



INTELLIGENCE AND SECURITY COMMITTEE
70 Whitehall
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29 January 2008

INTELLIGENCE AND SECURITY COMMITTEE
ANNUAL REPORT 2006-2007

The Intelligence and Security Committee's Annual Report 2006-2007 was laid before Parliament today by the Prime Minister.

Commenting on the Report, which was delivered to the Prime Minister on 4 December 2007, the Rt. Hon. Alan Beith MP, speaking on behalf of the Committee said:

“In the period since the Committee last reported, the security and intelligence Agencies have been faced with a tremendous workload in their efforts to counter the international threat from terrorism. Their efforts have brought a number of high profile successes. They managed to disrupt the alleged airliner plot in 2006, and another alleged plot to kidnap and murder a Muslim soldier in the West Midlands in February this year. There have also been a number of successful convictions, including five men involved in a fertiliser bomb plot and seven men associated with Dhiren Barot who were involved with planning attacks. The Committee would like to record its thanks and praise to the staff of the Agencies for these successes, and others which go unpublicised. However, recent attempted attacks have provided a stark reminder: despite all the hard work of the Agencies and the increased resources the Government has put at their disposal, there remains no guarantee that attacks will be detected and prevented in future.

“Since the ISC's last Annual Report, and in addition to its statutory duties, the Committee has carried out an inquiry into the knowledge and/or involvement of the Agencies in Rendition operations and the report on this matter was published in July 2007. Following the conclusion of the fertiliser bomb plot trial in April, the Committee is now conducting a thorough

examination of the links between the Crevice plotters and the July 7 bombers. The Committee will report on this matter later in the year.

“During the reporting period the Committee held 49 formal meetings with an attendance rate of over 90%. The ISC also held 19 informal sessions and undertook a number of visits. The Committee has investigated the administration, policy and finance of the Agencies and also issues concerning the wider intelligence machinery. This Report covers these matters in some detail.

“In conducting its inquiries the Committee has found that whilst the Agencies have provided information and evidence promptly, its work has at times been hampered by some Government departments failing to provide documentation in a timely fashion and failing to keep the Committee formally informed of changes relevant to its work. The Committee is disappointed by this response which has now been brought to the attention of the Prime Minister. The Committee hopes that it will not encounter such difficulties in the future.

“The Committee has also discussed with the Prime Minister the question of how the Committee might be strengthened to maximise the effectiveness of its oversight of the Agencies and reinforce its relationship with Parliament. We welcome this move: after thirteen years it is right to take stock, to take account of how the work of the Committee has grown and developed over this time, and to consider what change is needed in the post 9/11 and 7/7 world.

“The Committee’s proposals on reform cover issues such as access to sensitive documentation, to which we refer in our Report. Recent inquiries into Rendition and the 7 July bombings have reinforced how important it is that the Committee is given access to all the documentation and evidence it needs - there have been occasions where sight of the actual documents has led to the Committee changing its opinions on certain matters. In Annex B to the Report the Committee refers to a particular case where the ISC has consistently been refused sight of documentation. The previous Prime Minister agreed to review the matter last year but the Committee has not yet received a response. The ISC believes that refusal to grant this Committee access to documents where they are relevant to the Committee’s inquiries is inconsistent with the Prime Minister’s expressed wish to strengthen the Committee, and this position is therefore no longer tenable.”

NOTES TO EDITORS

1. The Intelligence and Security Committee, which was established by the Intelligence Services Act 1994, provides parliamentary oversight of SIS, GCHQ and the Security Service. The Committee examines the expenditure, administration and policy of the three Agencies and has access to the range of Agency activities and to highly classified information. Its cross-party membership of nine is appointed from both Houses by the Prime Minister in consultation with the Leader of the Opposition. The Committee is required to report annually to the Prime Minister on its work. These Annual Reports are placed before Parliament by the Prime Minister, after the deletion of any sensitive material. The Committee also provides ad hoc reports to the Prime Minister on occasion (the last of these was the “Report into Rendition” – Cm 7171).

2. In this report the Committee focuses on its statutory role of examining the administration, policy and expenditure of the three Agencies – the Security Service, the Secret Intelligence Service (SIS) and the Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ). It has also examined matters relating to the wider Intelligence Community.

3. During the reporting period, the Committee held 49 formal and 19 other meetings and took evidence from the Foreign Secretary, the Home Secretary, the Attorney General, the Independent Reviewer of Counter Terrorism Legislation, senior members of the West Yorkshire and Metropolitan Police Services, and senior officials including the Cabinet Secretary, the Permanent Secretary, Intelligence, Security and Resilience, the heads of the Agencies, the Chief of Defence Intelligence and the head of the Serious Organised Crime Agency.

4. The Committee members are:

Rt. Hon. Paul Murphy, MP (Chairman) – until 24 January 2008

Rt. Hon. Michael Ancram QC, MP

Rt. Hon. Alan Beith, MP

Mr Ben Chapman, MP

Rt. Hon. Lord Foulkes of Cumnock

Rt. Hon. George Howarth, MP

Rt. Hon. Michael Mates, MP

Mr Richard Ottaway, MP

Ms Dari Taylor, MP

The former Chairman, the Rt. Hon. Paul Murphy MP, was appointed Secretary of State for Wales on 24 January 2008. The Prime Minister has not yet appointed a successor.

5. The Committee do not discuss their work programme or evidence given to them other than through official reports or official press releases. The latest news can be found on the Committee’s website - www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/intelligence

6. Copies of the Annual Report are available from TSO (The Stationery Office). Copies of the Intelligence and Security Committee’s earlier reports can be found at www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/intelligence or can be purchased from TSO.