STRATEGIC DEFENCE AND SECURITY REVIEW: FIRST ANNUAL REPORT

In October 2010, the Government published a new National Security Strategy (NSS) and the first ever Strategic Defence and Security Review (SDSR), collectively developed by the National Security Council (NSC). No UK government had previously carried out a coordinated review of all its security and defence capabilities. The NSC had to take account of the overriding need to reduce the deficit and redress the absence of any up-to-date strategy within the MOD, due to the lack of a Defence Review for twelve years. It made hard choices about which capabilities to protect, which to enhance and which to cut back. It focused on what mattered for the future.

The NSS set out four top-tier national security risks: terrorism, cyber threats, international military crises and national disasters such as floods - giving a clear focus to the Government's national security effort. The SDSR set out how the Government intended to address these major risks, and what key decisions the Government had made about equipping the UK Armed Forces, police and intelligence agencies properly to tackle current and future threats. At the heart of the NSS and SDSR was an integrated approach to national security, combining defence, development, diplomatic, intelligence and other capabilities. Implementation of both the Strategy and the Review has been driven collectively from the centre by the NSC.

Since October 2010, significant progress has been made in delivering SDSR commitments. But the Arab Spring, the death of Usama bin Laden and the natural disasters in Japan, as well as an increasingly challenging global economic outlook, demonstrate how rapidly and dramatically international contexts can change. The robust nature of the SDSR and the NSS has vindicated the NSC decision to maintain an adaptable defence and security posture to provide long term flexibility in our approach to national security.

The Government's work on national security is overseen by the NSC chaired by the Prime Minister. It meets weekly, bringing together key Ministers and military and intelligence chiefs to consider a broad range of domestic and international security

issues. It is supported by the National Security Adviser and the National Security Secretariat in the Cabinet Office.

The Government is held accountable by Parliamentary Select Committees including the Joint Committee on the National Security Strategy, to whom the Minister for Government Policy recently provided evidence on the NSS and the SDSR, and the House of Commons Defence Committee, who recently reported for the second time on the SDSR. In addition, this document fulfils the commitment to provide an annual public report on implementation of the SDSR.

The SDSR comprised over 200 individual commitments across the national security agenda. There has been good progress against the majority of these undertakings, including delivery in many of the highest priority areas: publishing a revised counter-terrorism strategy, publishing a Building Stability Overseas Strategy, launching a major new National Cyber Security Programme and significant work to bring the defence budget back into balance as part of a comprehensive programme of defence transformation. This report sets out progress over the last 12 months against SDSR commitments in each area.

Defence

The Armed Forces can rightly be proud of their outstanding contribution to operations in Afghanistan and Libya. In Afghanistan, UK forces have been engaged in intensive counter-insurgency operations in Helmand Province, and in training the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) - who have already taken responsibility for security in a first two tranches of districts. In Libya, UK Armed Forces responded fast and flexibly to the requirement to make a major contribution to NATO air operations and to the maritime tasks. The Libya campaign confirmed the validity of the adaptable posture set out in the SDSR.

This Government inherited a challenging financial position and an over-committed Defence budget. The SDSR recognised the need to restore affordability to the defence spending plans. Over the last twelve months, the MOD has taken tough but necessary action on equipment and personnel costs to bring the defence programme broadly back into balance. The UK retains the fourth largest military budget in the

world and will meet NATO's target of spending 2% of Gross Domestic Product on defence over the Spending Review period. To ensure that future aspirations are matched by resources, in July the Government announced that the MOD can plan on the defence equipment and equipment support budget increasing by 1% a year in real terms between 2015 and 2020. This decision puts plans for Future Force 2020 onto a stronger footing and makes several significant programmes possible, including spending on the Joint Strike Fighter, procurement of the Rivet Joint intelligence and surveillance aircraft and the development of the Global Combat Ship.

In the **maritime environment** the SDSR announced the decision to decommission HMS Ark Royal immediately, reduce by four the number of frigates, place at extended readiness either HMS Ocean or HMS Illustrious and decommission a Bay-class amphibious support ship. The Royal Navy has implemented these changes in full. It has taken out of service HMS Ark Royal, four Type 22 frigates and RFA Largs Bay, which has been purchased by the Royal Australian Navy. HMS Illustrious will be decommissioned in 2014. Progress towards building Future Force 2020 capabilities has included the launch of the second Astute class submarine, HMS Ambush, and the start of construction of the fifth submarine, HMS Anson. The third new and highly capable Type 45 destroyer, HMS Diamond, entered service and assembly of the new Queen Elizabeth class aircraft carriers has progressed well. The Electromagnetic Aircraft Launch System has been selected as the preferred means of launching aircraft from the operational carrier and detailed assessments continue.

In the **land environment** the SDSR announced that the Government would be rationalising headquarters, converting one operational divisional headquarters to a force preparation role and removing one deployable brigade. The Army also undertook to reduce holdings of Challenger 2 tanks by around 40%, to reduce AS90 vehicles by around 35% and to rationalise wider equipment holdings. The Army is on track to meet commitments to reduce equipment holdings, has announced the disbandment of 19 Light Brigade, has started rationalising elements of its non-deployable headquarters and regional divisional and brigade structures have been

reduced. Progress towards building Future Force 2020 capabilities includes a planned increase in defence funding between 2015 and 2020, meaning about £1 billion will be spent on 14 new Chinook Helicopters and £1 billion on refurbishment of the Army's fleet of Warrior vehicles.

In the **air environment** the SDSR announced that we would be reducing Tornado numbers, removing Harrier from service in 2011, and reducing Joint Strike Fighter numbers but buying the more capable Carrier Variant and installing a catapult on the new aircraft carrier. The SDSR also announced that the RAF would not bring Nimrod MRA4 into service, would focus the VC-10 on air-to-air refuelling, and would withdraw from service the TriStar from 2013, the C-130J Hercules by 2022 and Sentinel once it is no longer required in Afghanistan. The Royal Air Force withdrew the Harrier from service in December 2010. Tornado drawdown remains on track. Progress towards building Future Force 2020 capabilities includes Typhoon force growth and delivery of the RAF's largest ever aircraft, the Voyager Future Strategic (transport) and Tanker Aircraft (FSTA), which has started UK trials and will go into service in the new year as a replacement for TriStar and the VC-10. A400M production remains on track - the first aircraft is expected to be delivered in late 2014 as a replacement for the C-130 Hercules.

The SDSR made clear that while effective military hardware is essential, it is our **people** that give our Armed Forces their edge and deliver the capabilities this country needs. The SDSR committed to rebuilding and formalising an Armed Forces Covenant and in May the Government announced a new version of the Armed Forces Covenant. This was enshrined in law by the Armed Forces Act 2011, including the requirement for an annual report on the Covenant to Parliament. Key proposals from Dr Andrew Murrison's report, 'Fighting Fit: a Mental Health Plan for Service Personnel and Veterans,' are also being implemented - 30 additional mental health nurses have been commissioned and a 24-hour mental health support line has been launched. The Armed Forces Compensation Scheme was revised, incorporating all of Lord Boyce's recommended changes, and sustainable and fair changes have been made to allowances.

The SDSR took tough but vital decisions and there were few harder than staff reductions, particularly for those who had provided many years of distinguished service. However, to realise the long-term vision for defence the SDSR announced reductions of around 17,000 service personnel and 25,000 civil servants by 2015. The three Services have announced redundancy programmes and a first tranche of MOD civil servants have accepted voluntary early release. MOD's civilian workforce has already fallen by almost 10% compared to the SDSR baseline and it is on track to meet the SDSR commitment of a total fall of around 32,000 by the year 2020.

The SDSR committed to a six-month study of the role and structure of **reserve forces**. In July, the Future Reserves 2020 study recommended around £1.5 billion of investment in the reserve forces of all three Services over the next ten years to progressively adjust the Regular/Reserve balance. This will be implemented while maintaining the land forces capability set out in the SDSR so that by 2020 we envisage a total trained Army of around 112,000, broadly in the ratio 70:30 Regular to Reserve.

The SDSR announced the intention to bring back half of the UK military personnel from Germany by 2015 and the rest by 2020, and to deliver £350 million per year from estate rationalisation, while reflecting reductions in RAF equipment based around the UK. In July, the Defence **Basing** Review made clear how these strategic, long term changes would affect the military footprint, providing long term stability for the Armed Forces and better value for money for the taxpayer. RAF Marham will remain as a base for Tornado GR4 aircraft while RAF Leuchars will become an Army base. The Typhoon force will grow at RAF Lossiemouth, while Kinloss will become home to Army units. Work in the coming year will develop the detailed plans required to implement these changes.

Lord Levene has completed his review of MOD's structure and corporate culture to identify the changes needed to deliver the Future Force 2020. His recommendations have been agreed and are being implemented in full, including plans to create a new Joint Forces Command. To ensure that the equipment and support programme remains affordable, the Defence Secretary is chairing meetings of the new Major Projects Review Board. Lord Currie has reviewed defence single source contracts

and made wide-ranging reform proposals that are now the subject of public consultation. Work continues to review and renegotiate up to 500 contracts with a total value of £8 billion. The Green Paper on Equipment, Support and Technology for UK Defence and Security was published last year and the White Paper will be published shortly.

On the **Deterrent**, implementation of the SDSR decision to reduce the number of nuclear warheads on each Vanguard Class submarines has started, with the first submarine carrying a maximum of 40 nuclear warheads instead of 48. Separately the implementation of SDSR decisions regarding the overall nuclear weapon stockpile and number of operational missiles on each submarine is on track. In May this year, formal approval was granted to begin the assessment phase for the programme to replace the Vanguard-class submarines. In addition, to assist the Liberal Democrats make the case for alternatives to the Trident system, the Government initiated a study into the costs, feasibility and credibility of alternative nuclear deterrent systems and postures.

Wider Security

The NSS and SDSR prioritised tackling the international **Terrorism** threat, which was SEVERE for much of the year but reduced to SUBSTANTIAL in July. The leadership of Al Qa'ida (AQ) is weaker than at any time since 9/11. The deaths of Usama Bin Laden and Anwar Al Awlaki have contributed significantly to this. AQ has played no significant role in recent political change in North Africa and the Middle East. Nonetheless, other terrorists groups, including AQ affiliates in Yemen and Somalia, have emerged as a substantial threat in their own right.

The SDSR committed to continuing to support the devolved institutions of Northern Ireland to tackle the threat from terrorism. The threat from Northern Ireland related terrorism to Great Britain remains SUBSTANTIAL (SEVERE in Northern Ireland). The Government has developed a new strategic approach in support of the Police Service of Northern Ireland and the Northern Ireland Executive, allocating an additional £200 million over the next four years to countering this threat.

The SDSR committed to review the most sensitive and controversial counter-terrorism and security powers, to revise the UK counter-terrorism strategy (CONTEST) and to reform the counter-radicalisation workstream of CONTEST (*Prevent*). The Government published a more focused Prevent Strategy in June and a revised CONTEST in July. The new version of CONTEST has been broadened to cover all forms of terrorism but focused on the greatest risks. Following a review of the most controversial counter-terrorism and security powers, in January the Government announced that Control Orders would be replaced by less intrusive and more targeted Terrorism Prevention and Investigation Measures (TPIMs), changes to stop and search powers and a reduction in the maximum period suspects can be held without charge for terrorism offences from 28 to 14 days. The TPIM Bill and the Protection of Freedoms Bill are currently before Parliament.

The SDSR committed to enhancing the response of police armed response units to a terrorist firearms attack in the UK and supporting their work with specialist military units. Significant improvements have been made to the police and military response to a Mumbai-style attack.

The SDSR committed to delivering a safe and secure Olympic and Paralympic Games next year. In December 2010 the Home Office announced that the Government expects to deliver the core of the Government safety and security programme for about £475m, the majority of which will pay for the policing operation. More broadly, the SDSR commitment to maintain core counter-terrorism policing capabilities while introducing efficiency savings has been honoured.

The SDSR has helped ensure that development is at the heart of an integrated approach across Government. Both tackling the root causes of **instability and** helping to resolve **conflicts overseas** are key national security tasks. The Government is on track to meet its commitment to direct 30% of Official Development Assistance (ODA) toward conflict-affected and fragile states by 2014/15. This investment will help reduce poverty and focus work in some of the poorest countries in the world but will also contribute to the UK's own national security.

The SDSR also committed to a new cross-Whitehall strategy to address instability and conflict overseas and to a larger Conflict Pool fund for conflict prevention. In April, the Government announced an increase in the Conflict Pool's programme resources from £229 million this financial year to £256 million in financial year 2011-12, and increases annually thereafter to £309 million in FY 2014-15. In July, the Government published the Building Stability Overseas Strategy, a key principle of which was to tackle threats at source – focusing on those fragile and conflict-affected countries where the risks are high, the UK's interests are most at stake and where the UK can have an impact. As a result, Government departments are now working with NGOs and international partners to establish an improved Early Warning System to enable early action to help prevent and respond to conflict. The Government has also committed to a new annual £20 million Early Action Facility to speed up support for emerging crises and to help build strong, legitimate and robust societies in fragile countries.

This year, the UK also deployed its first ever Stabilisation Response Team to Libya to help build a shared international understanding of the country's interim stabilisation needs, bringing together military and civilian expertise. Early planning by the UK-led International Stabilisation Response Team fed into a National Transitional Council stabilisation plan, and supported the United Nations' engagement.

The SDSR announced £650 million of new investment to tackle the rapidly evolving threats to **Cyber Security**. In April, the Government launched a transformative National Cyber Security Programme, backed by this new investment. November's London Conference on Cyberspace demonstrated the UK's continued lead on international cyber thinking and helped build alliances with like-minded nations, shaping an open, vibrant and safe cyberspace. The Conference was attended by more than 700 participants from over 60 countries, and was debated in social media around the world including in China, Pakistan, India and the Middle East. The UK signed a trilateral Cyber Defence Memorandum of Understanding with Australia and the US in June.

The SDSR committed to a new National Cyber Crime Strategy and a new Cyber Security Strategy. To meet this requirement, on 25 November the UK Cyber

Security Strategy set out the UK's approach to securing opportunities for UK growth, tackling cyber crime, bolstering the UK's critical infrastructure protecting national interests in cyberspace and improving national cyber security skills and capabilities. The MOD, Home Office law enforcement community and BIS are recruiting new cyber specialists to manage the implementation of the new strategy under strengthened Cabinet Office leadership by the Office of Cyber Security and Information Assurance. In parallel to this work, Government and the private sector are developing joint plans for improving the UK's ability to protect itself against cyber security threats, including those that threaten the most critical national infrastructure. The Government is working with the private sector on plans for pilot cyber accreditation products and services.

SDSR re-focused **Civil Emergencies** planning towards better preparing for the highest priority risks – unconventional terrorism, wide area flooding and pandemic influenza. In March, Exercise Watermark tested Government and public preparedness for flooding. In the new year, the Government will formally respond to the Environment Agency's report on lessons from the exercise. The Government published a new UK Influenza Pandemic Preparedness Strategy in November, aimed at informing local organisations and emergency planners.

The SDSR committed to strengthened Crisis Management in the Cabinet Office. The Government has upgraded the Cabinet Office Briefing Rooms (COBR), reduced infrastructure vulnerabilities to natural hazards and provided advice to small and medium size enterprises on business continuity and resilience. As part of the broader Big Society agenda, the Government launched in March the Community Resilience Programme to help communities build resilience to civil emergencies through self-help schemes at local level. The National Resilience Capability Programme has developed capabilities to respond to a wide range of emergencies, such as flooding and severe winter weather.

The SDSR recognised diverse risks to the UK's **Energy Security**, including political instability in key energy producing countries. Before the Arab Spring, Libya provided 7% of UK oil imports and met 2% of global oil demand. The loss of Libyan production and concern over instability in the region contributed to significant global

price volatility. To prevent market shortage, the UK supported the International Energy Agency's release of oil stocks before increased production from countries such as Saudi Arabia helped stabilise supply and price.

In October, the Chief Nuclear Inspector's report into the Fukushima accident concluded that UK nuclear facilities have no fundamental safety weaknesses. The UK remains committed to safe civil nuclear power. A shift by some countries away from nuclear power to fossil fuels after damage to the Fukushima nuclear plant has added to existing pressure on gas prices from growing global demand.

The SDSR committed to improving the domestic energy market and agreeing a new International Energy Forum (IEF) Charter. In July, the Government launched Planning Our Electric Future: a White Paper for secure, affordable, and low-carbon electricity. The paper outlined the strategy for a cleaner, more diverse and more sustainable electricity mix and plans to legislate for a capacity mechanism that matches electricity supply to demand. The UK was also one of 86 signatories to the new IEF Charter and continues to support the European Commission's work on an energy road map to 2050.

On **Organised Crime**, the SDSR committed to establishing a powerful new National Crime Agency (NCA), to publishing a new Organised Crime Strategy and to revising the UK Threat Assessment. In June, the Home Office published the National Crime Agency (NCA) plan, setting out the vision for a new agency at the centre of Government's efforts on organised crime that connects local policing and neighbourhood action to national agencies and action overseas. Keith Bristow has now started his new role as the first head of the NCA, responsible for setting up and then leading the new agency. In July, the Government published the Organised Crime Strategy, which will transform the UK's collective response to organised crime through a more forward-looking threat assessment and a clearer approach to working with overseas partners. The revised Organised Crime UK Threat Assessment gives the most comprehensive picture of the threat ever and will guide the response of law enforcement partners. The last year has also been the most successful ever for asset recovery, with a record £161 million net receipts recovered

from criminals, a rise of 5% from the year before. The Government has deprived criminals of more than £1 billion in assets.

The SDSR commitments on **Border Security** included technological enhancements, EU action on passenger records, the establishment of a National Maritime Information Centre, a stronger focus on aviation security and a new Border Policing Command. The Government has responded to threats to aviation by introducing new scanning technology and procedures to stop terrorists from boarding an aircraft bound for or leaving the UK. The UK played a leading role in the EU adoption of a risk-based inbound cargo security regime and in May the UK opted in to the EU's draft Passenger Name Record directive based on a strong UK negotiating position on data capture for intra-EU flights. In April the Government completed the transfer of the existing e-Borders services to alternative providers and subsequently contracted to increase the capability and scope of e-Borders (a system which electronically collects and checks passenger details in advance of travel) to cover all modes of transport. The new National Maritime Information Centre became operational in April and has already provided valuable information on maritime threats in support of the Libya campaign. Implementation of the NCA's new Border Policing Command remains on track.

The SDSR recognised the risk of hostile states or groups outside of UK borders obtaining the capability to attack UK interests, including with CBRN weapons. It committed to better central coordination on **Counter Proliferation and Arms Control** through a new Cabinet Office-chaired committee, a new common fund, international diplomacy and capacity building efforts, negotiations on a new Arms Trade Treaty and a new technical assessment capability. The new committee has been established and is overseeing work to produce the UK's first National Counter-Proliferation Strategy. The committee also oversees a new Critical Capabilities Pool, which is ensuring that UK retains the skills and abilities needed to tackle proliferation risks.

Since April, the cross-Government Virtual Hub for Counter Proliferation (CP) Technical Assessment has joined up the expertise from a number of departments and agencies through more collaborative working (without increasing administrative

overheads). The Virtual Hub has established a more coordinated, programmatic approach to CP assessment under the guidance of the newly-formed Counter Proliferation Committee of officials, to focus on the highest priority proliferation risks.

Internationally, the UK played a crucial role in renewing UN Security Council Resolution (SCR) 1540, which will continue to ban terrorists from acquiring nuclear materials and expertise for years to come. In March, the UK agreed to contribute £4m to the IAEA Nuclear Security Fund, becoming the second biggest contributor to the fund responsible for securing nuclear and radiological material throughout the world. The UK will continue to take a leading role in international control regimes and at the UN, tackling serious proliferation challenges such as Iran and North Korea, who continue to defy international law and further develop their illegal nuclear programmes.

In July, the FCO announced the conclusions of its Export Control Review, which concluded that there was no evidence of any misuse of controlled military goods exported from the UK. But it also concluded that there are measures we can take to strengthen the controls, which will be taken forward in the coming year. We have played a major role in gathering international support for an Arms Trade Treaty, including at the UN.

Alliances and Partnerships

The SDSR committed to reinforcing the alliance with the **US**, the UK's pre-eminent security and defence relationship. The British diplomatic network in the US remains strong and close military cooperation, as was demonstrated in Libya, remains critical to the success of ongoing operations, including in Afghanistan. Intelligence sharing, counter-terrorism cooperation and collaborative work on cyber operations has developed throughout the year. In the longer term, the UK and US Joint Strategy Board announced during President Obama's visit in May will take a joint approach to long-term planning between the two nations.

The SDSR committed to intensifying the defence and security relationship with France. The November 2010 UK-**France** Summit saw the signing of two ground-breaking and wide-ranging defence and security cooperation treaties. Close UK-

French cooperation over Libya demonstrated the ability of the two nations' armed forces to work together, maximising capabilities in a complex, multinational setting. The UK and France have also conducted two major exercises and have agreed a five-year exercise plan to develop the Combined Joint Expeditionary Force capability. Advances in equipment cooperation include the establishment of a joint project office on Unmanned Air Systems.

As well as announcing the intention to strengthen relationships with our established closest allies, in September the FCO announced a **Network Shift** towards an expanded overseas network and deeper diplomatic relationships with Emerging Powers. This involves extending the UK's diplomatic presence in China and India, with additional reinforcements in Brazil, Thailand, South Korea, North Korea, Mongolia, Malaysia, Nigeria, Angola, Botswana, Chile, Argentina, Colombia, Panama, Peru, Pakistan, Vietnam, the Philippines and Taiwan. It also involves opening new Embassies in South Sudan and Kyrgyzstan, reopening Embassies in Cote d'Ivoire, El Salvador and Madagascar and, in due course, opening a new Embassy in Somalia. The programme is funded by savings from European posts and by reducing the footprint in Iraq and Afghanistan over time. Ministers have also increased visits to key countries, including 80 visits to the Gulf in the last year, and formalised new arrangements, such as the UK-Turkey Strategic Partnership signed in Ankara by the two Prime Ministers in July 2010.

The UK's key role as a permanent member of the **UN** Security Council was emphasised by events in Libya and the leading role in gaining widespread support for UN SCR 1970 and UN SCR 1973 to protect the Libyan people. The UK also promoted the role of the UN Secretary General's Special Representative for Libya and the Special Envoy for post conflict planning in providing a quick and integrated response. Other UNSCRs on North Korea, Cote d'Ivoire, Sudan/South Sudan and Somalia demonstrated the role the UN continues to play in addressing threats to international peace and security.

NATO's role in enforcing UN resolutions through the No Fly Zone in Libya demonstrated the ability of the two organisations to work together towards international crises, within a wider coalition of willing participants. The UK was a

driving force in maintaining political will to sustain the NATO operation and will continue to invest in the reform of the NATO Command Structure and strongly support the Secretary General's efforts to improve NATO efficiency and effectiveness.

The UK continues to work closely with **EU** partners to ensure that, alongside NATO, Europe promotes shared security and prosperity interests. The UK has led the debate on tougher action on piracy while maintaining an activated national headquarters (HQ) at Northwood commanding EU Operation ATALANTA, the EU mission to counter piracy off the coast of Somalia. The UK continues to press for stronger action in the Balkans and Afghanistan, while supporting greater EU capability development and better EU-NATO relations.

The SDSR committed to producing **integrated strategies** for the countries and regions of greatest significance or risk. For priority countries and regions, the NSC has approved these government-wide strategies for systematically pursuing wider national objectives. These strategies are regularly reviewed to respond to ongoing developments and track progress towards objectives and drive individual country plans, which have been developed for each country where there is UK representation.

The SDSR committed to promoting the UK's **economic interests** through commercial diplomacy. In May, the FCO published the Charter for Business, which set out how the diplomatic network will support the UK's economic interests overseas and help deliver growth. Successes include opening markets in India worth £500 million, defending a UK company in Korea from a multi-million pound tax claim, and assisting a UK company in Qatar to secure business worth £2 billion. Commercial diplomacy efforts include support for British defence exports, including the highly capable Eurofighter Typhoon, which has made the final stages of several major export competitions and is now in service with six nations. The UK has continued to champion multilateral trade liberalisation, encourage World Trade Organisation accessions and promote bilateral EU Free Trade Agreements (FTAs), such as the Korean FTA that came into force in July and is expected to net the UK £150 million per year.

The SDSR committed to focusing the UK's overall **defence engagement**, the use of defence capabilities to increase the UK's influence and understanding across the world. In May the Foreign and Defence Secretaries announced a new defence engagement strategy to be published before the end of 2011, to ensure that UK maximises influence through use of defence assets and activities to support wider national goals of protecting our security, enhancing our prosperity and protecting UK citizens.

The SDSR committed to establishing a National Space Security Policy. To fulfil this, a Space Security team has been formed in the Cabinet Office and is working to publish a National Space Security Policy in 2012.

The SDSR committed to a system of lead Ministers, accountable to the NSC, responsible for overseeing the co-ordination of SDSR implementation. Over the last year, progress has been monitored by a cross-Government Implementation Board of senior officials, based in Cabinet Office and reporting to NSC. This underscores the joint, whole-of-Government approach that the NSC continues to take on issues of national security.

The acid test of any defence and security strategy is its ability to deal with a crisis. The UK's prompt and flexible military, diplomatic and stabilisation activity in Libya confirmed the validity of many of the key conclusions of the SDSR. The outstanding performance of the Armed Forces and civilians demonstrated the UK's continued ability to project power flexibly and to take a leading role in shaping international events. The UN, EU and NATO again demonstrated their centrality. The excellent political and military cooperation with France, other NATO and European partners and Gulf States demonstrated the vital importance of strengthening defence ties with existing allies and new partners in tackling defence and security.

The Government remains determined to update the NSC biannually on SDSR progress and will continue to provide public annual reports. In 2012, there will be a further update to Parliament and, in line with the commitment in the National Security Strategy, a review of the National Security Risk Assessment.