



INTELLIGENCE AND SECURITY COMMITTEE OF PARLIAMENT



PRESS RELEASE

The Intelligence and Security Committee of Parliament published its Annual Report for 2016-2017 today. The Chairman of the ISC, the Rt. Hon. Dominic Grieve QC MP, said:

“This Report covers the work of the previous Committee, from July 2016 to April 2017. The Report itself was written prior to the General Election in June, but the serious delay in reconstituting the Committee meant that it can only now be published. It is regrettable that it is now over eight months late and the Committee will be considering what can be done to guard against this in future.

“The Report is a substantive and detailed consideration of the work of all seven organisations which the Committee oversees. It considers the approach being taken, and the resources being allocated, to each of the national security threats facing the UK: international counter-terrorism; Northern Ireland related terrorism and cyber security. It also details the Committee’s findings in relation to offensive cyber, the intelligence coverage and effects plan, international relationships, and administration and expenditure.

“Countering the threat of terrorism remains the primary focus for all seven organisations. The past year has seen the first fatal terrorist attacks occur within Britain since 2013. Our thoughts are with all those affected by the attacks.

“The scale of the terrorist threat facing the UK is unprecedented in terms of the number of current investigations and the overall number of ‘individuals of interest’. MI5 have told us that it represents a pace which they have not experienced before, in particular given the increase in what is referred to as “high risk casework” (individuals who have received terrorist training or are attempting to procure the means to carry out an attack). We note that the dispersal of foreign fighters from Syria and Iraq raises serious questions as to when and where they will resurface, and with what intent. There will also be a serious challenge to reintegrate children who have grown up in the so-called ‘Caliphate’, educated and inculcated by Daesh.

“Our Report also addresses the current cyber threat to the UK. All sectors of society are at risk, and while many aspects of the threats involve damage to the economy, individual prosperity or privacy, there is, increasingly, a risk of physical damage in the ‘real world’. The threat ranges from individual criminals, to organised crime groups and terrorist organisations, to state actors such as Russia, China and Iran. We

know that this last group are highly capable of carrying out advanced cyber attacks but their use of these methods has historically been restricted by the diplomatic and geopolitical consequences if the activity was uncovered, Recent Russian cyber activity appears to indicate that this may no longer be the case. This places an ever greater importance on ensuring the security of systems in the UK: detecting and countering high-end cyber activity must remain a top priority for the Government.

“During the period covered by this Annual Report, the Committee continued to take evidence regarding its Detainee Inquiry, as well as a review of diversity and inclusion in the intelligence community. We will publish our findings on these in the coming months.”

NOTES TO EDITORS:

1. The Intelligence and Security Committee of Parliament (ISC) is a cross-party committee of nine parliamentarians from the Commons and the Lords, established under the 2013 Justice and Security Act. Further information on the Committee can be found at:

<http://isc.independent.gov.uk/>

2. This Report reflects the work of the previous Committee,¹ which sat from September 2015 to May 2017:

The Rt. Hon. Dominic Grieve QC MP (Chair)

*The Rt. Hon. Richard Benyon MP
(from 21 October 2016)*

The Most Hon. the Marquess of Lothian QC PC

*The Rt. Hon. Sir Alan Duncan MP
(until 17 July 2016)*

The Rt. Hon. Fiona Mactaggart MP

*The Rt. Hon. David Hanson MP
(from 21 October 2016)*

The Rt. Hon. Angus Robertson MP

*The Rt. Hon. George Howarth MP
(until 18 October 2016)*

The Rt. Hon. Keith Simpson MP

The Rt. Hon. the Lord Janvrin GCB GCVO QSO The Rt. Hon. Gisela Stuart MP

3. The Committee oversees the intelligence and security activities of the UK, including the policies, expenditure, administration and operations of the Security Service (MI5), the Secret Intelligence Service (SIS) and the Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ). The Committee also scrutinises the work of other parts of the UK intelligence community, including the Joint Intelligence Organisation and the National Security Secretariat in the Cabinet Office; Defence Intelligence in the Ministry of Defence; and the Office for Security and Counter-Terrorism in the Home Office.

4. The Members of the Committee are subject to Section 1(1)(b) of the Official Secrets Act 1989 and are routinely given access to highly classified material in carrying out their duties. The Committee sets its own agenda and work programme. It takes evidence from Government Ministers, the Heads of the intelligence Agencies, officials from the intelligence community, and other witnesses as required. The Committee is supported in its work by a Secretariat provided by the Cabinet Office. It also has access to legal, technical and financial expertise where necessary.

5. The Committee makes an annual report to Parliament on the discharge of its functions. The Committee may also produce Reports on specific investigations. Prior to the Committee publishing its Reports, sensitive material that would damage national security is blanked out ('redacted'). This is indicated by *** in the text. The intelligence and security Agencies may request the redaction of material in the Report if its publication would damage their work, for example by revealing their targets, methods, sources or operational capabilities. The Committee considers these requests for redaction carefully. The Agencies have to demonstrate clearly how publication of the material in question would be damaging before the Committee agrees to redact it. The Committee aims to ensure that only the minimum of text is redacted from the Report. The Committee believes that it is important that Parliament and the public should be able to see where information had to be redacted.

¹ The following Members were appointed to the Committee in November 2017: the Rt. Hon. Dominic Grieve QC MP (Chair), the Rt. Hon. Richard Benyon MP, the Rt. Hon. the Lord Janvrin GCB GCVO QSO, the Rt. Hon. Ian Blackford MP, Kevan Jones MP, the Rt. Hon. Caroline Flint MP, the Most Hon. the Marquess of Lothian QC PC, the Rt. Hon. David Hanson MP and the Rt. Hon. Keith Simpson MP.