

# COUNTERTERRORISM IN THE UNITED KINGDOM

## MODULE II: POLICY RESPONSE

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### Opening Credits

Music

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### Counterterrorism in the United Kingdom: Module II: Policy Response

By Paul Jonathan Smith

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### Development of National Security Strategy

In the wake of 9/11, the British Government decided to reassess and update its national security strategy to reflect the increased threat of international terrorism.

A “New Chapter” was added to the Strategic Defence Review in 2002, setting out the contribution of the Armed Forces to counterterrorism. In 2006, the cross-government counterterrorism strategy (CONTEST) and cross-government counter-proliferation framework were implemented. The Office of Security and Counter Terrorism (OSCT) was established within the Home Office in 2007 to provide policy oversight of CONTEST across government ministries. A new strategic framework for the Foreign and Commonwealth Office was formed in 2008, emphasizing the fact that national security depends on work with other nations.

Throughout this review process, the British Government regarded its counterterrorism strategy as a national policy, which incorporates economic, educational and social policy, and foreign affairs, as well as purely defence, security, and intelligence matters. The policy realistically acknowledges that there will be more attacks and that 100% security cannot be guaranteed. Significantly, it also stresses the importance of “hearts and minds.”

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### Principles Behind Counterterrorism Strategy

*The National Security Strategy of the UK* published in March 2008, provides guiding principles that define the UK's Counter Terrorism strategy.

Strategy is clearly grounded in a set of core values, which includes: “human rights, the rule of law, legitimate and accountable government, justice, freedom, tolerance, and opportunity for all.”

To reiterate the UK's objectives and certainty of risk: “At home, our aim should be that people are able to go about their business without fear and with a reasonable assurance of safety. Some risk is inevitable and the government's role is to minimise and mitigate it.”

Wherever possible, Her Majesty's Government will tackle security challenges early. “The most effective way to reduce the long term threat from terrorism is to tackle the causes of violent extremism, both at home and overseas.”

Overseas, the government favours a multilateral approach. “The threats and drivers are increasingly trans-national and demand a trans-national response. Therefore, UK supports action by the UN, EU, NATO, IMF and World Bank to address international terrorism. However, partnership with the USA is UK's most important bilateral relationship and central to our national security.”

At home Her Majesty's Government also favours a partnership approach. Rather than strictly military, police, intelligence, and security agencies, “the changing nature of the threats and risks, and our improved understanding of the best way to respond to them, demand broader partnerships with owners and operators to protect critical sites and essential services; with business to improve resilience; with local authorities and communities to plan for emergencies and to counter violent extremism: and with individuals, where changing people's behaviour is the best way to mitigate risk.”

Within government, a more integrated approach must be developed. “The major security challenges require an integrated response that cuts across departmental lines and traditional policy areas.”

The UK government will retain strong, balanced, and flexible capabilities. “Her Majesty's Government continues to invest in a wide range of capabilities for dealing with the immediate threat, from intelligence to policing to greater resilience.”

Her Majesty's Government will also continue to invest, learn, and improve to strengthen its security. "We recognise that we need to continue to invest and improve, to monitor the effects of our policy and actions, and to learn from our experience."

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### CONTEST: The Four P's

"The Four P's" constitute the core of British counterterrorism strategy.

1. PREVENT: Counter radicalization as the cause of violent extremism.
2. PROTECT: Defend Critical National Infrastructure and the UK's borders.
3. PREPARE: Develop a response to any terrorist attack in the UK.
4. PURSUE: Detect, disrupt, and prosecute terrorists at home and abroad.

Each of these strands will now be examined in greater detail.

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### Prevent

The first strand of the UK's counterterrorism strategy is PREVENT.

PREVENT begins with fighting for the "hearts and minds" of young teens in Muslim communities in the UK. Will they become law abiding citizens or suicide bombers by the time they reach age 18?

Local community engagement is critical to "reduce tensions." Regional and local government, local police, volunteer and community groups, faith groups, education, art, and media all play roles in PREVENT. Their interaction with local Muslim communities in the UK must be highly sensitive to their religious, economic, political, and social concerns. The government's domestic policy regarding economics, the criminal justice system, health, and education all significantly influence radicalization within the Muslim community.

UK foreign policy, particularly regarding Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and the Middle East, is crucial to the prevention of home-grown extremism. In addition to the actual policies themselves, press coverage of UK military operations overseas and the impact of those operations on the domestic Muslim community are important matters requiring careful consideration.

A successful PREVENT policy is critical to the long-term reduction of extreme radicalization, which fuels terrorism in the UK. However, this endeavour will be neither quick nor easy.

The PREVENT “message” must be consistent and comprehensible. Consequently, several Communication Principles must be considered.

1. Communicate with people, not just their faith. Islam cannot be blamed for terrorism. Rather, the Muslim community must support moderate leadership and isolate extremism.
2. Support common positions, such as family, prosperity, opportunity, and freedom of worship. Denounce the use of violence.
3. Fill information gaps to counter myths and misperceptions that UK domestic and foreign policy is “Islamophobic”. Media must be fully employed to positively portray the UK and undermine the Al-Qaeda narrative.
4. Utilize the Research, Information and Communications Unit (RICU) within OSCT to coordinate the PREVENT message across different government ministries.

PREVENT has been a controversial policy with its critics claiming that the police have used it as a means of covertly collecting intelligence on the UK Muslim community. Consequently it has been reviewed and role of numerous other government departments (Treasury, Health, Education etc) has been increased. The latest update of PREVENT was published by the Home Office in June 2011.

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### Protect

The second strand of the UK’s counterterrorism strategy is PROTECT. In comparison to PREVENT, PROTECT is slightly easier to implement for several reasons.

To begin with, Her Majesty’s Government has considerable experience protecting Key Points following the “Irish Troubles.”

In addition, the UK’s National Infrastructure, which delivers essential services to the British population, covers 9 distinct sectors: Food, Communications, Transport, Energy, Water, Health, Government, Emergency Services, and Finance.

Finally, there are 565 critical Key Points in the UK, whose security is coordinated by the Centre for the Protection of National Infrastructure (CPNI).

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### Centre for the Protection of National Infrastructure

CPNI serves an important function in PROTECT. It is located in the British Security Service (MI5) and is staffed by Security Service officers and sector experts. CPNI can therefore respond rapidly to new threats revealed by intelligence, such as a liquid explosive threat against aircraft.

UK PROTECT policy is *not* driven by threat. CPNI determined threat to be too broad and inaccurate, and every installation in every sector considered itself a Key Point.

Instead, CPNI developed an impact-driven, vulnerability-focused, and threat-informed approach, which rates each Key Point on a “Criticality Scale” in the event of its loss.

This scale rates the impact of each Key Point on a scale of 5 down to zero. Sector significance and impact on the UK population are key considerations in determining the rating of an event when applying this scale.

Category 5 describes catastrophic events.

Category 4 events are considered severe

Category 3 events are characterized as substantial

Category 2 events, significant

Category 1 events would be moderate and

Category 0 events would be considered minor, with no impact on any sector

Examples are shown here to illustrate how the criticality scale might be applied.

Once each Key Point is rated, CPNI provides security advice for its protection, which is then implemented by the sponsor government department. For example, aviation falls under the Department of Transport.

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### Key Point Principles

During the years of Irish terrorism, the UK’s infrastructure was frequently attacked. In response, a series of pragmatic principles emerged.

- Identify the critical facility that must be protected in each Key Point. For example, an attack on a single oil pipeline at an oil refinery is not critical, but the loss of the control room running the whole refinery might be.
- Defend in depth, and identify external vulnerabilities. Security defences, such as CCTV cameras, fences, and locks only buy time for a reaction force to respond. Are there contingency plans in place for that reaction and are they regularly rehearsed? For example, is there an emergency generator plan?
- Staff is the greatest vulnerability at a Key Point. Who needs to be vetted and what are the access controls?

PROTECT is generally the most visible aspect of a nation's counterterrorism policy, as security measures are placed around Key Points. Often, the key to a successful PROTECT policy is the secure exchange of intelligence and security information throughout the commercial world.

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### Protect: Other Issues

PROTECT also brings other issues into play.

CPNI shares threat intelligence via "Sector Information Exchanges." These are CPNI sponsored meetings of security representatives from the leading commercial companies in that particular sector. They are briefed on the latest threat intelligence based on the Traffic Light System, in which the colours red, yellow, and green correspond to different levels of intelligence sensitivity as follows:

- RED: for their information only; cannot be shared with colleagues,
- YELLOW: "need to know" but can be passed to other colleagues as necessary; and
- GREEN: can be widely disseminated among company employees

An additional facet of PROTECT is the widespread use of closed-circuit television (CCTV). Approximately 25% of the world's CCTV cameras are in the UK; however, their use is not considered a major civil liberties violation by the general public.

In support of counterterrorism investigations, the PROTECT network run by CPNI can be a significant source of intelligence for MI5.

The police run National Counter Terrorism Security Office is co-located with CPNI. This office runs the Counter Terrorism Security Advisors (CTSA) network in every police force across the UK. The CTSA's identify and assess local critical sites, develop security plans for those sites, and promote PROTECT awareness within their force. They also receive comprehensive training in IED preparation, CBRN threats, vulnerable site surveys, and integrated security systems. After the London bombings on July 7, 2005, CTSA's were additionally tasked with reviewing security at local "crowded places".

Through the CTSA's the National Counter Terrorism Security Office sponsors a series of table top exercises which brief commercial businesses on how to protect themselves against the threat of terrorism. These exercises include Project ARGUS which specifically considers the security of a shopping mall. Exercises such as ARGUS have been very well received by the UK business community.

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### Prepare

The third strand of the UK's counterterrorism strategy is PREPARE. PREPARE also emerged in response to the PIRA in the 1970's. It has been updated and is now designed to:

- Improve resilience at the national, regional and local levels to ensure that the UK is prepared for a terrorist attack;
- Mitigate the consequences of an attack and facilitate a quick return to life as usual; and
- Respond to attacks on British citizens and interests abroad.

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### Features of Prepare

The development of PREPARE as a national counterterrorism strategy prompted a fundamental reorganization within the British Government's counterterrorism and law enforcement agencies.

The Joint Terrorism Analysis Centre (JTAC), was established in 2003. JTAC brings together expertise from the police, intelligence agencies, and 16 government departments to review assessed intelligence and disseminate appropriate reports to the rest of Whitehall. JTAC also runs the Counterterrorism ALERT system, which informs Her Majesty's Government and the public when a terrorism threat level changes. For instance, the threat from PIRA



has decreased since 2003, while the threat to the UK from Al-Qaeda has remained SEVERE, indicating a likely attack.

The Serious and Organised Crime Agency (SOCA) was formed in 2006. SOCA is an amalgamation of the National Criminal Intelligence Service, Her Majesty's Customs and Excise Enforcement Branch, and the police Regional Crime Squads. Its mission is to counter national law enforcement threats, primarily drug and people smuggling. SOCA regularly communicates with MI5 and local police regarding counterterrorism matters. This close liaison will continue in upcoming years when it is planned to broaden SOCA's responsibilities to include investigations into paedophilia. The organization will then be renamed and become the National Crime Agency.

The UK Border Agency was established in 2008, combining the UK's existing border agencies, namely Her Majesty's Customs, the Immigration Service, and police ports units. Together with the introduction of the new border control IT system, E Borders, and the possible development of a National Identity Scheme requiring ID cards for all residents over the age of 16, the UK Border Agency will significantly enhance UK border security against both criminals and terrorists.

Additionally, the national crisis command structure has been further developed in light of the Al-Qaeda threat.

The Home Secretary now chairs a weekly meeting which includes the Office of Security and Counter Terrorism (OSCT), JTAC, the UK intelligence community (UKIC), and senior counterterrorism police to review the current domestic counterterrorism situation and initiate CONTEST measures as required.

The well-established Cabinet Office Briefing Room (COBR) continues to be the operational oversight committee during a national security crisis. COBR is normally chaired by the Home Secretary (although the Prime Minister may step in if the situation is sufficiently serious) and attended by other Government ministers and senior officers from the UK intelligence community and counterterrorism police.

Counterterrorism funding has also increased dramatically. Resources dedicated to counterterrorism and intelligence have more than doubled from £1 billion in 2001 to £2.5 billion in 2008. The UK counterterrorism budget rose to £3.5 billion by 2010/11.

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### National Doctrine for Interagency CT Response

The UK also established a National Doctrine for Interagency Counterterrorism Response.

One aspect is the development of the UK's Operational Doctrine During a Covert Counterterrorism Investigation. The doctrine is contained in the Manual of Major Covert Terrorist Investigations and explains the interagency command structure, called the Executive Liaison Group (ELG), which actually runs a covert counterterrorism investigation. The ELG evolved in the 1990s in response to the PIRA attacks and will be further explained in Module 3.

A second aspect is the development of national counterterrorism training. MI5 provides counterterrorism briefings on threat and the UK's Operational Doctrine for police Chief Constables, Assistant Chief Constables, officers in the police Senior Leadership Development Program, and police senior officers on the Strategic Command Course. There are formal MI5 counterterrorism courses for senior line managers, as well as all heads of police Special Branches (SB) and Counterterrorism Units, all junior SB staff, all junior police officers who may man a Counterterrorism Operations Room or Intelligence Cell, and those officers who may attend an ELG. MI5 provides police with specialist training in source handling and technical operations for counterterrorism operations. MI5 also provides police with two table-top exercises, which discuss the covert (pre-arrest) and overt (post-attack) scenarios. Additionally, MI5 offers a range of protective security, personnel security, and physical security courses for policemen in response to the threat from counterterrorism and espionage.

The third aspect of the National Doctrine for Interagency Counterterrorism Response is the development of Major Incident Procedure Manuals. These have been prepared in each major UK city and establish the respective roles and responsibilities of the various emergency services, local authorities, and the military in the event of a terrorist attack. The Manual for London was prepared by the London Emergency Services Liaison Panel, and in 2007, was in its 7<sup>th</sup> Edition.

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### UK Response to Threat from WMDs

The UK recognizes the serious threat posed by weapons of mass destruction. However, it considers WMD preparedness to be just one facet of the national counterterrorism strategy as a whole. Separate CBRN Divisions have not been established within MI5 or the police.

Instead, civilian and military experts would be called upon if a WMD situation were to occur. The UK's approach to the WMD threat is:

1. **DISSUADE:** Diplomatically persuade countries *not* to acquire, develop, or contribute to the spread of WMD and related materials and expertise, which could eventually get into the hands of terrorists.
2. **DETECT:** Expose attempts by states and terrorists to develop or acquire WMD capability.
3. **DENY:** Refuse terrorists or unfriendly states access to WMDs and the necessary materials, equipment, technology, and expertise to develop them.
4. **DEFEND:** Facilitate the development of appropriate operational responses to CBRN incidents. This ranges from the installation of detection devices at ports to the deployment of specialist military units to support police in the wake of an attack.

The final strand of the UK's national counterterrorism strategy, PURSUE, will be considered in the third module.

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### Closing Credits

Music