



The Chairman
Home Affairs Committee

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Rt Hon Theresa May MP
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The Home Affairs Committee took oral evidence from Keith Bristow yesterday. Our objective was to hear his views, before he leaves the organisation in January, on the National Crime Agency's achievements and challenges since it was established.

Mr Bristow deserves to be commended for creating the Agency, as a new and important crime-fighting organisation, and for overcoming the challenges which this has involved over the last two years.

We raised a number of concerns with Mr Bristow. These included the weaknesses in the money-laundering database, Elmer. He confirmed that this system had been identified as being unfit for purpose as early as 2006, and that it was now required to deal with 380,000 cases when it was only designed to cope with 20,000. However, he told us that it is not an option for the NCA itself to fund a replacement for Elmer, as it is a government system which the NCA merely hosts.

Apparently the Home Office has made a commitment to replace Elmer. I would therefore be grateful if you could let me know:

- when Elmer will be replaced;
- who is responsible for funding its replacement; and
- whether the Home Office itself, or another agency, is leading on this work.

We also raised with Mr Bristow our concerns about the number of senior people leaving the organisation. He explained that this had arisen because several senior staff were coming to the end of their contracted time with the organisation. The NCA was also actively seeking to bring in new staff with the IT and other skills to deal with 21st century crime, which required shedding other staff who lacked those skills. However, we were not reassured about how the resulting risks of instability and loss of corporate memory were being addressed within the Agency. I would be grateful to know what steps are being taken in this respect.

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One of the strengths of the NCA is the level of its international cooperation with other crime agencies and the 'brand' of the organisation. The value of this has been particularly marked in relation to its recent operation in Bahrain. We regard this as one of the strongest aspects of the NCA and would be grateful for your assurance that this undoubted strength will be protected under the NCA's new leadership.

I would be grateful for your response by Monday 14 December.

With every good wish
Yours
Keith

**Rt Hon Keith Vaz MP
Committee Chair**