

PAPER FOUR

INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM: PROTECT AND PREPARE

Earlier Papers in this series have outlined the threat posed by international terrorism and the Government's strategy to reduce that threat. This paper reviews what we are doing to enhance our ability to withstand attack by making the UK a harder place to attack: the Protect and Prepare strands of our strategy.

Protecting the UK, its citizens and British interests

The nature of the terrorist threat, and in particular the willingness of the terrorists to inflict mass casualties, means that we cannot protect all possible targets all of the time. But we can:

- make it harder for the terrorists to operate in the UK; and
- more effectively protect our critical national infrastructure and other specific terrorist targets in the UK and overseas.

International co-operation and the vigilance and good sense of our citizens are critical to our ability to do these things.

Making it harder for terrorists to operate in the UK

International terrorists depend on their ability to cross borders, to operate undetected and to finance their preparations and attacks. Working with its international partners, the Government is taking a range of steps to compromise terrorists' freedom of action in all these respects.

- We are tightening border security by sharing more information among our international partners about people refused entry to our countries and by ensuring closer co-operation at the border itself between our law enforcement agencies;
- The introduction of ID cards – with biometric identifiers – will make it harder for terrorists or criminals to assume a stolen or forged identity. We are working with our EU partners to incorporate biometric identifiers into visas and other identity documents;
- The UK has played a lead role in putting in place international agreements to freeze the assets of terrorists and terrorist organisations, and has also put in place a domestic, sophisticated system for reporting suspicious financial transactions and powers to seize cash being used to support terrorism or deriving from crime.

Securing our borders

Terrorists need to be able to travel. All the terrorists involved in the 11 September 2001 attacks were non-US citizens. It is essential therefore that, working with our international partners, we take action to identify suspected terrorists seeking to gain entry to the UK and to bear down on the use of false identities.

The Government is taking a series of steps to do this by:

- working with our international partners to facilitate the exchange of information about lost and stolen passports and other immigration data;
- promoting joint working at our own borders between the existing border agencies – the Immigration Service, HM Customs and Excise and the police – with shared objectives and the exchange of information and intelligence;
- putting in place juxtaposed immigration controls with our French and Belgian partners so that people's permission to enter the UK is checked before they set foot on British soil;
- investing in IT – the e-borders project – which will enable us to export the effective point of decision about whether someone should be allowed to travel to the UK to their port or airport of embarkation under an 'authority to carry' scheme.

Disrupting terrorist finances

All terrorists need money to launch their attacks – for equipment, logistical support, or their dependents. This need is also a vulnerability: terrorists' need for cash provides a useful investigative trail of their activities; stopping terrorists' funding flows impedes their capacity for action. A key aim is to create a hostile environment for terrorists and those who finance them.

UK domestic agenda

The UK has extensive experience of tracking, disrupting and undermining the finances of terrorist networks. Measures to prevent terrorist funds from entering the financial system, and to identify and block those that do are embedded in legislation and industry guidance with Know Your Customer rules, suspicious transaction reporting and terrorist asset freezes. The UK has fully met all its obligations under UN Security Council Resolutions and the UN Convention on Terrorism, including taking effective asset freezing action against over 200 individuals and 100 organisations..

UK banks and financial institutions have cooperated fully, constructively and with dedication in seeking out sources of terrorist funding and blocking them.

Police and the intelligence agencies have developed dedicated specialist units to counter terrorist finance and – with the invaluable co-operation of the financial services industry- have had great successes in prevention and disruption.

International CTF agenda

The fight against terrorist financing will be a theme of the UK's Presidency of the G7. Now that the international regulatory framework has now been established, the challenge is to ensure effective implementation worldwide and proper engagement of stakeholders. G7 Finance Ministers, led by the Chancellor, have therefore requested an Action Plan to deliver this.

The UK plays a leading role in the Financial Action Task Force, developing international standards for tackling terrorist financing. The IMF and World Bank decisions to assess countries' terrorist finance controls as part of Financial Stability Assessment Programmes will be critical in raising standards worldwide. The UK also provides technical assistance to key partner countries bilaterally and through the UN Counter Terrorism Committee.

With EU partners, the UK is ensuring that the fight against terrorism is extended across Europe, both in ensuring that countries have preventive measures in place to stop terrorist funds entering the EU, and increasing effectiveness in freezing terrorist assets.

Protecting our citizens and infrastructure

We are also taking steps to make ourselves a harder target. As these briefing papers explain, terrorists intent on inflicting mass casualties have a wide range of choice of targets. But that does not mean that we cannot deter attacks or reduce their impact by better protective security. So we have:

- sought investment, in partnership with the private sector, in the protection of our critical national infrastructure – those services and industries vital to everyday life – and, through the Security Service, provided specialist expert advice on security to a range of domestic organisations;
- greatly enhanced transport security - achieved by working with our private sector partners and international partners to raise standards both at home and overseas;
- protected key people and institutions vital to the functioning of our democracy;

- worked with the police in developing counter measures to suicide attacks, especially against crowded places;
- developed border and port security, including identity checks and sharing of information with international allies; and
- taken steps to protect better British facilities and interests abroad and provide British travellers with information about the risks of terrorism overseas.

Protecting British interests and travellers overseas: Travel advice

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office website (www.fco.gov.uk) provides Travel Advice on 217 countries and territories. This is designed to help British travellers avoid trouble by providing information on threats to personal safety, including those from terrorism. The advice on each country or territory is reviewed at least monthly and following every significant incident. The FCO seeks to ensure that the advice, including on terrorism, is current, clear and consistent.

The summary section of the Travel Advice on each country or territory has at least one bullet point describing the threat from terrorism. A separate section on terrorism follows immediately after the summary. This gives as clear a picture as possible of the terrorist threat and includes information about any recent terrorist incidents. It also contains links to pages offering more general information about the threat from terrorism and about protective security.

The Foreign Secretary commissioned a review of Travel Advice last year. UK travel, tourism and insurance industries were widely consulted, as well as other business and media organisations. One of the main outcomes of the Review, announced in June 2004, was that *“in future, in the case of intelligence-based [terrorist] threats, we shall advise against travel only in situations of extreme and imminent danger – if the terrorist threat is sufficiently specific, large-scale or endemic to affect British Nationals severely.”*

In his foreword to the Review, the Foreign Secretary wrote: *“Our Travel Advice must inform people of the threat from terrorism; and, when the threat is acute, it will inevitably lead to some disruption in travel in the interests of public safety. But at the same time we must make sure we do not do the terrorists’ work for them by causing too much of the very disruption which the terrorists want. So our Travel Advice needs to strike an important balance, making public safety its prime concern while minimising the disruption which terrorists want to cause. We must give people the information they need to remain*

vigilant, and to make judgements about risk and security as they do every day, while allowing normal life to go on to the greatest extent possible.”

The FCO has formed the Travel Advice Review Group. This includes both officials and many of those from the private sector who were consulted on the Review. It meets regularly to ensure that Travel Advice continues to meet the requirements of the travelling public.

Preparing for an attack

The steps we have taken to prevent terrorism, to pursue the terrorists and protect against attack, have reduced the threat and improved our defences. However, we cannot exclude the possibility that there will be another successful attack against UK interests. So we must be prepared, including for attacks which use unconventional chemical, biological or radiological weapons.

The Government and its partners have rehearsed our response to terrorist attacks since 9/11 and ensured that our emergency services are equipped for the full range of possible eventualities.

Preparation includes:

- updating the legislative framework for civil protection through the Civil Contingencies Act which sets out updated roles and responsibilities for local responders in preparing for a wide range of emergencies and which also modernises the legislative tools available to deal with the most serious emergencies by enabling the taking of emergency powers where the necessary safeguards have been met;
- the establishment of a cross-government capabilities programme which aims to ensure that a robust infrastructure is in place to deal rapidly, effectively and flexibly with the consequences of any terrorist or non-terrorist crisis affecting the UK. This work is based on the assessment of the risk of particular crises arising and the severity of the impact were they to do so. It includes workstreams that: provide for the ability to respond to attacks using conventional means and chemical, biological, radiological (so-called “dirty bombs”) or nuclear devices; to decontaminate people, land and buildings; to treat mass casualties and mass fatalities; and to ensure that our essential services such as utilities, transport and the financial sector continue to function in a crisis;
- working with private sector partners and other stakeholders to keep them informed and help them prepare;

- providing our emergency services with the latest generation of protective equipment, establishing a network of laboratories to provide swift diagnosis of threats and putting in place the facilities needed to provide rapid decontamination of people and buildings;
- running an intensive programme of exercises throughout the country and in our diplomatic posts overseas to test our preparedness on the ground and ability to manage our response to attack at home or abroad.

Recent counter-terrorism exercises

The following major, live, multi-agency operational exercises were held in 2004 as part of the Home Office's national exercise programme to test UK national and local police contingency plans for managing the crisis and recovery phases of a terrorist incident:

27-29 February 2004 in Thames Valley.

11-13 June 2004 in Aberdeen.

3-4 December 2004 in Bristol.

In addition to these, other Government departments and agencies have conducted similar exercises at national, regional and local levels to test C-T resilience and response capabilities.

There have also been similar exercises in 2004 for British Diplomatic Missions and their staff based overseas, some exercises have been tailored for specific posts or events, others have been organised on a regional basis.

Good communications

The Government believes that the measures taken to enhance our protection and have significantly reduced the UK's vulnerability to attack, though we are clearly not invulnerable. Complete invulnerability is simply not possible.

One other factor has to be in place for this strategy to succeed: good communications between Government and its partners and citizens.

We rely heavily on the alertness of the public, but also on the public's willingness to get on with everyday life in the absence of specific threats. The Government has sought to strike this balance by improving the information we provide, but without providing a running commentary on our assessment of threat useful to the terrorists themselves and or needlessly alarming people with unspecific threats.

The pamphlet published last August "*Preparing for emergencies*" was an integral part of the Government's strategy to communicate more effectively on these matters.