



Joint Committee on the National Security Strategy

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Sir Mark Sedwill
National Security Adviser
Cabinet Office
70 Whitehall
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31 January 2018

Dear Sir Mark,

The National Security Capability Review and the 'Modernising Defence Programme'

The Committee has noted the Government's announcement on 25 January that defence will no longer constitute one of the work streams of the National Security Capability Review. Our understanding is that this work will instead be continued by the Ministry of Defence as an internal process, reporting later in the year.

It appears that the announcement of this news was made to journalists first, two days before the Secretary of State for Defence made his formal statement in the House of Commons. This reinforces our sense that Parliament has had to rely primarily on apparent leaks and speculation in the media for its information about the review's progress. Given our active role in scrutinising the NSCR process, the Committee asks that in future we are given advanced, (or at least, simultaneous), notice of any such announcements relating to the NSCR. Where time is limited, the JCNSS secretariat can arrange for information to be communicated swiftly to members.

In the light of this announcement, which updates the information you provided in your appearance before the JCNSS in December, the Committee has the following questions:

1. What does the decision to separate the defence work stream from the National Security Capability Review mean for future reviews of the National Security Strategy and national security capabilities? Will this no longer be an integrated process, as in 2010 and 2015?

The future of the National Security Capability Review

2. What adjustments will need to be made to the National Security Capability Review to accommodate the decision to review defence capabilities separately?
3. Can the defence elements be separated cleanly from the other eleven work streams of the Capability Review?
4. When can we expect the outcome of the National Security Capability Review to be made public? How has the timetable been affected by the decision to separate the defence strand?

5. What is the size of the budget now under review as part of the Cabinet Office-led Capability Review process? Will this remain a fiscally neutral exercise?

The 'Modernising Defence Programme'

6. Will the Modernising Defence Programme be fiscally neutral?
7. What role, if any, will the National Security Council have in the ongoing review of defence capabilities? What will be your involvement as National Security Adviser?
8. When can we expect the Modernising Defence Programme to be complete and its outcomes made public?

I would be grateful if you could write to the Committee with the requested information by 16 February. I would expect to publish your letter, unless it contains information that is deemed confidential.

Yours sincerely,



Dame Margaret Beckett DBE MP

Chair