College for National Security

Guide to the

UK National Security Community

2025

Foreword by Madeleine Alessandri

Chair of Joint Intelligence Committee

The tectonic plates of geopolitics are shifting, creating tremors in the international order that we had regarded as stable since the middle of the last century. Ongoing conflicts in Ukraine, the Middle East and in parts of Africa are showing us the challenges of modern warfare and straining the sinews of conventional diplomacy. Autocratic alignment is gaining ground. How do we defend democracy, alleviate humanitarian suffering and maintain our values in turbulent times?

Exponential technological advances bring massive opportunities, as well as challenges. How do we harness the accelerating technological breakthroughs for the common good while mitigating the risks they pose if used with hostile intent?

Our planet is warming. How do we not only slow that trend but, critically, speed up the adaptation that we and others need to cope with a changing environment? There is a strong correlation between countries already at risk of instability and the impacts of climate change. Migration, food and water insecurity, and biodiversity collapse all have direct national security impacts.

Against this backdrop, we need to ensure that the UK national security system is firing on all cylinders, and we use our size as our strength: being small but focussed can make agility easier and innovation faster. To use the old saying, ‘we need to be greater than the sum of our parts’. And the most important part of our system is you – the people who make things happen.

This guide, edition two, is written by the national security community for the national security community, and is designed to help and support you in your national security role. Please draw on it, share it, and provide feedback to the College for National Security on what you would like to see more of in the next edition.

Madeleine Alessandri

Delivering the College for National Security

To respond to this and to the broad range of threats the UK faces, we need a workforce that is knowledgeable, skilled and connected. The College for National Security is based within the Government Skills Directorate of the Cabinet Office, and closely tied to the National Security Secretariat. The College provides learning across the Civil Service and wider public sector on the threats we face and the actions we are taking to counter them. The College is working to build capability in the National Security practitioner community and is supporting wider professions with National Security learning offers.

We will deepen professional skills and make us better connected by broadening our reach beyond the traditional National Security departments. We will support our community to ensure that policy and operations are well-informed, and that staff have access to the skills needed. We will form a community of experts encompassing devolved governments and nations to better identify and mitigate threats. The College will deliver at all classification levels, creating a common knowledge baseline, and sharing best practice on the ‘tradecraft’ of operating in the sector. Specialist training will remain the domain of departments and professions.

Andrew Millar

Contents


Attorney
General's
Office

Attorney General's Office

We provide legal advice and support to the Attorney General and the Solicitor General, otherwise known as the Law Officers. The Law Officers:

- provide legal advice to government to help ministers act lawfully, and in accordance with the rule of law
- oversee the main independent prosecuting departments – the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) and the Serious Fraud Office (SFO)
- oversee His Majesty's CPS Inspectorate, which inspects how cases are prosecuted
- oversee the Government Legal Department, which provides legal services to government
- perform other functions in the public interest, such as reviewing sentences which may be too low

Contributions to UK national security

AGO works on legal issues relating to all areas of national security, by virtue of the Attorney General being chief legal adviser to the government, who attends Cabinet and is a member of the National Security Council.

AGO officials also convene and chair the National Security Council (Officials) (Legal) (NSC(O)(L)) sub-committee of the National Security Council, which brings together legal heads from multiple departments and agencies for the purpose of supporting the work of the National Security Council.

National security legal obligations

The Cabinet Manual, which sets out the main laws, rules and conventions affecting the conduct and operation of government, explains the role of the Law Officers in government and provides guidance on when Law Officer advice should be sought.
The Cabinet Manual also reflects the long-standing Law Officers' convention that whether the Law Officers have given legal advice, or the contents of any such advice, is not to be disclosed outside government without their authority.

Case study

Two government departments disagree as to whether a lawful basis exists to pursue a particular policy or action in the field of national security. Advice is sought from the Law Officers on the lawfulness of the proposal and the risk of legal challenge, and this advice will inform whether to proceed, and if so, how to proceed.

Useful links

Attorney General's Office
www.gov.uk/government/organisations/attorney-generals-office

Cabinet Manual
www.gov.uk/government/publications/cabinet-manual


Cabinet Office
10

National Security Secretariat

The National Security Secretariat (NSS) keeps the UK safe, secure and prosperous by bringing together the UK's national security community, providing high-quality support to the Prime Minister and the National Security Council, and maintaining centre-to-centre relationships internationally. Working within the wider Cabinet Office and led by the Prime Minister's National Security Adviser (NSA), we assist the Prime Minister and the Cabinet in the development, co-ordination and implementation of its highest priority objectives.

To do this we:

- **support the running of the National Security Council** to co-ordinate the agendas, resolve disagreements, and run the collective-agreement process. This includes the subcommittees Nuclear, Ukraine, Science and Technology Council and Europe Committee

- **support departmental join-up and cohesion of policy** in cross-cutting areas such as China, homeland security, support for Ukraine, economic security, and international summits

- **support the delivery and coherence of the Prime Minister's priorities** by working between No.10 and Whitehall to ensure their priorities are understood across government, and departmental priorities are understood in the centre

- **challenge the system** to check that policies are as effective as possible and have taken on board all departmental equities. We have also owned and developed the UK's national security strategies and cross-cutting reviews

- **act as the Prime Minister's representative internationally**, especially at the G7 and G20, and provide briefing and advice on his international engagement, trade policy, and global issues

- **deliver preparedness and emergency response** in times of domestic and international crisis through COBR

Some of our specific responsibilities include:

- **emergency measures:** NSS runs specific emergency responses and Home Defence

- **crisis response:** NSS owns the COBR system and the Crisis Management Excellence Programme

- **nuclear:** NSS sets nuclear deterrence policy and, working with other departments, provides advice to the PM on nuclear deterrence matters including the Defence Nuclear Enterprise, AUKUS, Counter-Proliferation and Arms Control

- **chemical, biological and radiological security:** NSS ensures preparedness for CBR risks

- **investment security:** NSS screens inward investment under the National Security and Investment Act, allowing HMG to intervene if needed, in order to protect national security

- **cyber:** leads the National Cyber Strategy, and the Cyber and Tech Portfolio in the Integrated Security Fund. NSS also co-ordinates the response to cyber incidents of national significance

- **UK Integrated Security Fund:** a government-wide fund that addresses the highest-priority threats to UK national security at home and overseas – this year, the fund totals £1 billion

Government Security Group

The Government Security Group (GSG) in the Cabinet Office hosts the Functional Centre for the Government Security Function. This engages and co-ordinates the rest of the function across government departments and beyond. The function has adopted a cross-government strategy, develops capabilities and services, sets and assures standards and delivers expert advice.

Contributions to UK national security

Government Security Function Strategy (GSFS) delivers security primarily from within departments and arm's-length bodies. This enables the government to protect citizens and provide vital public services, by understanding and managing security risks across key pillars including personnel security, technical security, and physical security. The function was established in 2018 following a Cabinet Office review and is currently refreshing its strategy.

National security legal framework

The Government Security Function and the Government Chief Security Officer were established in 2018 following a Cabinet Office review, agreed by the then PM, which concluded that the delivery of government security had not kept pace with the challenges of the 21st century, and that we lacked the capacity and capability to adequately mitigate security risks. The Government Chief Security Officer leads the Government Security Function and provides the vision, strategy and operating model to improve the way we protect our people, buildings and information across government.

Case study

The Procurement Act 2023 includes new powers to exclude and debar companies on national security grounds. To facilitate the use of these powers, the government has established a National Security Unit for Procurement (NSUP) within Government Security Group. NSUP will be the co-ordinating function for the consideration of serious national security risks in the public sector supply chain. NSUP will serve as a hub to bring together national security and procurement expertise, and facilitate assessments of suppliers. The unit will work closely with contracting authorities, the national security community, government departments and international partners to co-ordinate the assessment of companies, and to present recommendations to ministers on excluding and debarring companies that pose a national security risk.

Useful links

Government Security
www.security.gov.uk

Joint Intelligence Organisation

The Joint Intelligence Organisation (JIO) provides intelligence assessment and leads on the development of the UK Intelligence Community's analytical capability. It fuses secret intelligence, diplomatic reporting and open source information to assess sensitive national security issues to ensure ministers and senior officials receive robust, authoritative and independent intelligence assessment to inform their decisions.

Contributions to UK national security

We provide authoritative, all-source assessment for the Prime Minister, the National Security Council and senior policy makers to support their decision-making on national security and foreign policy priorities. This includes assessments considered by the Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC), a cross-government committee that brings together senior officials from the collection, assessment, and policy communities to consider and endorse the most important assessments produced by the JIO. We also issue shorter, more rapid assessments that are not considered by the JIC, and produce a daily summary of intelligence for the Prime Minister, other ministers and senior officials.

Intelligence assessment adds a layer of judgement to intelligence analysis, adding the 'so what?' to support and inform the customer's decision-making. In our assessments, we draw on a wide range of material at all classifications – secret intelligence, diplomatic reporting, and open source material – sourced from the intelligence agencies, the diplomatic service, operational and policy areas of government, international partners, think tanks and academia, open source providers, and the private sector.

Our work covers 'traditional' national security topics such as geopolitical issues and threats to British interests, but we also apply a national security lens to issues such as emerging technology, health security, and climate change.

The Professional Head of Intelligence Assessment is part of the JIO. The Professional Head of Intelligence Assessment is the Head of the Intelligence Analysis Profession, a community of over 1,700 intelligence analysts across government, and leads on the development of the UK intelligence community's analytical capability. We ensure that analytical methodologies are up-to-date, the assessment bodies meet the required standard, and run the UK's Intelligence Assessment Academy, which provides training for intelligence analysts. We also lead on innovative projects to further develop our intelligence assessment capabilities – this includes INDEX, a digital service which enables analysts to source and share government analysis and publicly available information quickly, easily and securely.

National security legal framework

Independent oversight of the JIO is conducted by the Intelligence and Security Committee of Parliament (ISC). The Justice and Security Act 2013 and accompanying memorandum of understanding between the government and the ISC, set out the ISC's responsibility for examining the JIO's policies, expenditure, administration and operations. The ISC publishes an annual report on the discharge of its functions, and may also publish reports addressing a particular strategic or operational issue, including JIO's work on that issue.


COUNTER
TERRORISM
POLICING
CTOC
CTOC
COUNTER
TERRORISM
OPERATIONS
CENTRE

Counter Terrorism Policing

Our purpose is to keep people safe by preventing, deterring and investigating threats to UK national security. Counter Terrorism Policing (CTP) is the lead law enforcement organisation for a range of national security threats. Our primary mission is to counter terrorism, and increasingly we also tackle State Threats and possess a duty to investigate war crimes.

Contributions to UK national security

CTP is a collaboration of UK police forces. We have units based regionally across the UK, a Counter Terrorism Operations Centre in London, which brings together CTP, intelligence agencies, parts of the criminal justice system and government, and officers based overseas supporting UK investigations and building the capacity of our international partners.

Our most significant relationships have formed with, and continue to develop with, the UK Intelligence Community, frontline policing, and local communities, along with government and the private sector.

Terrorism: We are seeing increasingly fragmented ideologies, a continuing shift towards self-initiated terrorism and hateful online ideologies filtering into the lives of young people. These investigations focus on a range of activities, from possession of terrorist publications, to fundraising, and preparing, acts of terrorism.

State threats: As a nation, the threats we currently face are diversifying. They are deepening in complexity and they are changing the direction of our own work, as well as that of our partners. The National Security Act 2023 provides a suite of new powers to support the UK's response to state threats.

War crimes: CTP is the lead law enforcement agency for war crimes in the UK. Referrals received by specialist officers touch almost every continent in the world and span significant time periods, both current and historic.

National security legal framework

CTP operates by virtue of a collaboration agreement made under Section 22a of the Police Act 1996. The responsibilities of Counter Terrorism Policing are defined by this agreement and include matters beyond terrorism, accountable to the National Police Chiefs' Council Counter Terrorism Co-ordination Committee.

Case studies

CTP, together with partners, continues to disrupt attacks and bring terrorist offenders to justice. Here are just some of those convicted in 2023.

- A 22-year-old from Brighton was only minutes away from buying the firearm he intended to use to carry out a deadly attack at Speakers' Corner in Hyde Park, London, when he was arrested. He had identified a named target for the attack and made plans to shoot police officers and soldiers nearby. He was sentenced to life in prison and will serve a minimum of 24 years.

- A 19-year-old from Essex, who plotted to kill soldiers and police officers, was jailed for life after a CTP investigation. He carried out hostile reconnaissance and spoke online about his plans to commit an attack in London.

- A teenager from the North East, who drew up plans to target a mosque while disguised as a police officer, was jailed for 10 years.

- A Coventry man, who built a drone with the intention of supplying it to ISIS, was jailed for life and will serve a minimum of 20 years.

Useful links

Counter Terrorism Policing
www.counterterrorism.police.uk

Action Counters Terrorism
act.campaign.gov.uk

ProtectUK
www.protectuk.police.uk


Department for
Business & Trade

Department for Business and Trade

The Department for Business and Trade (DBT) supports investment, unlocks exports, and opens up new markets for British business. We champion open and fair global trading and support long-term growth to create better jobs and higher wages to improve UK living standards.

Contributions to UK national security

DBT contributes to the UK's national security both directly and indirectly by:

- promoting secure and resilient economic growth
- supporting strategic advantage in our advanced manufacturing sectors
- advancing the UK's economic security objectives including policy development on economic coercion
- helping UK defence and security industries export their products, while regulating sensitive exports through the Export Control Joint Unit
- bringing sectoral and business expertise to inward and outward investment security
- strengthening critical and vulnerable supply chains, including the supply of critical minerals
- building resilience in critical national infrastructure (CNI) sectors including chemicals and the Post Office
- designing, implementing, and enforcing targeted trade sanctions
- tackling economic crime and corporate transparency
- strengthening bilateral relationships and co-operation with other nations using trade levers
- upholding the International Rules Based System through engagement with international economic fora

National security legal obligations

DBT ministers are responsible for decisions on export licensing and trade agreements.

DBT develops and implements trade sanctions under the Sanctions and Anti-Money Laundering Act 2018 on behalf of the FCDO/Foreign Secretary.

The Economic Crime (Transparency and Enforcement) Act 2022 and the Economic Crime and Corporate Transparency Act 2023 form a broad suite of legislation, which enables Companies House, an executive agency of DBT, to take on an expanded role in tackling economic crime, including international money laundering, sanctions evasion, illegal arms movements, and terrorist financing.

Case studies

- As part of its mandate to promote responsible exports, the Export Control Joint Unit refused export licences on national security grounds on 174 occasions in 2023.

- Since Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the UK has sanctioned over £20 billion worth of trade with Russia. This includes bans on the export of goods, services, and technologies that could be used by Russia's military, and the import of goods such as gold, iron, and steel that generate revenue for the Russian state.

- In the first six months since the new Economic Crime and Corporate Transparency Act powers became available (4 March to 9 September 2024), Companies House has removed 94,000 addresses and redacted or removed details of 36,200 documents which have included personal data used without consent. Previously, individuals wishing to have this data removed would have required a court order.

Useful links

Department for Business and Trade
www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-business-and-trade

Department
for Education

Department for Education

The Department for Education is responsible for children's services and education, including early years, schools, higher and further education policy, apprenticeships and wider skills in England. We work to break the link between background and success, by protecting children and delivering higher standards of education, training and care.

Contributions to UK national security

CONTEST:

- **Prevent:** Supporting the sector to identify and manage radicalisation concerns through a network of frontline practitioners and providing online guidance and training.

- **Pursue:** Supporting counter-terrorism investigations by providing advice and information to improve outcomes for young people and help to reduce national security threats.

- **Protect and Prepare:** Supporting the sector to prepare for and respond to national security incidents that may impact education and childcare. This includes training, guidance and incident response.

Cyber:

- Increasing cyber resilience throughout the education sector and reducing lost learning from cyber-attacks, essential to national prosperity.

- Protecting tertiary education in England against cyber threats through the continued funding of Janet, the UK's National Research and Education Network (NREN).

- Protection of payment services delivering billions of pounds to the sector annually.

- Protection of child/learner data for millions of citizens.

State Threats:

- Ensuring our world-leading universities remain alert to the risks of collaborating internationally within an increasingly complex and volatile geopolitical environment.

- Working in partnership with the sector to strengthen measures that safeguard academic institutions by protecting their staff, students, independence and values, including free speech and human rights.

Useful links

Department for Education
www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-education

Cyber Security
www.jisc.ac.uk/cyber-security

Universities UK: Managing Risks in Internationalisation
www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/what-we-do/policy-and-research/publications/managing-risks-internationalisation


Department for
Energy Security
& Net Zero

Department for Energy Security and Net Zero

The Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ) is leading an economy-wide transformation by generating cheaper, cleaner, homegrown energy and seizing the opportunities of net zero to lead the world in new green industries. We are responsible for delivering security of energy supply, ensuring properly functioning energy markets, encouraging greater energy efficiency, reducing carbon emissions, and tackling climate change.

Contributions to UK national security

We strive to identify emerging threats and reduce risks and vulnerabilities to the UK's energy security. We have a range of national security interests, including protecting our critical national infrastructure (CNI), developing our new nuclear and other energy technologies, non-proliferation, and climate and energy security.

- The Cabinet Office **Lead Government Department (LGD) publication**[1] sets out the responsibilities of departments in the identification and assessment of risks, prevention, preparation and emergency response, and recovery following an emergency. DESNZ leads on identifying and assessing risks which relate to energy and civil nuclear CNI sectors.
- The department responds to the cross-cutting impacts of risks where these affect the supply of energy, such as the effects of severe storms and weather.
- The **National Risk Register**[2] sets out in more detail the risks that directly impact DESNZ's sectors, and those that could have cascading or secondary impacts on DESNZ's sectors.
- Advancing the UK's energy security by becoming a clean energy superpower and through building sustainable supply chains, home-grown energy production, and domestic manufacturing.
- Protect the UK's Civil Nuclear Infrastructure from current threats, manage legacy risks and ensure future technologies are secure by design.
- Improving the cyber security of our energy industry through regulation, partnership and collaboration, in order to ensure a safe and secure transition to net zero and to build resilience against the current and future threat landscape.
- DESNZ scrutinises transactions in the energy sector to ensure secure investments.

1 www.gov.uk/government/publications/list-of-lead-government-departments-responsibilities-for-planning-response-and-recovery-from-emergencies/the-roles-of-lead-government-departments-devolved-administrations-and-other-public-bodies-html

2 www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-risk-register-2023

National security legal obligations

Non-Proliferation Treaty: We are responsible (alongside FCDO and MOD) for compliance with the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons which covers nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation, and the right to peaceful uses of nuclear technology. We ensure that the UK's civil nuclear industry is not used unlawfully as part of a nuclear weapon programme, playing a central role in HMG's international efforts to reduce threats.

Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC): We are responsible for ensuring that the CWC is effectively implemented in the UK, including the crown dependencies and overseas territories. The CWC is an international arms control treaty that entered into force in 1997. It bans chemical weapons and controls toxic chemicals. The CWC introduced a verifiable ban on an entire class of weapons of mass destruction by prohibiting the development, production, acquisition, stockpiling, transfer, and use of chemical weapons. It also requires the destruction of existing chemical weapons stockpiles, and the destruction or conversion of chemical weapons production and storage facilities. The non-proliferation of chemical weapons is one of the fundamental objectives of the CWC. Each State Party must ensure that toxic chemicals are only developed, produced, acquired, retained, transferred, or used for purposes not prohibited by the CWC.

Network and Information Systems Regulations (NIS): The NIS Regulations are aimed at raising levels of cyber security and resilience across sectors which are vital for our economy and society, providing services such as the supply of electricity, oil, gas and water and the provision of healthcare and transport. The objective of the NIS Regulations is to drive improvements in cyber security. They require operators of essential services to put in place appropriate and proportional technical and organisational cyber security countermeasures to manage risks posed to the security of the network and information systems on which their essential service relies. Operators of essential services must prevent and minimise the impact of incidents on the essential services, and notify their competent authority if a serious incident occurs.

Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material (and its amendment): We are responsible (alongside the Office for Nuclear Regulation) for compliance with the Treaty which covers the physical protection of nuclear material used for peaceful purposes during international transport, the criminalisation of certain offences involving nuclear material, and international co-operation – for example in cases of theft, robbery or other unlawful taking of material of credible threat thereof.

Useful links

Department for Energy Security and Net Zero
www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-energy-security-and-net-zero

Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) is responsible for improving and protecting the environment. We aim to grow a green economy and sustain thriving rural communities. We also support our world-leading food, farming and fishing industries. Defra is a ministerial department, supported by 33 agencies and public bodies.

Contributions to UK national security

We have diverse responsibilities, and we are the lead department for:

- two CNI sectors: water and food. We share responsibility for food with the Food Standards Agency, with them leading on food safety and Defra on food supply. This covers all security and resilience issues, including physical, personal, cyber and investment security
- a significant number of risks on the National Security Risk Assessment, including non-malicious hazards like flooding and plant diseases, to malicious threats. We lead the recovery from Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear weapons incidents
- domestic climate adaptation and climate security, taking a major role in creating and acting on the five-yearly UK Climate Change Risk Assessment, considering issues such as biodiversity and nature recovery
- animal and plant health risks, contributing to the One Health Agenda

National security legal obligations

Our national security obligations, as set out in legislation:

- under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004, the Environment Agency (Defra Arm's-Length Body) is a Category One Responder
- National Security Investment Act, with Defra carrying out risk assessments of investments in its sectors
- legislation relating to protecting the biological security of animals and plants in the UK, and also relating to the maritime security of our fisheries
- legislation on the management of zoonotic diseases within the UK
- sector-specific legislation for the food and water sectors that has implications for national security, for example the Security and Emergency Measures Direction 2022

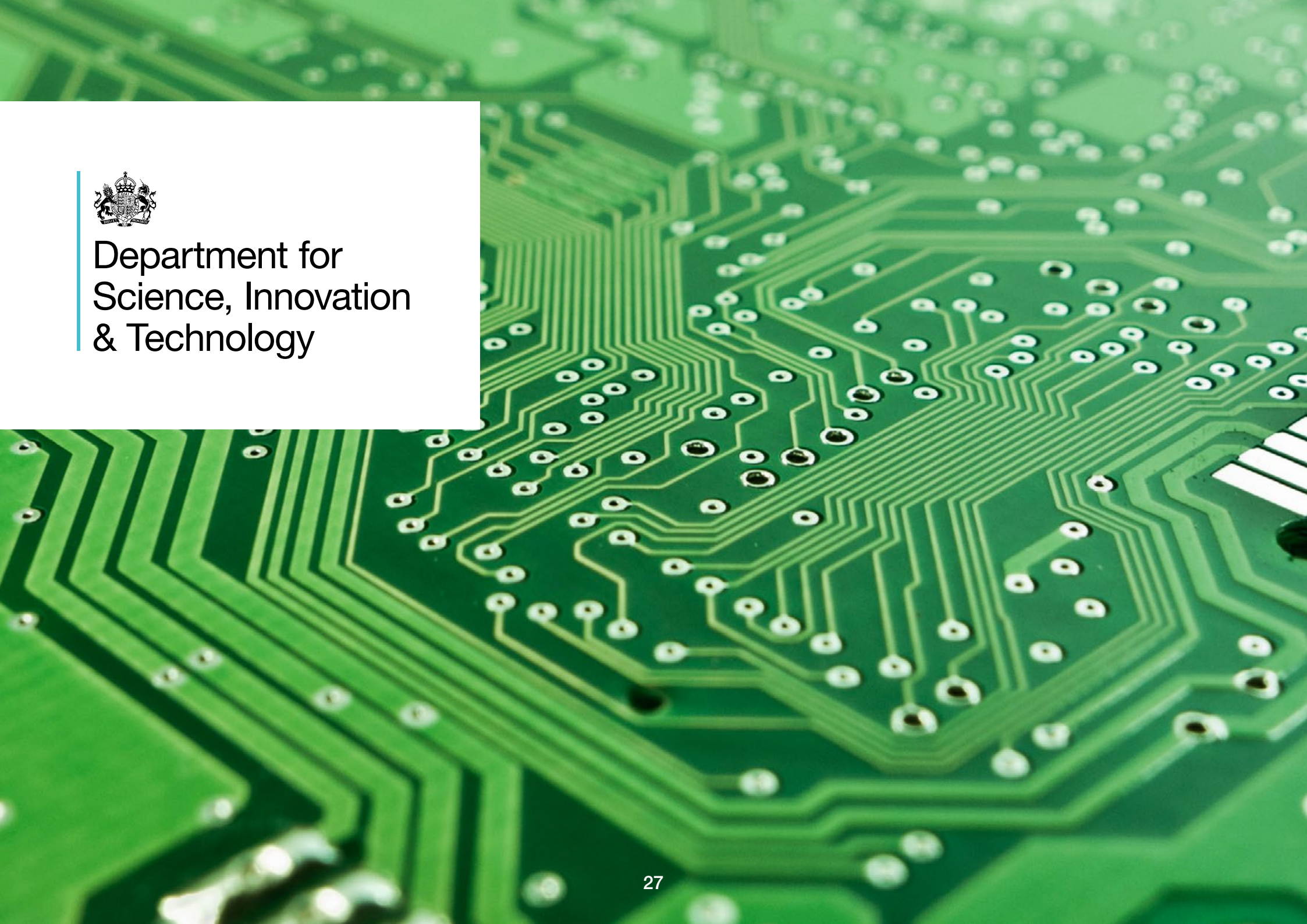
Case studies

- In 2018, the lethal nerve agent Novichok was used to poison several individuals in Salisbury, which also resulted in contamination of the local environment. We led the recovery process to support the decontamination and remediation of sites.

- In 2022, Storm Eunice caused severe flooding across the UK. We led an Emergencies Operation Centre (EOC) to support the security of cross-government CNI to minimise impact on the public and any damage caused by the storm.

Useful links

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-environment-food-rural-affairs



Department for Science, Innovation & Technology

Department for Science, Innovation and Technology

The Department for Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT) drives change that will deliver improved public services and economic growth. We lead HMG's relationship with the tech sector.

Contributions to UK national security

DSIT has a range of national security interests, which include:

- **research security:** leading on the development of policy on research security, and through the work of the Research Collaboration Advice Team to support UK research institutions to understand and manage national security risks arising through international collaboration

- **technology:** supporting both national security and prosperity by growing, protecting, and enabling the adoption of specific deep technologies in the UK, such as quantum technologies, robotics, engineering biology and semiconductors

- **cyber:** promoting the UK as a leading and democratic cyber power, through commitments made in the National Cyber Strategy, including strengthening the UK's cyber ecosystem, technology advantage and improving resilience

- **economic security:** identifying and scrutinising economic interactions that generate national security risks, analysing risks relating to emerging and critical technology, and shaping policy on export controls

- **counter disinformation:** leading the domestic operational and policy response for countering disinformation and attempts to manipulate the online information environment, including working with industry and social media companies

- **international:** ensuring the government's digital and tech priorities are represented through targeted international engagement, and ensuring government, business and academia can safely collaborate internationally on digital and emerging technologies

- **data security:** leading on current national security issues relating to data infrastructure and data security policy development – this includes developing government policy response to securing UK bulk data against exploitation for malign purposes

National security legal framework

We operate under a range of frameworks, notably the National Security and Investment Act.

Case study

In March 2022, hoax calls made to ministers from individuals purporting to be the Ukrainian Prime Minister were uploaded to YouTube. These were publicly attributed to the Russian state by No.10 in a media briefing. Following this, the Counter-Disinformation Unit, which was previously part of DCMS but has moved to DSIT, engaged with YouTube to secure removal of the videos. This was on the basis they were part of a Russian information and influence operation designed to achieve strategic advantage by attempting to embarrass the UK government and undermine its support for Ukraine. When YouTube was unable to identify the state link and therefore the breach in their terms of service, the Counter-Disinformation Unit facilitated engagement including via the declassification of relevant intelligence.

Useful links

Department for Science, Innovation and Technology
www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-science-innovation-and-technology


Department
for Transport

Department for Transport

The Department for Transport (DfT) works with partners to support the transport system through investment, setting policy and ensuring delivery to keep the UK on the move.

Contributions to UK national security

We work to identify emerging threats, reduce risks and vulnerabilities to transport security and civil contingencies, and develop mitigations to maintain the flow of critical goods.

We work across the full range of transport modes, including aviation, maritime and land, alongside a range of cross-cutting national security issues, such as cyber and economic security.

- **Aviation:** we lead UK aviation security policy and strategy, which includes security measures for passenger and cargo flights, and risk advice for airlines' use of global airspace.

- **Maritime:** we set security measures for British-flagged ships and ports and provide advice to the maritime industry on terrorism, piracy, and state threats.

- **Land:** we protect the rail, bus and coach network, and also promote a protective security culture within the vehicle rental sector. We also work closely with our French counterparts on Channel Tunnel security.

- **Cyber:** we seek to improve cyber security standards across the transport sector to increase the resilience of the UK's critical transport networks.

- **Economic security:** we screen foreign direct investment in the transport sector and work to build the resilience of the UK's CNI from a range of threats.

National security legal obligations

We operate in accordance with a range of laws and legal frameworks, some of which include the National Security and Investments Act 2021, the International Ship and Port Security Code, and the National Aviation Security Programme. These variably enable us to screen direct foreign investments, review UK flagged ships and ports' standards, regulate domestic aviation security, and inspect protective security and compliance at domestic rail stations.

Case study

Over the last decade there have been several attempts to attack planes using concealed devices in hand luggage. In one specific case, we worked with scientific experts to confirm the device's viability, used those results to develop new security measures to mitigate the risk, and introduced new domestic and international travel security procedures.

Useful links

Department for Transport
www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-transport

Department of Health & Social Care

Department of Health and Social Care

The Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) is responsible for leading the nation's health and adult social care to help people live longer, healthier, more independent lives. DHSC is a ministerial department, supported by several agencies and partner organisations.

Contributions to UK national security:

We have a range of national security interests:

- **Counter-Terrorism:** We are responsible for the health and adult social care sector's contribution to CONTEST in England. This includes the implementation of Prevent Duty and working with partners to strengthen health's capability across Protect and Prepare.

- **CBRN:** We mitigate the threat posed by the malicious use of chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear (CBRN) agents by hostile actors. This includes the maintenance of a range of response capabilities and the UKs national stockpile of medical countermeasures.

- **Biosecurity:** Biological security is national security, and we lead work to support the delivery of health commitments under the UK Government's Biological Security Strategy and Resilience Framework.

- **CNI:** We work with our partners to ensure the security and resilience of critical national infrastructure and systems (CNIS) within the health and adult social care sector.

- **Public Health:** The Chief Medical Officer (CMO) is the UK Government's principal medical adviser and the professional head of all directors of public health in local government. The CMO provides public health advice to ministers and across government, including during incidents and emergencies with biological and national security implications.

- **Homeland Defence:** We support preparations for a range of hybrid and national threats against the UK, in line with the commitments of the Strategic Defence Review.

UK Health Security Agency

The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) prevents, prepares for and responds to infectious diseases and environmental hazards with the aim to keep all our communities safe, save lives and protect livelihoods. We provide scientific and operational leadership, working with local, national and international partners to protect the public's health and build the nation's health security capability.

- **Biosecurity:** UKHSA takes lead responsibility for infectious and endemic diseases in incident planning and response – this includes leading the response across government and the health and care system.

- **Public Health:** We prepare, plan for and respond robustly and rapidly to the public health impacts of all incidents including any chemical, biological, radiological, or nuclear (CBRN) events.

- **Advice & Expertise:** UKHSA provides expert scientific advice during environmental incidents and emergencies, including flooding, meteorological hazards and terrorism to ensure that health is considered as part of the response.

- **Radiation Protection:** As the UK's primary authority on radiation protection, UKHSA provides world-leading products, services, training and expertise to UK and EU government agencies, educational and research institutions and to a wide range of commercial organisations.

National security legal obligations:

In collaboration with our agencies and partners, DHSC supports organisations across the health system to fulfil their national security legal obligations. As Category One responders under the Civil Contingency Act 2004, health organisations are subject to the full set of civil protection duties. This includes an assessment of the risk of emergencies occurring to inform contingency planning, putting in place emergency plans, and sharing information with other local responders to enhance co-ordination.

Useful links

Department of Health and Social Care
www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-of-health-and-social-care

UK Health Security Agency
www.gov.uk/government/organisations/uk-health-security-agency


Department
for Work &
Pensions

Department for Work and Pensions

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) is responsible for the welfare, pensions and child maintenance policy. As the largest public service department, we administer the State Pension and a range of working age, disability and ill-health benefits to around 20 million claimants and customers. Our objectives are to maximise employment and in-work progression, and improve people's quality of life.

Contributions to UK national security

To achieve our core purpose, some of our functions and responsibilities also contribute to protecting UK national security including:

- the protection of payment services delivering considerably in excess of £200 billion per year to citizens and residents
- the protection of our customers' identifying particulars

National security legal obligations

None unique to the department.

Case study

The principal threats to public service delivery and to the security of UK residents' data are the activities of hostile foreign states and of organised criminal groups. Our departmental security processes are designed to mitigate these threats. As an example, it was disclosed in Parliament in December 2020 that our departmental security team had proactively used its cybersecurity capability to prevent organised criminal attempts to defraud the benefit system of £1.7 billion during the first nine months of the COVID-19 pandemic. We share knowledge and understanding of the subject with other parts of government.

Useful links

Department for Work and Pensions
www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-work-pensions


Foreign, Commonwealth
& Development Office

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) pursues UK national interests and projects the UK as a force for good in the world. We promote the interests of British citizens, safeguard the UK's security, defend our values, reduce poverty, and tackle global challenges. To do this, we use diplomatic and development tools, international partnerships, and our network of 280 overseas embassies, high commissions and other missions. We are supported by 12 agencies and public bodies.

Contributions to UK national security

We seek to strengthen international security, and make the UK safer and more resilient to global threats. We use our relationships and influence abroad to prevent, deter, respond to, and mitigate threats. Some of our work includes:

- extending the UK's global influence by working with a network of like-minded partners
- overseas work to anticipate, mitigate and adapt to new threats ranging from natural hazards and climate change, to cyber-attacks and terrorism
- collaborating with international partners to prevent, manage and positively support countries and regions to transition out of conflict
- providing a resilient and professional consular service for British citizens living and travelling overseas, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year
- leading the UK's enduring support to the Overseas Territories and their peoples

National security legal framework

The Foreign Secretary has responsibility for, and oversight of, the work of GCHQ and the Secret Intelligence Service (SIS). As part of this, the Foreign Secretary issues warrants to SIS and GCHQ authorising their use of investigatory powers under the Investigatory Powers Act 2016, and issues authorisations to SIS and GCHQ under the Intelligence Services Act 1994. The latter take the form of property interference warrants, or authorisations for acts done outside the United Kingdom.

We also advise on a range of international law matters, including those related to the use of force internationally. We are also active in the sanctions sphere which is regulated by the Sanctions and Anti-Money Laundering Act 2018.

Case study

Immediately after Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine, through the CSSF Ukraine Cyber Programme, we provided cyber incident response support to bolster Ukraine's ability to detect and counter the barrage of cyber-attacks against them, including wiper ware and espionage intrusions. We have also led cross-government and international efforts to hold Russia to account for malicious cyber activity against Ukraine. For example, the UK, supported by all NATO allies and the EU, imposed sanctions on Russian Military Intelligence (GRU) for malicious cyber and hybrid threat activity targeting Ukraine, European partners, NATO allies and the UK itself. This was the largest ever package of UK sanctions against the Russian Intelligence Services (RIS). As part of this effort, we publicly attributed new malicious cyber activity to the GRU, including for destructive cyber-attacks on Ukrainian CNI in advance of and during Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. A **full record of UK and allied attributions of the GRU's cyber activity**[3] is available on GOV.UK.

Useful links

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office
www.gov.uk/government/organisations/foreign-commonwealth-development-office

3 www.gov.uk/government/publications/profile-gru-cyber-and-hybrid-threat-operations/profile-gru-cyber-and-hybrid-threat-operations

Civilian Stabilisation Group

The Civilian Stabilisation Group (CSG) provides all NSC departments with rapid access to specialist civilian expertise in conflict, security, and stabilisation. CSG experts are deployed flexibly by the FCDO – whether for days or months, in-country, remotely, or through hybrid arrangements - to support the delivery of HMG objectives in fragile and conflict-affected environments.

Contributions to UK national security

We can deploy consultants to work on HMG platforms overseas (typically embassies or high commissions, but including other facilities such as military bases) and to locations where HMG doesn't currently have an established presence. Consultants can be deployed in support of a range of HMG work, for example to provide technical assistance or capacity building support to partner governments; to support HMG programme scoping, implementation, and evaluation; or to provide expert policy advice to political and programme teams.

CSG expertise spans 17 thematic areas, including (but not limited to):

- Conflict Prevention and Resolution
- Counter-Terrorism and Countering Violent Extremism
- Gender, Children, and Stability
- Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict (PSVI)
- Serious and Organised Crime, and Illicit Finance

CSG experts have played a critical role in delivering HMG objectives including the COVID-19 response, Ukraine, Israel-OPTs, Afghanistan, Somalia and Sudan and many more.

Useful links

Working for the Office for Conflict, Stabilisation and Mediation's Civilian Stabilisation Group (CSG)
www.gov.uk/guidance/working-for-the-office-for-conflict-stabilisation-and-mediations-civilian-stabilisation-group-csg


Government
Office for Science

Government Office for Science

The Government Office for Science's (GOS) mission is clear: putting excellent science advice at the heart of decision-making. It delivers this in two main ways:

- through pro-active and demand-led science advice for government that is relevant, excellent, transparent and fit for purpose

- ensuring government has science advice mechanisms that are efficient, effective, speak truth to power and are embedded irreversibly in government systems

Contributions to UK national security

Science for national security, strategic advantage and resilience, are central pillars of our work. This includes:

- **emergency response:** providing independent science advice to COBR in emergencies, through the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE)[4] – maintaining 24/7 readiness and monitoring a wide range of risks that may require science advice

- **scientific expertise:** engaging with policy makers to provide expert advice from a range of sources both internally and externally – this includes convening the Chief Scientific Advisor network and providing the secretariat for the Prime Minister's Council for Science and Technology

- **analysis and insight:** working closely with national security partners to produce all-source assessments of international science and technology capabilities, emerging applications, and geopolitical context. The work combines expert and intelligence lead insights alongside open-source data analysis to support national security discussion fora, such as the National Security Council and Joint Intelligence Committee

- **preparedness and response:** ensuring science and technology underpins wider government preparedness, plans and response to national security risks, supporting the National Security Risk Assessment and development of assessments for chronic risks

- **emerging technologies, futures and foresight:** promoting and embedding strategic long-term thinking within government and across the Civil Service to realise strategies and policies that are resilient to future challenges and opportunities: our advice, communities and training lead to better systems for considering future issues, and our analysis, projects and resources provide excellent science advice on future challenges and opportunities. Recent examples include: the Futures Toolkit, the implications of different AI futures, and a new assessment of chronic risks facing the UK, delivered in collaboration with Cabinet Office

4 www.gov.uk/government/organisations/scientific-advisory-group-for-emergencies

Case study

The critical role of science in supporting emergencies

Since the first activation of SAGE for the Swine Flu Pandemic in 2009-2010, SAGE has responded to a wide range of emergencies impacting the UK. Examples include the Fukushima nuclear emergency in 2011, UK winter flooding in 2013, the Ebola outbreak in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in 2018, the potential breach of Toddbrook reservoir in 2019 and most recently the COVID-19 global pandemic in 2020.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, GOS convened SAGE COVID 105 times over 2 years, supported by 10 themed subgroups. SAGE brought together experts from many different disciplines including virology, epidemiology, medicine, public heath, statistics and mathematical modelling, engineering and behavioural and social sciences to deliver coherent advice to ministers, enabling them to make evidence-based decisions. The range of issues on which scientific advice was provided by SAGE during the pandemic was broad, with over 1000 papers produced or considered by SAGE.

Useful links

Government Office for Science
www.gov.uk/government/organisations/government-office-for-science

Council for Science and Technology
www.gov.uk/government/organisations/council-for-science-and-technology

Futures, Foresight and Horizon Scanning
www.gov.uk/government/groups/futures-and-foresight


GCHQ

Government Communications Headquarters

The Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ) is the UK's intelligence, cyber and security agency. We help to keep the UK safe, resilient and prosperous in an uncertain and volatile world. We do this by providing insights and countering threats through signals intelligence and effects, by securely connecting the national security community, and making the UK the safest place to live and work online.

Through the National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC), we work round the clock to reduce the harm to the UK caused by cyber attacks, and to bolster our collective cyber resilience.

Through the National Cyber Force (NCF), we support the delivery of responsible cyber operations to protect against threats to the UK.

Contributions to UK national security:

GCHQ focuses on communications: how to access, analyse and – occasionally – disrupt the communications of the UK's adversaries, and on the nation's cyber security.

We work across five mission areas:

- **counter terrorism:** stopping terrorist attacks in the UK and against our interests overseas
- **cyber security:** making the UK the safest place to live and work online
- **serious and organised crime:** reducing the social and financial harm that serious and organised crime causes to the UK
- **strategic advantage:** countering state threats, promoting the UK's prosperity and shaping the international environment
- **support to defence:** protecting defence personnel and assets and supporting an integrated approach to war fighting

National security legal framework

The Intelligence Services Act 1994 sets out GCHQ's function as a foreign-focused signals intelligence agency.

The Investigatory Powers Act 2016 governs the use and oversight of investigatory powers by law enforcement, and the security and intelligence agencies. GCHQ is also governed by the Human Rights Act 1998 which protects citizens' rights under the European Convention on Human Rights. This legislation ensures our work is as democratically accountable and transparent as possible.

GCHQ operations comply with international law, as set out in successive UK government statements on international law and cyber operations.

Case studies

GCHQ has contributed vital intelligence to shape the West's response to the illegal Russian invasion of Ukraine, and has played a key role in strengthening Ukraine's cyber security. It has responded to the full range of threats from China, including espionage and cyber-attacks, which have implications for almost every area of government policy and the everyday lives of British people. It has helped disrupt terror plots. It has strengthened the UK's national security protections, aligning and co-operating with partners. And it has worked tirelessly to match the capability of emerging tech and to tackle the ongoing threat of ransomware, the impact of which costs the UK dearly.

The NCSC deals with nationally-significant cyber incidents, empowers businesses and citizens to improve their online security, and works with partners to raise awareness of emerging threats, share best practice and advice and develop a skills pipeline for the future. For example:

The NCF carries out cyber operations daily in the interests of national security, the UK's economic wellbeing and in support of the prevention of serious organised crime. NCF operations are conducted against both state and non-state threats, such as terrorism. Since its inception in 2020, the NCF has:

- protected military deployments overseas
- disrupted terrorist groups
- countered sophisticated, stealthy and continuous cyber threats, in support of NCSC
- countered state disinformation campaigns
- reduced the threat of external interference in democratic elections
- removed child sexual abuse material from public spaces online


HMGCC
HMGCC

His Majesty's Government Communication Centre

His Majesty's Government Communication Centre (HMGCC), founded in 1938, is a centre for national security engineering. HMGCC works with the national security community, UK government, academia, private sector partners and international allies to bring engineering ingenuity to the national security mission, creating tools and technologies that help to protect the nation.

Contribution to UK national security

HMGCC's role is to design and deliver operational technology solutions in direct support of UK national security activity.

Operational technology is the engineering that underpins the national security mission – a combination of tools and systems that enable national security work to be carried out in challenging and unpredictable operational environments.

The products we create are deployed around the world, allowing our national security partners to collect information and communicate securely.

The scope of what operational technology can cover is broad. Examples could be helping to develop tools so organisations operating overseas in often hostile, dangerous areas can communicate securely, or creating technologies to support investigative techniques such as surveillance. In these situations, the tools we create could be involved to help intelligence gathering around terrorists, or in cases of groups involved with serious crime. It is always about using technology to keep the country safe.

National security legal framework

HMGCC operates fully in accordance with UK law, including that specifically applicable to national security customers.

Case study

The HMGCC Co-Creation pilot, a shared endeavour between HMGCC and the Defence, Science and Technology Laboratory, works by sharing operational technology challenges with wide-ranging networks of academia and industry, then working closely with them on solutions. The whole idea is about using networks to ensure HMGCC is tapping into a huge pool of expertise, to help keep pace with rapid advances in technology.

These challenges represent some of the most difficult issues posed to HMGCC by national security organisations. They have included a huge variety of different tasks such as using artificial intelligence in information scanning and creating communications tools to keep staff safe when working in dangerous locations.

In response to the challenges set in financial year 2023 to 2024, 135 proposed solutions have been received, with 20 companies making it through to contract.

Useful links

HMGCC
www.hmgcc.gov.uk


HM Revenue
& Customs
HM REVENUE & CUSTOMS

His Majesty's Revenue and Customs

His Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) is the UK's tax and customs authority which collects money to pay for public services and provides financial support. Our vision is to be a trusted, modern tax and customs department that closes the tax gap, improves performance with a skilled and engaged workforce and supports wider government economic aims.

Contributions to UK national security

We contribute to protecting national security by:

- Delivering the collection and management of the taxes that fund UKG's national security infrastructure and profession.
- Working with Border Force to maintain a secure border.
- Fighting a range of serious organised crime/OCGs, including repayment fraud.
- Leading on the criminal enforcement of trade sanctions and strategic export controls.
- Detecting and reporting terrorist financing.
- Gathering and disseminating intelligence to help fight serious organised crime and other threats to national security.
- Gathering and transmitting evidence to support overseas criminal investigations.
- Securely holding vast amounts of data, keeping it safe from cyber-attack.
- Managing and administering critical national IT infrastructure for UKG.
- Embedding experts into other departments with a national security focus.

We have three core teams that undertake these functions:

- **HMRC Security Function:** our Security Directorate and Security Teams are embedded in our core business groups. HMRC Security practitioners assess risks and threats, respond accordingly and upskill teams to ensure colleagues have the skills and capabilities to fulfil their security responsibilities. HMRC Security hosts the Government Security Centre for Cyber. Working with the National Cyber Security Centre, Government Security Group and Cabinet Office, the team provides expertise to help departments meet functional and cyber security standards
- **Fraud Investigation Service:** responsible for civil and criminal investigations into the most serious fraud and wrongdoing
- **Risk and Intelligence Service:** seeks to identify, manage and mitigate risks to the tax system

National security legal framework

We conduct investigations to pursue prosecutions for those who commit serious offences, some of which include money laundering, corruption, false documentation and forgery.

Case study

We are a key member of the UK Law Enforcement community and we work with domestic and international partners to address a range of crime priorities, including illegal drugs trade, modern slavery and child sexual exploitation. During the pandemic, we worked with the National Crime Agency (NCA) and other partners to support an investigation led by Europol, the European Union’s law enforcement agency. This investigation infiltrated a major criminal encrypted communication platform which was used to distribute illicit commodities, money laundering and for plotting against rival criminals. This successful investigation has helped to accelerate existing operations and led to several new interventions, all of which will have substantial revenue impact and enhance our strategic understanding of organised crime.

Useful links

His Majesty's Revenue and Customs
www.gov.uk/government/organisations/hm-revenue-customs


HM Treasury

His Majesty's Treasury

His Majesty's Treasury (HMT) is the economic and finance ministry, controlling public spending, setting the direction for economic policy, and seeking to achieve strong and sustainable economic growth.

Contributions to UK national security

We lead, or are involved in, several national security policy areas, some of which include:

- **sanctions and illicit finance:** we develop policy and legislation to address economic crime and illicit finance in the UK and overseas, this includes designing novel financial sanction regimes, and innovative techniques to tackle money laundering
- **financial sanctions implementation:** we seek to improve understanding, implementation and enforcement of financial sanctions in the UK, led by the Office for Financial Sanctions, to ensure that financial sanctions contribute to the UK's national security and foreign policy goals, and uphold the integrity of, and confidence in, the UK financial services sector
- **economic security:** we are responsible for building a more prosperous, secure and resilient economy, by realising economic opportunities and deterring global security threats
- **financial stability:** we are responsible for the security and resilience of the UK's finance sector, focused on increasing essential cyber and operational resilience standards
- **national security spending control:** we set budgets for the Ministry of Defence, FCDO, the intelligence agencies, and other national security spending departments

National security legal obligations

Our power to impose monetary penalties for breaches of financial sanctions are contained in The Policing and Crime Act 2017. We also operate under The Sanctions and Anti-Money Laundering Act 2018.

Case study

We have directly implemented sanctions on over 1200 individuals and over 120 entities, including oligarchs, worth over £140 billion. We have also frozen the assets of 19 Russian banks with global assets worth £940 billion.

Useful links

His Majesty's Treasury
www.gov.uk/government/organisations/hm-treasury

Office for Financial Sanctions
www.gov.uk/government/organisations/office-of-financial-sanctions-implementation


Home Office

Home Office

The Home Office plays a fundamental role in reducing national security risks to the UK's people, prosperity and freedoms. We mitigate threats across the full range of malicious actors, whether from terrorists, states, or cyber and economic criminals. We provide leadership across government, both in setting strategic direction and crisis response.

Contributions to UK national security

The Home Office is the lead department for terrorism, serious organised crime, and illegal migration. We protect people in the UK from threats from other states, provide joint leadership for economic crime with HMT and lead on cyber crime policy.

The Home Office also delivers a range of national security capabilities and operational and crisis response. These include:

- oversight of law enforcement and intelligence agencies such as MI5, NCA, and Counter Terrorism Police
- maintaining and enhancing the government's investigatory powers and capabilities
- reducing the UK's vulnerabilities and increasing resilience to the threats we face
- leading frontline delivery, from crisis management to homeland security casework
- providing advantage through science, technology, and industry engagement

National security legal framework

The Home Office is responsible for a broad range of legislation which gives our law enforcement and intelligence agencies the powers and tools they need to keep the UK safe. They provide the foundation for the delivery of national security and include:

- Terrorism Act 2000 and Terrorism Act 2006
- National Security Act 2023 and Official Secrets Act 1989
- Economic Crime and Corporate Transparency Act 2023 and Fraud Act 2006
- Investigatory Powers (Amendment) Act 2024 and Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000
- Online Safety Act 2023 and Computer Misuse Act 1990

Case study

The Home Secretary has responsibility for CONTEST and the Home Office is the lead department for counter-terrorism as part of the government's Outcome Delivery Plan. The Homeland Security Group in the Home Office leads on supporting the Home Secretary in delivery of their counter-terrorism responsibilities. It also provides oversight of Counter Terrorism Policing and enables Home Secretary oversight of MI5, and it co-ordinates the response to terrorism-related crises.

Useful links

Home Office
www.gov.uk/government/organisations/home-office

Counter-terrorism strategy (CONTEST) 2023
www.gov.uk/government/publications/counter-terrorism-strategy-contest-2023

Economic crime plan 2023 to 2026
www.gov.uk/government/publications/economic-crime-plan-2023-to-2026

Fraud Strategy
www.gov.uk/government/publications/fraud-strategy


Ministry
of Defence
MINISTRY
OF
DEFENCE

Ministry of Defence

The Ministry of Defence's (MOD) purpose is to protect the nation and help it prosper. Through global reach and influence, we protect our people, territories, values and interests at home and overseas. Through strong armed forces and in partnership with allies, we ensure our security, support our national interests and safeguard our growth and prosperity.

Contributions to UK national security

To protect against current and emerging threats, while seeking to deter and prevent future conflicts. Examples of what we are doing to protect the UK right now include:

- Maintaining and operating the UK's nuclear deterrent as the bedrock of national defence, operating the Continuous At Sea Deterrent for six decades under Operation RELENTLESS, providing critical insurance against the gravest threats

- Leading NATO's Euro-Atlantic collective security: the Army's deployment in Estonia; RAF operations across NATO's eastern flank; and the Royal Navy's Atlantic Bastion approach, central to European defence against Russian submarine threats in the North Atlantic

- Protecting UK homeland security through enhanced cyber defence and critical infrastructure protection, the new CyberEM Command countering daily cyber-attacks, with the National Armaments Director driving procurement of defence technologies and strengthening national resilience

- UK Defence Innovation allocating annual funding to accelerate technology adoption, streamline procurement from innovative companies, and deliver emerging capabilities to frontline forces, investing in drones, AI, and autonomous systems for modern warfare

- Defence Intelligence providing foundation and strategic intelligence to inform policymaking, threat analysis, early warning of crises, operational support, and equipment procurement guidance to MOD and across Government, partnering with GCHQ, MI5, and SIS

National security legal framework

We operate in accordance with UK and international law, most notably international humanitarian law which regulates the conduct of armed conflict. The UK legal basis for our functions is the Royal Prerogative, but also some statutory powers, including the Investigatory Powers Act 2016.

Case study

In response to Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine, we have worked closely with the Armed Forces of Ukraine to design a training programme in the UK, known as Operation INTERFLEX, that has taken nearly 56,000 recruits from civilian to soldier.

As of July 2025, the UK has pledged almost £21.8 billion in overall support to Ukraine, of which £13 billion is for military assistance. The UK is on track to provide Ukraine with 100,000 drones, as well as air defences, artillery, and other forms of military, industrial and logistical support.

Useful links

Ministry of Defence
www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ministry-of-defence


Ministry
of Justice
Ministry
of Justice

Ministry of Justice

The Ministry of Justice is responsible for protecting and advancing the principles of justice. Our priorities are to ensure that punishment cuts crime, to deliver swifter justice for victims and act as a beacon for justice and the rule of law. National security is a vital foundation for that work.

Contributions to UK national security

MoJ is the leading department managing individuals who pose a risk to national security within the criminal justice system in England and Wales, including offenders connected to terrorism, serious and organised crime and hostile state activity. This includes responsibilities from interaction with the courts and managing risk in custody to subsequent supervision on licence.

We are a core part of the national security community and work closely with a range of partners to protect the public. This includes working collaboratively with other Government departments to maintain and strengthen our legislative framework on policy issues pertaining to national security and the justice system. HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) also work closely with other operational partners to ensure robust offender management.

National security legal framework

MoJ is responsible for a range of legislation which provides the foundation for our agencies managing individuals of national security concern and, in doing so, helping to safeguard the UK. This includes, but is not limited to, The Prison Rules 1999, Criminal Justice Act 2003, Offender Management Act 2007 and Sentencing Act 2020.

Legislative changes led by MoJ in recent times – namely the Terrorist Offenders (Restriction of Early Release) Act 2020 and Counter-Terrorism and Sentencing Act 2021 – have strengthened our approach to managing national security threats. These have ensured that terrorist offenders are no longer eligible for automatic early release from prison (without Parole Board approval), spend at least 12 months under supervision in the community and may be required to undertake polygraph testing as a licence condition.

Case studies

In August 2022, Organised Criminal Groups with links to custody engaged in several firearms discharges in Merseyside. This resulted in the deaths of two victims and the attempted murder of two others. HMPPS worked alongside law enforcement partners to identify, charge and convict those responsible. Those convicted received sentences with minimum terms ranging from 41-47 years.

In March 2024, a convicted terrorist offender received a sentence of 27 months after breaching notification requirements under Part 4 of the Counter-Terrorism Act 2008. They received a wide range of specialist assessments and interventions during their time in prison, including theological and practical mentoring to support disengagement and build resilience. Upon release, they were made subject to stringent licence conditions under the supervision of the Probation Service National Security Division, including residence at a Probation Approved Premises, electronic monitoring and a requirement to attend regular polygraph examinations.

Useful links:

Ministry of Justice
www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ministry-of-justice


NCA
National Crime Agency

National Crime Agency

The National Crime Agency's (NCA) mission is to protect the public against serious and organised crime, through the conduct of intelligence-led law enforcement operations, using the full range of covert and overt specialist capabilities to investigate organised crime groups both domestically and overseas. The NCA operates a global network of operatives working with law enforcement and intelligence partners internationally to pursue serious organised crime groups wherever they operate, preventing their activities, while protecting communities and preparing partner agencies and organisations to better mitigate that threat. We only operate against the most serious organised crime groups. We have the statutory power to direct the nation's law enforcement agencies to support our operations. We are unique among law enforcement agencies. Our officers can hold the powers of a constable, immigration officer, and both general customs along with revenue and customs officers. We operate against a wide-range of serious and organised crime, including: child sexual abuse, corruption, cybercrime, drug trafficking, firearms, fraud, kidnap and extortion, organised immigration crime, human trafficking, modern slavery, and money laundering.

Contributions to UK national security

Serious and organised crime causes more harm to more people more often than any other national security threat. The NCA seeks to prevent and disrupt threats to our national security, including threats emanating from serious and organised crime, state sponsored crime groups, hostile state cyber actors, and corrupt public officials.

National security legal framework

The NCA was enacted under the Crime and Courts Act 2013, which provides a statutory basis for the agency's crime reduction and criminal intelligence mission. We discharge our crime reduction function through the investigation and prosecution of serious organised crime, along with the system leadership of the law enforcement response. We discharge our criminal intelligence function through the acquisition, analysis and dissemination of criminal intelligence to partner organisations. The NCA uses numerous statutory instruments in support of that mandate, such as the Investigatory Powers Act 2016, Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984, and the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000.

Case study

The agency delivered an international disruption campaign targeting LockBit, the world's most harmful cybercrime group. The agency infiltrated the group's network, and took control of LockBit's services, compromising their entire criminal enterprise. LockBit ransomware attacks targeted thousands of victims around the world and caused losses of billions of pounds in ransom payments and in the cost of recovery. The group provided ransomware-as-a-service to a global network of hackers or 'affiliates', supplying them with the tools and infrastructure required to carry out attacks.

The NCA took control of LockBit's primary administration environment, which enabled affiliates to build and carry out attacks, and the group's public-facing leak site on the dark web. The content on this site was replaced with information designed to discredit the group and damage trust in its services. The agency also obtained LockBit's platform source code and a vast amount of intelligence from their systems about their activities and those who had worked with them and used their services.

The agency worked closely with domestic partners, the South-West Regional Organised Crime Unit and Met Police, and internationally the FBI, and a number of international law enforcement partners to covertly investigate LockBit as part of a dedicated taskforce called Operation Cronos. LockBit's supporting infrastructure, based in a number of countries, was seized by members of the Op Cronos taskforce, and 28 servers belonging to LockBit affiliates were also taken down.

In wider action, co-ordinated by Europol, two LockBit actors were arrested in Poland and Ukraine, thousands of criminal online accounts closed and over 200 cryptocurrency accounts linked to the group were frozen. The US also unsealed indictments against two Russian nationals for conspiring to commit LockBit attacks. The agency obtained over 2,500 decryption keys and proactively contacted all UK-based victims to offer support and help them recover encrypted data. It also assisted Europol and the US to support thousands of victims internationally. The primary actor behind the group has now been indicted by the US and sanctioned by UK, US and Australia, showing that law enforcement will be relentless in targeting major cybercrime groups.

The agency degraded the threat from LockBit by destroying the credibility of the brand, creating distrust within the criminal community, with a reduction in global LockBit hackers by around 65%. Our domestic focus also enabled us to reduce UK LockBit victims by 69%, reducing further harms and protecting the UK.


Northern
Ireland
Office
ERSKINE HOUSE

Northern Ireland Office

The Northern Ireland Office (NIO) supports the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland in promoting the best interests of Northern Ireland within a stronger United Kingdom. We ensure that Northern Ireland's interests are fully and effectively represented at Westminster, and that the government's responsibilities are fully and effectively represented in Northern Ireland.

Our purpose is to make politics work by closely working alongside the Northern Ireland Executive to help improve the effectiveness and delivery of the devolved institutions. We seek to ensure a more secure Northern Ireland, deliver a growing economy including rebalancing the economy, and ensure a stronger society by supporting initiatives designed to build better community relations and a genuinely shared future.

Contributions to UK national security

Northern Ireland Related Terrorism (NIRT) in Northern Ireland remains the responsibility of the NIO. Wider national security in Northern Ireland also remains an excepted power, which means it is not a devolved power and is legislated on by Westminster. This includes national security issues such as Extreme Right Wing Terrorism, and NIRT in Great Britain. We work closely with security partners to reduce the intent and capability of terrorists and support building safer communities that are resilient to the harms caused by terrorism, paramilitarism and criminality.

Case study

Since the signing of the Good Friday Agreement in 1998, there has been significant progress in building a safer Northern Ireland. However, there remains a persistent NIRT threat from a small group of individuals. We lead a cross-community team of partners to ensure work undertaken to combat NIRT, paramilitarism, and organised crime is co-ordinated and deconflicted to enable maximum impact in reducing the threat, stopping another generation getting drawn into this activity, and creating the environment for Northern Ireland to achieve its full potential and be a better place to live, work and invest. The NIRT threat level was reduced to SUBSTANTIAL in March 2024, meaning an attack is likely.

Useful links

Northern Ireland Office
www.gov.uk/government/organisations/northern-ireland-office


Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba

Scottish Government

We are the devolved government for Scotland, and have a range of powers and responsibilities, some of which include: the economy, education, health, justice, rural affairs, housing, environment, transport, and taxation.

Contributions to UK national security

Despite national security being a reserved matter, it is often delivered in a devolved area, and the impacts and ramifications of any associated issues might be felt by Scottish citizens. Any national security incident in Scotland, or against Scottish interests, would result in the incident response being mostly carried out by Scottish bodies. Responsibility for the consequence management for such incidents is entirely devolved. Scottish Government Ministers are responsible for the funding of those bodies, and they are accountable to the public and the Scottish Parliament.

We work closely with Westminster and the other devolved administrations to collectively prepare for any major national security incidents, and to ensure that wider national security policies are fit for purpose in Scotland.

National security legal obligations

National security remains a reserved matter, which means it is not a devolved power and is therefore legislated on by Westminster.

Useful links

Scottish Government
www.gov.scot


SECRET
INTELLIGENCE
SERVICE MI6

Secret Intelligence Service

The Secret Intelligence Service (SIS, also known as MI6) are the UK's overseas intelligence arm protecting the UK population, economy and interests from hostile actors. Founded in 1909, but not publicly confirmed until 1992, most of what we do, and the identity of the people who work for us, remains secret. Alongside MI5 and GCHQ, we make up the majority of the UK's Intelligence Community.

Contributions to UK national security

SIS serves three core functions:

- **counter terrorism:** gathering intelligence to prevent terrorist attacks in the UK and against our interests overseas
- **disrupting hostile state activity:** tackling threats form hostile state actors to ensure the UK's prosperity and security
- **cyber:** continuing to act as the UK's covert edge through defending the UK against cyber attacks

These functions can only be managed:

- in the interests of national security
- in the interests of the economic wellbeing of the UK
- in support of the prevention and detection of serious organised crime

National security legal obligations

SIS is held to account by various legislative frameworks:

- the Intelligence Services Act 1994, which sets out SIS' functions
- the Investigatory Powers Act 2016, which provides a framework for the use of investigatory powers by intelligence agencies
- the Human Rights Act 1998, which protects citizens' rights under the European Convention on Human Rights

SIS also has independent oversight bodies:

- the Investigatory Powers Commissioner's Office, who oversee the use of the power we employ to conduct operations
- the Investigatory Powers Tribunal, which is the judicial body offering a route for redress for anyone who believes they have been the victim of unlawful action by SIS
- the Intelligence and Security Committee, who provide oversight of our operations, policies and expenditure to Parliament

We are accountable to the current government who set our priorities, and the Foreign Secretary has ministerial responsibility for SIS and our actions.


SECURITYSERVICE
MI5

Security Service (MI5)

MI5 exists to protect the UK from threats to our national security, primarily terrorism and threats posed by states. MI5 has existed, in different forms, since 1909 and was placed on a statutory footing by the Security Service Act in 1989. Much of our work, and the people who work for us, has to remain secret so that our adversaries cannot gain insights into what we are doing and how we are doing it.

Contributions to UK national security

MI5's three main areas of focus are: countering terrorism, countering state threats and providing protective security advice.

MI5 carries out investigations by obtaining, analysing and assessing intelligence. We can collect some of this evidentially, but we are not an executive agency, so work closely with the police and other partners to secure convictions and disrupt threats, both at home and overseas.

MI5 work closely with SIS and GCHQ. We also have many other domestic and international partnerships.

While they make their assessments independently, the Joint Terrorism Analysis Centre and Joint State Threats Assessment Team ultimately report to the Director General of MI5.

Through our protective security arm, the National Protective Security Authority, we provide advice to other organisations about how they can keep themselves safe.

National security legal framework

As set out in the Security Service Act 1989, MI5's function is to protect national security. Beyond the Security Service Act, other pieces of legislation governing M15's work include the Intelligence Services Act 1994, the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 and the Investigatory Powers Act 2016.

The legislation explains the powers used by MI5, alongside other public bodies, as well as the oversight arrangements in place to govern the use of these powers. In order to protect their effectiveness, specific capabilities are kept secret.

Ministerial responsibility for MI5 resides with the Home Secretary.

Useful links

MI5
www.mi5.gov.uk

NPSA
www.npsa.gov.uk

Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Welsh Government

The Welsh Government is the devolved government for Wales. It has a range of powers and responsibilities, some of which include: housing, education, transport, and language.

Contributions to UK national security

We have a wide remit for governing Wales, some of which contributes to national security.

The National Security and Resilience Division (NSRD) is responsible for supporting the policy and operational response in relation to civil contingencies, emergency planning, national security and counter terrorism. This includes planning and exercising for major incidents, counter terrorism, cyber resilience and national security strategies. The division is also responsible for the Welsh Government's response to major incidents, and for establishing and supporting the Emergency Co-ordination Centre (Wales).

The National Security and Counter Terrorism Team sits within the NSRD Division. This team co-ordinates the Welsh Government's involvement in the development and delivery of the UK Government's Counter-Terrorism strategy. The Welsh Government is the chair for the Prevent Strategic Board and along with Counter Terrorism Policing Wales co-chairs, and the CONTEST Cymru Board. It also provides representation at the UK-level Boards and works closely with, and supports Counter Terrorism Policing Wales to deliver counter-terrorism training and exercises.

While national security is a reserved matter, it is often delivered in a devolved area, and the impacts and ramifications of any associated issues might be felt by Welsh citizens. As such, we work closely with Westminster and the other devolved governments to collectively prepare for any major national security incidents.

National security legal framework

National security remains a reserved matter, which means it is not a devolved power and is therefore legislated on by Westminster.

Useful links

Welsh Government
www.gov.wales

This publication is available at www.gov.uk/official-documents

College for
National Security

The CfNS welcomes your feedback on the guide.

Contact details:
cfns@cabinetoffice.gov.uk

Version 3, 2025