

The Secretary of State for Defence (Mr. John Hutton) announced recently that the Ministry of Defence routinely reviews the planning assumptions which guide the development of capability over the medium to longer-term. In a statement to the UK Parliament he said that in the absence of a direct military threat, these assumptions set out in broad terms the types of operation which the armed forces should be capable of undertaking. The assumptions are not intended either to constrain or precisely describe the actual pattern of operational commitments at any point in time. But regular review is required to ensure there is a relationship between the planning assumptions and the developments in the strategic context.

Previous defence planning assumptions were published in the supporting essays to the 2003 White Paper—"Delivering Security in a Changing World". The Department has now completed the most recent review and is publishing the outcome.

On the military tasks that the armed forces might be asked to undertake, we have decided to:

- eliminate the specific military task—"Military Aid to the Civil Power In Northern Ireland" to reflect the continuing normalisation in Northern Ireland;
- merge the military tasks—"Integrity of UK Waters" and "Integrity of UK Airspace" as "Integrity of the UK" to reflect the requirement for an integrated approach;
- rename and disaggregate the military task—"Defence Diplomacy" to "Security Co-operation: Support to Current and Future Operations" which reflects the requirement to maintain international support for operations, ranging from basing to contributions; and "Security Co-operation: Strengthen International Peace and Stability and Support Wider British Interests" which covers the promotion of UK interests, including conflict prevention, counter proliferation and support to other Government Departments;
- add a new military task—"Military Assistance to Stabilisation and Development" to reflect our recent operational experience.

We will continue to group the military tasks under four generic headings. The consolidated military tasks (MTs) are therefore:

Standing Strategic Tasks

MT 1.1—Strategic Intelligence

MT 1.2—Nuclear Deterrence

MT 1.3—Hydrographic, Geographic and Meteorological Services

Standing Home Commitments

MT 2.1—Military Aid to the Civil Authorities (MACA)

MT 2.2—Integrity of the UK

MT 2.3—Public Duties and VIP Transport

Standing Overseas Commitments

MT 3.1—Defence and Security of the Overseas Territories

MT 3.2—Defence and Security of the Cyprus Sovereign Base Areas (SBAs)

MT 3.3—Security Co-operation: Support to Current and Future Contingent Operations

MT 3.4—Security Co-operation: Strengthen International Peace and Stability and Support Wider British Interests

Contingent Operations Overseas

MT 4.1—Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief

MT 4.2—Evacuation of British Citizens Overseas

MT 4.3—Peacekeeping

MT 4.4—Peace Enforcement

MT 4.5—Military Assistance to Stabilisation and Development

MT 4.6—Power Projection

MT 4.7—Focused Intervention

MT 4.8—Deliberate Intervention

We have decided to rename the Strategic Planning Effects as Strategic Outcomes and Strategic Enablers, and have decided to:

- delete the effect Contain;
- add a new outcome: Reassurance; and three new enablers: Insight; Resilience; and Coalition Influence.

The consolidated list is therefore:

Strategic Planning Outcomes

- Prevention—the stopping or limiting of the occurrence, escalation or resumption of a crisis or conflict.
- Reassurance—action to protect our own cohesion and that of allied and neutral states
- Stabilisation—the creation and maintenance of the security conditions required to allow all levers of power to address the underlying causes of conflict.
- Deterrence—the convincing of a potential aggressor that the consequences of coercion or armed conflict would outweigh the potential gains.
- Defeat—the reduction of the military effectiveness of an adversary so that he is no longer able to achieve his aims or prevent us from achieving ours.
- Coercion—the use of force, or threat of force, to persuade an opponent to adopt a certain pattern of behaviour of our choosing and against his wishes.
- Disruption—the degradation of specific elements of an adversary's capability in order to limit his freedom of action.
- Destruction—the damaging of an adversary's organisation, capability or equipment to such an extent that they are no longer militarily viable.

Strategic Planning Enablers

- Insight—an understanding of a state or region's diplomatic, economic and military dynamics in order to enhance the ability to identify the causes and likelihood of impending crisis.
- Resilience—the ability at every level to detect, prevent and if necessary to handle and recover from disruptive challenges.
- Coalition Influence—the ability to affect the aims and objectives of a coalition force.

On concurrency and scales of effort, we have decided broadly to maintain the concurrency assumptions as set out in 2003 as follows:

- That routinely and without creating overstretch we should be able to mount an enduring medium scale military assistance to stabilisation and development or peacekeeping operation simultaneously with an enduring small scale peacekeeping or power projection operation and;
- a small scale power projection, peace enforcement or focused intervention.

That we should seek to avoid committing to two concurrent UK medium scale operations. However, there will be occasions when it will not be possible to draw down an enduring medium

scale commitment prior to a second operation at medium scale. Therefore, that we should, accepting that it will place greater stress on our current force structure and cause harmony guidelines to be exceeded for many force elements, be able to reconfigure our forces rapidly to carry out:

- an enduring medium scale peacekeeping or military assistance to stabilisation and development or peacekeeping operation;
- an enduring small scale peacekeeping or power projection operation simultaneously with;
- a limited duration medium scale power projection, peace enforcement or focused intervention operation.

That given time to prepare, we should be capable of undertaking:

- a demanding one-off large scale intervention operation while still maintaining a commitment to a simple enduring small scale peacekeeping operation.

That, additionally, we must take account of the need to meet standing commitments, for example; quick reaction alert aircraft for the integrity of the UK Airspace, and contingent forces.

We have been operating above our planning assumptions for scale of effort and concurrency since 2003, but we do not believe that this is a level of commitment which is desirable for our armed forces to sustain for an indefinite period. It is our objective to reduce our current level of operational deployments over the next year or so.

The Department is now taking forward the implications of these changes to our planning assumptions.