide advice and curriculum materials to parents, school leaders and governors. All sectors now have robust inspection frameworks in place to monitor implementation of *Prevent*.

2.42 We increased the number of *Prevent* priority areas from 30 to 46 in June 2015.

¹⁶ The remaining 15% of referrals covered other forms of extremism or were not recorded as related to a specific ideology.

¹⁷ This includes the 143 people in custody in Great Britain for terrorism-related offences as of December 2015.

As a result, our local coordinator network dramatically increased its reach, working with over 2,790 different institutions (schools, universities and faith institutions) and engaging nearly 50,000 individuals over the course of 2015. We also boosted the number of community based projects aimed at reducing the vulnerabilities which can lead to individuals being drawn into terrorism. 130 community based projects were delivered in 2015, up from 70 in 2014, reaching over 25,300 participants. Over half of these projects were delivered in schools, aimed at increasing young people's resilience to terrorist and extremist ideologies. We have also made available a grant fund of £3.6 million, to be distributed among local authorities in England, Wales and Scotland, to support the delivery of the *Prevent* duty further.

RESEARCH, INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS UNIT

The Research, Information and Communications Unit (RICU) was established in 2007 as a cross-government initiative resourced by the Home Office, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, and Department for Communities and Local Government and responsible for delivering on counter-terrorism priorities under the CONTEST strategy. Today, RICU has become a government strategic communications unit which is based in the Home Office and which works across a range of public safety issues, including counter-terrorism and counter-extremism, organised immigration crime, cyber crime and money laundering.

RICU works in partnership with private sector experts to build the capacity of civil society groups to confront and challenge the ideology of terrorism and extremism. Through RICU, we are working to ensure that groups which are willing to lead the fight against radicalisation in their own communities are supported by the best communications professionals and industry experts, who can provide them with creative advice and support, production capabilities, public relations expertise and social media training.

We are proud of the support RICU has provided to organisations working on the frontline to confront the warped ideology of groups like Daesh, to protect communities and to support families.

Protect

2.43 A number of terrorist attacks worldwide in 2015 directly affected British citizens. These have shown starkly that our investment in protecting our people and interests, both at home and abroad, is crucial. In the SDSR, we committed to build on our existing programmes by collaborating with international partners to improve protective security where British citizens and interests may be at risk.

2.44 In 2015, our *Protect* objectives were to:

- strengthen our border security;
- reduce the vulnerability of our transport network;
- increase the resilience of our critical infrastructure;
- improve protective security for crowded places and people at specific risk from terrorism; and
- improve protective security in key overseas locations.

Strengthening our border security

2.45 Border security remains a key focus of our *Protect* work. We continue to improve and evolve our border detection systems to ensure they identify those individuals and consignments which pose the greatest risk to the UK (for example, firearms, explosives and drugs), whilst facilitating the movement of legitimate travel and trade. We have developed a sophisticated freight targeting capability and further enhanced our passenger data analytical capability. Following the Paris attacks in November, the Ministry of Defence provided mutual aid to other organisations working at the Border to support our counter-terrorism effort.

2.46 The CTSA 2015 enabled the introduction of the Authority to Carry Scheme

in 2015 in March last year. This extended the scope of the UK's 'No Fly' arrangements to all individuals, British and foreign, seeking to travel to or from the UK, posing security, crime or immigration threats. This built upon the more limited 2012 Scheme. In the first year of operation of the new scheme, the National Border Targeting Centre refused carriers authority to carry nearly 1,000 individuals to the UK.

2.47 Since April 2015, exit checks have been in place on all international commercial scheduled air, sea and rail services leaving the UK for destinations outside the Common Travel Area.¹⁸ The check is made against passenger information provided by port and service operators and can enable appropriate interventions to prevent travel, but not in every instance. Our ability to intervene to prevent individuals, including vulnerable adults and minors, leaving to travel to conflict areas, and to prevent foreign nationals arriving here, depends on the availability and accuracy of this advance information. We will continue to work with carriers and operators to ensure that data about individuals travelling from and into the UK is available to ports police and to Border Force in advance of travel.

2.48 Passenger Name Records (PNR) relates to information collated by companies to enable travel reservations to be processed and may include how travel was reserved and paid for, contact details, seat numbers and travel itinerary. Processing of PNR by the security authorities allows the identification of individuals who are, or may be, travelling for terrorist purposes and enables appropriate interventions against them. Our capability to process PNR is among the most advanced in Europe. Over the course of 2015, we have significantly enhanced the extent of

¹⁸ The Common Travel Area comprises the United Kingdom, the Republic of Ireland, the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man.

our capability to analyse PNR including for journeys being made within the EU.

2.49 Following the terrorist attacks in Paris, the EU Council of Ministers and the European Parliament reached agreement in December on the text of an EU Directive on the use of PNR for the prevention, detection, investigation and prosecution of terrorist offences and serious crime. This welcome agreement permits EU member states to process PNR on routes within the EU. The Directive will lead to new capabilities for processing of PNR across Europe, and new opportunities to support international investigations to identify individuals who have taken part, or intend to take part, in terrorism-related activity, who try to avoid detection by taking circuitous routes through Europe to or from Syria.

2.50 Special Branch are present at ports and routinely undertake activity to identify and disrupt travel to the conflict area in Syria and Iraq. Last year saw a number of young people travelling from the UK to Syria and Iraq. In order to increase our ability to intervene and prevent these vulnerable individuals travelling, we have provided guidance to the travel industry to help them to better identify and refer them to the authorities. We have also developed and successfully piloted training to empower those working in ports and in the travel industry to refer concerns to police or Border Force.

2.51 In 2015, as part of an ongoing programme, the Home Office invested substantially in radiological and nuclear screening at the UK border to ensure our systems remain amongst the best in the world. This has further strengthened our capabilities to identify and intercept illicit materials that may represent a threat to the UK's national security, or pose a public health risk.

Reducing the vulnerability of the transport network

2.52 Transport remains a prominent and current target for terrorist groups. The UK continues to work on improving aviation security both in the UK and abroad. In 2015, new EU rules were introduced to UK airports requiring greater use of explosive detection equipment. We are building on this in 2016 with increased use of security scanners and investment in screening technologies.

2.53 But we also rely on security at airports overseas to keep passengers safe. Since July 2014, we have been working with a number of countries and airlines to apply additional security screening of passengers flying to the UK. We extended these measures in response to the Metrojet attack, and are working closely with international partners to improve global aviation security standards. As part of this effort, we are more than doubling our spend on aviation security around the world, with British experts sharing expertise with local counterparts.

2.54 The military has continued to support our wider aviation security measures with a comprehensive UK air defence system held at continuous readiness. Aircraft can be launched within minutes to intercept any unidentified or unauthorised aircraft compromising UK airspace. Our integrated air defence system provides the capability to counter airborne terrorist threats and act as a deterrent against any attack.

2.55 There have been significant developments in the way security is delivered on the general rail network. These include: implementation of new transport policing tactics to deter and detect criminal and terrorist activity, as well as to reassure the general public; commencement of armed patrols on the London Underground; and the dissemination of cyber security guidance to the rail industry.

2.56 We have continued to review the effectiveness of security arrangements in place at our ports and cross-Channel rail services. This has included ongoing reviews of arrangements in place at the Channel Tunnel, the Port of Calais, and other locations in partnership with France. We have further enhanced perimeter security and made technological advancements to x-ray scanners (to detect weapons or explosives on passenger shuttles) at each end of the Channel Tunnel.

Resilience of Critical Infrastructure

2.57 We assess all risks to our Critical National Infrastructure, from flooding to cyber-attack to terrorism, and work with operators to enhance our infrastructure security. We are reviewing infrastructure policing to ensure that the UK has the right capability to protect our national infrastructure and address national threats. The scope includes the protection of civil nuclear and some military sites, policing at airports and policing of the strategic road and rail network. A number of different national and local forces are currently responsible for policing this infrastructure. We expect the review to report to Ministers later this year.

Access to hazardous materials

2.58 We have introduced and implemented new regulations to control the sale of explosives precursors. Evaluation of the effectiveness of our controls shows that, while implementation has been successful in some areas, more work is required. As well as fast-tracking our own efforts and supporting European partners to strengthen their controls, we are assessing the availability and security of commercial and military explosives.

Crowded places and people at specific risk from terrorism

2.59 The police constantly review security at events and consider potential threats to ensure that everything is being done to protect our communities from terrorism. In light of the attacks in Europe the police regularly reviewed the arrangements in place during 2015. This led to increased overt and covert presence on some streets and at some locations, in particular at major events in big cities. The police continue to engage with communities and businesses to provide advice and reassurance.

Prepare

2.60 The number of terrorist incidents in Europe and elsewhere in 2015 has underlined the importance of our emergency response, both to relatively unsophisticated attacks by lone individuals, and to much more complex attacks, particularly involving firearms and explosives at multiple locations.

2.61 In 2015, our priority *Prepare* objectives were to:

- continue to build capabilities to respond to and recover from a wide range of terrorist and other civil emergencies;
- improve our preparedness for the highest impact risks in the National Risk Assessment;
- improve the ability of the emergency services to work together during a terrorist attack; and
- enhance communications and information sharing for terrorist attacks.

Emergency response and recovery capabilities

Responding to a firearms attack

2.62 We have longstanding plans for responding to firearms attacks. But the November Paris attacks were a terrible reminder of the destruction which a marauding terrorist firearms attack can cause and the challenges it poses for the emergency services. Following the attacks in Paris, we took the decision to provide extra funding to uplift armed policing capability and capacity to respond more quickly and effectively to a firearms attack. This funding uplift will total £35 million in 2016/17, with more to follow in future years.

2.63 In 2015, the Armed Forces established plans to provide support in the event of a large scale terrorist attack in the UK. If

needed, up to 10,000 military personnel, supported by military experts such as bomb disposal teams, are on standby to support the civil authorities.

Counter-terrorism exercising

2.64 The Home Office continues to work with the police, security and intelligence agencies, Armed Forces and other government departments to regularly exercise our counter-terrorism response capabilities. During summer 2015, we delivered Exercise STRONG TOWER in London. This exercise tested the response of the Metropolitan Police Service, British Transport Police and other agencies to a terrorist firearms attack in the capital. The successful exercise provided a number of lessons on how to further improve our response.

Recovery capabilities

2.65 Throughout 2015, we have been working to ensure that our healthcare providers are ready to respond to a large number of casualties caused by an attack similar to those seen in Paris in November. We have examined better ways of coordinating and prioritising healthcare resources and expertise so that we can treat large numbers of casualties with complex injuries quickly and effectively, ensuring we save as many lives as possible.

2.66 We continue to enhance our digital capabilities to help prepare for and respond to a terrorist attack. Our free, secure website, ResilienceDirect, which enables multi-agency planning, response and recovery from emergencies across the UK, has been upgraded to allow responders to share real-time information from the scene of an emergency. We have also launched LessonsDirect, an online platform which allows emergency responders across the UK to share experience and learning from real-life incidents and exercises. Through our

Emergency Planning College, we have trained thousands of responders to ensure they are prepared for a civil emergency, including a terrorist attack.

2.67 We have also developed the response framework for dealing with chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear attacks, with the aim of implementing a more scalable, flexible and efficient response, delivering training to over 150,000 frontline responders.

Preparing for the highest impact risks

2.68 We have worked with international partners to ensure that, in the (low likelihood) event of a mass impact biological attack, medical supplies could be distributed to those affected as quickly and efficiently as possible. This is part of a broader drive to deliver a truly cross-government and coordinated response to significant biological threats, whether these occur naturally, accidentally, or deliberately. We will be publishing the results as a National Biosecurity Strategy later in 2016.

Emergency services interoperability

2.69 The Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Programme was developed to ensure that the emergency services work together effectively to save as many lives as possible. In 2015, we built on the original 2012 to 2014 programme to continue to improve multi-agency response to major incidents through joint training and exercising. In 2015, the emergency services also implemented a new national system for identifying, analysing and addressing learning from both real-life incidents and training exercises.

Communications and information sharing

2.70 During 2015, we continued to strengthen the ability of our emergency responders to communicate during a terrorist attack. In December, we completed a successful exercise of our fallback

communication system to ensure we would have effective command, control and coordination in the event of an attack, even if the usual telephone systems were unavailable.

CONTEST Overseas

2.71 As the former Home Secretary made clear in her Washington speech in February this year,¹⁹ and as we have seen in more recent events, we must continue to look beyond solely domestic solutions to deal with the terrorist threats we face. Over the course of 2015, we worked with our international partners to ensure that collaboration on counter-terrorism is matched with coordinated action which has lasting impact.

2.72 Our *Pursue* effort has continued to involve work with a range of countries across Asia, Africa and the Middle East where the terrorist threat to our people and interests is greatest. Where possible, we have provided training, advice and mentoring to build their counter-terrorism capacity, increasing their ability to conduct effective evidence based counter-terrorism investigations and to disrupt attack planning in line with the rule of law. In Pakistan and Nigeria, for example, we have well-established programmes to strengthen investigatory and judicial frameworks for dealing with terrorism, underpinned by clear human rights principles.

2.73 We have also used UN and EU sanctions to disrupt organisations and individuals. In the autumn of 2015, we secured UN agreement to impose sanctions on five British supporters of Daesh. In December, the UN held the first meeting of Security Council finance ministers in its 70 year history. With our allies we agreed to update the UN counter-terrorism sanctions regime to focus on Daesh, to better limit their access to resources, and to exploit vulnerabilities in their financial network.

2.74 On *Prevent*, other countries continue to look to the UK for ideas and expertise. In

response to the international nature of the online threat, we have led the formation of an Internet Referral Unit in Europol, based on the British model. This unit has a greater impact in a wider range of languages, specifically Arabic.

2.75 We have expanded our strategic communications support with international *Prevent* partners. Specifically, we helped to set up the Belgian sponsored, EU funded, Syria Strategic Communications Advisory Team to support Member States to tackle the communications challenges posed by their citizens travelling to Syria; and to build a network of European communication experts to share best practice on counter-extremism strategic communications. After the attack in Sousse in June 2015, we worked with the Tunisian Government to increase their capacity to counter and undermine extremist propaganda.

2.76 We have significantly stepped up our international efforts on *Protect* and *Prepare* following the Sousse attack. A Home Office and Foreign and Commonwealth Office team is coordinating activity across government and the private sector to strengthen security in key locations overseas. This includes understanding local capability to protect key sites and respond rapidly and effectively to attacks; and working collaboratively with host countries to reduce the risk. This may include the provision of training, mentoring or equipment. Some of this work is progressing in partnership with the US and European countries.

2.77 On border and aviation security, we have remained at the forefront of European efforts to share more passenger data and information on people travelling to conflict areas. In December, we were instrumental in the agreement of the EU Directive on the use of Passenger Name Records, which entered into force in May 2016. We have also

¹⁹ More information is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/home-secretary-international-action-needed-to-tackle-terrorism>

led calls for greater controls on the availability of illegal firearms in Europe. Substantially more stringent deactivation standards for firearms were agreed in November last year and these came into effect this April. Following the attack on the Metrojet airliner, we have been working closely with Egypt to deliver improved security at the airport at Sharm el-Sheikh. We also intensified our assessment of aviation security overseas to encourage improved standards and, where necessary, to apply additional security measures for flights to the UK.

2.78 Other countries recognise our expertise in developing security strategies and technology and often approach us for assistance. Where appropriate, we facilitate support through a Government to Government programme or in partnership with our security industry. We are currently delivering assistance to some of our most important international partners. These include Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait, Bahrain and Japan where we seek to broaden and deepen security relationships. Where relevant, we continue to develop opportunities for the UK security industry to support future Olympic and Paralympic Games hosts in delivering a secure games.

2.79 As part of the SDSR, we agreed to establish a new Joint International Counter Terrorism Unit in April 2016. This has become the strategic centre for UK counter-terrorism work overseas, bringing together the existing expertise of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Home Office and other departments. The new unit oversees expanded funds for support and capacity building work abroad; and will lead our counter-terrorism agenda internationally. In parallel, we will deliver more targeted and increased effect through an enlarged Overseas Counter-Terrorism Network.

2.80 The attacks this year in France, Belgium, Turkey and other parts of the world have underlined the terrorist threat facing us. We must continue to develop a common approach with our international partners, promote better flows of intelligence and information, and work to close technological gaps which terrorists look to exploit.

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