

REVIEW OF FCO CONSULAR EVACUATION PROCEDURES

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Any evacuation in a crisis is likely to be a complex operation, moving, often unpredictably and at speed, through a number of different phases. A wide range of actions and actors need to be co-ordinated and sequenced. The diagram on page 9 seeks to set out in tabular form how this might evolve in a large-scale crisis.

Attempting to evacuate UK nationals in a situation such as Libya in February 2011, with a collapse of administration in Tripoli, consequent chaos and danger at the airport and an insurgency in Benghazi, was an immense challenge. It took place in the midst of a wider and unfolding crisis in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, which had already seen evacuations of UK nationals from Tunisia and Egypt.

As arrangements to evacuate UK nationals from Libya were being prepared by the FCO consular crisis team, an earthquake hit New Zealand, with UK nationals among the missing. This necessitated the immediate launch of a parallel consular operation.

The UK was able in the space of a few days to evacuate over 800 UK nationals and over 1000 other nationals from Libya. This represented a considerable achievement, with many hundreds of FCO and other HMG staff working long hours in London and, often at considerable risk, in Libya and elsewhere in the region. But there were delays and other problems, which the FCO needs to address and learn from, as it has been doing already, not least in its reaction to the natural disaster in Japan.

This review has thus set out to understand and evaluate the FCO's arrangements for leading the evacuation of UK nationals, particularly given this recent experience, and to draw conclusions and recommendations for the future. The key ones include:

Posts' Contingency Plans

- The value of our overseas Posts having contingency plans, for various types of crisis and emergency, has been amply demonstrated by the recent crises. In the wake of experience in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya, the FCO moved quickly to stress test and update its Civil Contingency Plans (CCPs) elsewhere in the MENA region. This should be replicated for all "high risk" Posts worldwide.
- There is overlap between the various contingency plans Posts are required to have, in terms of the roles and responsibilities of Post personnel and the procedures to be followed in a crisis. We recommend that in future Posts should have a single crisis management structure in their plan with added detail as appropriate, covering civil contingencies, business continuity and other emergency scenarios. These should include updated country-specific triggers for escalating a Post's crisis response. These should continue to be updated and exercised annually at least.

FCO London Contingency Planning and Crisis Unit establishment

- FCO has strengthened its consular (and wider) crisis capacity in recent years, including in response to the 2004 Asian tsunami and 2006 Lebanon crisis. The concurrent and continuing MENA crises, alongside the earthquake in New Zealand and more recently the earthquake, tsunami and nuclear safety incident in Japan, imposed huge burdens on the system. FCO management were right to bring in additional senior staff to reinforce the leadership structure as the Libya crisis escalated. The willingness of staff at all grades across the organisation to volunteer to work in the crisis units and to cover for others who were doing so is to be commended and Ministers and senior management have done so.
- It is unlikely but not impossible that such a series of concurrent crises may reoccur on the current scale. The FCO will need to judge how much additional permanent resource should be devoted to its crisis capacity. One option, similar to military planning assumptions, would be to plan for being able to handle one enduring (i.e. more than one month) and two shorter term crises concurrently. It will be important to build on current arrangements, which have enabled a number of crisis units, some operating 24/7, to be mounted and sustained.
- The FCO's Consular Crisis Department (CCD) plays a central role in running consular crises and contributing to the Office's wider ability to operate crisis units. It is being reinforced and formally given a "whole of Office" mandate for crisis preparation and co-ordination, including an expanded programme of training for staff at all levels, in London and overseas. (Since the Libya crisis, the Department has been renamed "Crisis Management Department" (CMD) and, while the "existing arrangements" sections refer to CCD, all relevant recommendations in this report therefore refer to CMD rather than CCD).
- The FCO is adopting an updated, integrated crisis management structure, to reflect these new arrangements, modelled on the Gold, Silver and Bronze structure of roles and responsibilities employed by the police and other emergency services.

Integrating decision making structures at Post and in London

- Throughout a crisis, key decisions will need to be made in London and at Post. Revised planning structures anticipate these key decision points and make clear who is responsible for deciding what (Ministers, Gold, Silver, Bronze, Ambassador). Key decisions will include – but will not be limited to - those on travel advice, deployment of RDTs and OLRTs, evacuation planning and when to close a mission. Decision-making needs to draw in all relevant information (from Post, allies, London) and happen quickly.

- Planning tools should not be seen as exhaustive: analysis and decision-making should be flexible enough to identify when a situation is fundamentally different to scenarios previously planned for and take appropriate and unanticipated actions where necessary. The aim is for an agile, appropriate response.

RDTs and OLRTs

- FCO Rapid Deployment Teams (RDTs) and MoD Operational Liaison and Reconnaissance Teams (OLRTs) played a critical role in helping prepare and execute evacuation operations. It is important that they can be deployed rapidly and integrate with the Post team under the leadership of the Head of Mission.
- In the Tunisia, Libya and Egypt crises, the FCO deployed 11 RDTs, which was a challenge to the supply of trained staff. The FCO is exploring how the pool of RDT staff could be increased, eg by training larger groups and by increasing the geographical area from which the Regional RDTs are drawn, without compromising on the essential training RDT members receive.

Travel Advice

- Travel Advice is a central part of preparing for an evacuation. It is important that significant changes are carefully considered, rapidly decided and quickly communicated. The alert framework has been revised to emphasise the importance of British nationals making their own judgements on the basis of the best available information, including from FCO sources and to make more consistent the explanatory language (including advice to “consider leaving”) used alongside our four basic stages.
- The FCO’s LOCATE system, an on-line registration system for British nationals overseas, which also serves as a communications tool for alerting those nationals to Travel Advice changes and possible evacuation, has had limited success in attracting subscribers, despite continuing publicity and encouragement. The FCO is already making extensive use of traditional, digital and social media to encourage registration in times of crisis. The FCO has also accelerated its consideration of possible alternatives to LOCATE, drawing on experience of the recent crises.

Call Handling

- The FCO’s arrangements for emergency call handling were stretched by the recent crises. It was necessary to move to outsourced arrangements (which had been identified prior to these crises) to cope with the level of demand, but only after waiting times for the public had become unacceptably long. Set triggers for escalating call handling responses have been introduced, based on best

practice elsewhere. In crises since Libya, where the circumstances merited it, the FCO has moved earlier to out-sourced arrangements.

- Whether in-house or outsourced arrangements are being used, it is important that callers are quickly given accurate and up-to-date information and that their concerns are followed up wherever possible. Continuing current practice, the FCO will send staff to work alongside the outsourced call handlers to improve information flow in two directions: on appropriate advice for customers to the call-handlers; and quality assurance and information back to senior decision-makers in the FCO. FCO Crisis Centre will ensure that its core scripts and Frequently Asked Questions for use by call handlers (whether FCO or outsourced) are updated every few hours at times of crisis.

Chartering Commercial Aircraft

- The FCO has only exceptionally had recourse to chartering aircraft for evacuation of UK nationals. In most cases available commercial routes suffice. The FCO now has a range of chartering options, which provide flexibility, although these are likely to be in demand from other customers in a crisis.
- The FCO is extending the range of possible suppliers, including through formalising agreements with MoD, in addition to the existing agreement operated with DFID. FCO has clarified, including in relation to its Travel Advice hierarchy, the triggers for moving to chartering of aircraft, in particular if there is a prospect of commercial routes closing down. An integrated approach with MOD and DFID at the earliest stage will add value in providing a single understanding of the potential requirement and full range of options for evacuation of UK nationals.
- It is essential that consideration of the need to charter aircraft and putting charters on stand-by is made at the earliest appropriate point. The revised decision-making matrix makes clear that, during any pre-crisis planning stages and definitely at the alert and avoid stage, chartering options should be routinely explored (as they were for Bahrain and Syria in March/April 2011) and put on stand-by (as they were in Cote d'Ivoire in April 2011). The matrix also prompts decision makers to think through the likely speed of escalation of the crisis and how many or how few non-military evacuation options there are. If options are few and/or rapid escalation is more likely, planning for charters or military options should be brought forward.
- In future, to reduce the chances of a given aircraft being unavailable, for example through technical fault, as happened over Libya, FCO will either reserve more than one plane or specify in its contract that a redundancy capacity was essential. Extra costs would be involved.

- Delays were incurred in the Libya case also by the decision to await landing permissions from the Libyan authorities. This is standard practice. Once it became clear that other countries were seeking permission only once approaching the airport and that this was being granted, it was right that the FCO moved to follow this approach.

Military Operations

- UK military assets played a critical role in the Libya operation, the most complex UK evacuation in recent history. They played a lead role in the establishment of the highly effective multi-national co-ordination cell in Malta, which co-ordinated multiple daily missions to and from Libya by more than a dozen nations, evacuating many thousands of people.
- FCO/MOD co-operation was critical to this exercise. The FCO and MOD will build upon the Libya experience by formalising a Service Level Agreement between the departments to cover all stages of co-operation through the non-crisis phase to an evacuation operation, including establishing arrangements for inserting liaison officers into CMD.

Financing

- The FCO's approach to charging UK nationals in certain circumstances for assisted evacuations should be consistent and clear. It should balance the needs and responsibilities of the individuals involved against the wider interests of taxpayers in value for money in public expenditure. If commercial flights are available, UK nationals should be encouraged to take those options and UK and other nationals leaving on an assisted evacuation in such circumstances should be asked to make a financial contribution.
- HMG arrangements for financial responsibility for evacuation operations should also be clarified. Given that the interests of UK nationals overseas is a collective Government concern, we will codify the practice that costs should lie where they fall in Whitehall or be recovered from the Emergency Disaster Reserve (EDR) rather than, for example, the marginal costs of military deployments being recovered by MOD from the FCO.
- Access to the EDR should be possible throughout the financial year.

Concluding evacuation operations

- Close co-operation with other Government Departments (OGDs), such as the UK Border Agency (UKBA) and the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG), is critical to joined-up organisation of evacuation operations involving UK nationals. The FCO has established a cross-Whitehall network to ensure early OGD involvement in all phases of evacuation planning.

- As evacuation operations are being concluded and more generally, it is important that UK nationals are able to access information so that they can take their own decisions. In the wake of the various recent crises, FCO plans to set out publicly what Government can and cannot reasonably do, and what individuals should take responsibility for, in a new Consular Guide for UK nationals who work, live and travel abroad. The FCO is also drawing up more detailed information to distribute to those being evacuated on what assistance is, and is not, available on their return to the UK.

ANATOMY OF AN EVACUATION CRISIS



1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. The Foreign Secretary announced on 23 February, in the light of the challenges posed by the evacuation effort on Libya, that the FCO would review its arrangements for leading the evacuations of UK nationals in a crisis. In response to a written parliamentary question from the Shadow Foreign Secretary on 4 March, the Foreign Secretary said:

“The Prime Minister and I have both told the House that there are lessons we will wish to learn from this evacuation. I have therefore commissioned a review, with the aim of examining the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO)'s arrangements for leading the evacuation of British nationals in a crisis. The review will consider the contingency arrangements that the FCO in London and all Posts have in place, and the triggers and procedures for moving to a crisis footing and mounting civilian and military evacuation operations.”

- 1.2. This in turn reflected the Terms of Reference for the Review agreed by the Foreign Secretary (Annex 1). In each of the areas covered by the TORs we have sought to: understand and evaluate the existing arrangements the FCO has in place, in London and overseas; assess the experience of operating those arrangements during the recent crises, particularly in Libya; capture the lessons already learned and the changes implemented in subsequent crises, including the Japan earthquake, Cote d’Ivoire and emerging situations in Yemen and Syria; and propose recommendations for strengthening our arrangements.
- 1.3. We have consulted widely, in line with the Terms of Reference, including by inviting contributions from FCO staff in London and overseas and from some of the UK nationals evacuated from Egypt and Libya. A list of those organisations from which we invited contributions is at Annex 2. A Glossary is at Annex 3.

2. CONTEXT

- 2.1. By the time of the Libya evacuations, the FCO had been operating in crisis mode for five weeks, as protests spread in countries across the Middle East and North Africa. In January, following the resignation of the Tunisian President and the deteriorating situation there, the FCO's Consular Crisis Department (CCD) established a 24-hour phone-line, deployed specialist staff to Tunis and worked closely with the travel industry to ensure the safe repatriation of 3000 British nationals from Tunisia within 48 hours.
- 2.2. In February, in response to the deteriorating security situation in Egypt, CCD again established a 24-hour helpline, deployed over 60 staff to Egypt, helped over 2000 British nationals leave by commercial means, as well as organising two charter flights to supplement commercial capacity.
- 2.3. Overnight on 21/22 February, as arrangements for charter flights out of Libya were being put in place, an earthquake hit Christchurch. British nationals were among the missing. More call-handlers were deployed in CCD and an FCO Rapid Deployment Team (RDT) flew to New Zealand to reinforce the efforts of the High Commission.
- 2.4. In their efforts to help British nationals depart Libya, FCO staff in country worked long hours in chaotic and dangerous conditions. Thousands of people massed at Tripoli airport, making entry and movement difficult and dangerous; security forces used live gunfire to control crowds; communications were interrupted or non-existent; Libyan ground staff were unavailable; FCO staff had to arrange provision of fuel and handling agents as well as support to British nationals.
- 2.5. On 11 March, with unrest in Libya and elsewhere continuing, an earthquake with a magnitude of 9.0 struck 250 miles from Tokyo. The quake and resulting tsunami left an estimated 18,000 dead and many more missing, including British nationals. CCD established an emergency helpline and deployed over 60 additional staff to Japan to provide consular assistance, including transport out of the affected areas. CCD has also responded to crises in Cote d'Ivoire and Bahrain and pre-crises in Yemen and Syria.

- 2.6. Thus at the time of the Libya evacuations and thereafter the FCO's consular capacity was in the midst of an unprecedented series of crises which imposed exceptional demand on existing resources.

Libya was the most complex FCO-led evacuation in recent years, involving combined commercial charter, Royal Navy, RAF and Special Forces operations.

Over 800 British nationals were evacuated by the UK, the majority on flights organised by the FCO. And the UK evacuated over 1000 nationals from over 50 countries.

Despite the challenges of operating at Tripoli airport, FCO organised six government-funded charter flights from Tripoli, as well as four from Malta.

FCO deployed nearly 50 staff to assist the evacuation; and FCO's 24-hour helpline dealt with more than 2400 calls.

3. LIBYA: CHRONOLOGY

- 3.1. Demonstrations against the government began in many Libyan towns and cities from 15 February. These led to clashes, particularly in the East, where large numbers of casualties were reported. On 18 February, FCO Travel Advice was amended to advise “against all but essential travel to Eastern Libya, specifically the cities of Benghazi, Ajdabiya, Al-Bayda, Al Marj, Derna, and Tobruk”. On 19 February, following reports that demonstrations had spread to other areas of the country, Travel Advice was amended to recommend against all but essential travel anywhere outside Tripoli. FCO Ministers agreed that the Tripoli Embassy should make arrangements to get British nationals out of Benghazi, including by local charter.
- 3.2. On 20 February FCO Travel Advice was again upgraded to advise “against all but essential travel to Libya. Those without a pressing need to remain in the country should leave by commercial means if it is safe to do so.” Tripoli airport was still assessed as not presenting a security risk, and FCO continued to advise that transit through the airport could proceed as normal.
- 3.3. British Airways confirmed on 20 February that they had no plans to suspend their scheduled services to Tripoli. Travel Advice stated that FCO was not planning to arrange a charter flight from Tripoli, but would continue to monitor the situation on flight availability. The Embassy in Tripoli confirmed that they had identified a charter plane from Benghazi to Tripoli. Additional call-handlers were deployed to the FCO Crisis Centre. In line with the amended Travel Advice, the FCO’s Permanent Under-Secretary (PUS) decided that all Embassy dependants and non-essential staff should leave Libya.
- 3.4. On 21 February the Foreign Secretary agreed that a MOD Operational Liaison and Reconnaissance Team (OLRT) should be deployed in Libya, to evaluate potential military evacuation operations. That evening he authorised the chartering of a commercial flight out of Tripoli to augment the existing commercial capacity. He also asked MOD to re-route HMS Cumberland towards the Libyan coast. The French Embassy informed FCO that evening that they would start evacuating their nationals from Libya. FCO Crisis Centre initiated the charter booking process with their broker, Air Partner, and confirmed flight options before midnight. In light of advice from Air Partner and FCO staff in Libya that landing permissions were taking 24-48 hours to process, the first charter was arranged to depart from Gatwick at 0900 on 23 February.
- 3.5. Also on the evening of 21 February the Embassy in Tripoli recommended aborting the planned charter flight to evacuate UK nationals from Benghazi as airport staff and security had left the airport and it was no longer safe. Late that evening British Airways informed FCO they were suspending scheduled flights to and from Libya with immediate effect.

- 3.6. At 0700 on 22 February, when Tripoli's civil aviation authority opened, the aircraft operator applied for flight permits to Libya. On the same morning British Midland International (BMI) informed FCO that they had suspended their scheduled service to Tripoli. The Embassy in Tripoli confirmed that the airspace remained open and flights were arriving and departing, but warned that the airport was overcrowded and British nationals without a ticket might not be able to leave for two to three days. During the course of 22 February, CCD explored alternative options for flights.
- 3.7. In the afternoon, the Foreign Secretary announced that FCO was making arrangements for a charter plane to travel to Libya within the next 48 hours and was seeking landing clearances and permissions from the Libyan government. The Libyan Foreign Ministry advised the Embassy that they had authorized the Civil Aviation Authority to give clearance to all charters brought in by foreign governments to evacuate nationals, and had given authority for visas to RDTs. The Embassy pursued with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Civil Aviation Authority to get confirmation that landing permissions would be granted. Air Partner confirmed the details of the first charter flight, which was scheduled to depart Gatwick at 0900 on 23 February and arrive in Tripoli at 1230. Also on 22 February EgyptAir offered a charter flight for 23 February, having succeeded in securing permits for charters on 22 February, but their permits for 23 February did not come through. CCD also explored with BMI during 22 February the possibility of BMI charter flights on 23 and 24 February, if the FCO agreed to underwrite their insurance.
- 3.8. The FCO announced on 22 February that HMS Cumberland was being redeployed from the Eastern Mediterranean to international waters near Libya. An RDT was deployed to Crete to join the ship. The MoD decided, with the agreement of FCO and the consent of the Maltese authorities, to establish an international cell in Valletta to co-ordinate evacuations. This began operations on 24 February.
- 3.9. BMI decided early on 23 February not to fly the charters we had discussed with them the previous day. Early on 23 February, FCO confirmed to Air Partner that landing permits were no longer required for evacuation flights into Tripoli. A revised Gatwick departure time for the first charter was confirmed as 1300 while the airline sought to confirm that its insurance would cover a flight without a landing permit. The Foreign Secretary decided to send a second FCO charter plane and FCO asked Air Partner to arrange a further aircraft. At 1320 the pilot of the first charter discovered a technical fault on start-up, which eventually delayed departure from Gatwick until 2145 that evening.
- 3.10. During the course of 23 February some commercial flights to and from Tripoli airport were cancelled, but many continued to operate, albeit with extreme delays. An Embassy consular team was deployed at the airport to try to help

British nationals. Earlier that day, the first RDT had arrived in Libya on an Air Malta flight. In London, significant call waiting times were reported. CCD called in additional staff to support call-handling, though call times increased again towards the end of the day.

- 3.11. In the early hours of 24 February a flight to Gatwick, initially chartered by BP, left Tripoli. Passengers include British nationals whose departure had been facilitated by FCO staff. During the morning, the first FCO charter, which had landed overnight, departed Tripoli for Valletta, followed by an RAF Hercules, both carrying British nationals.
- 3.12. The first FCO charter flight subsequently flew to Gatwick, carrying passengers from both planes. The second FCO-chartered flight departed Tripoli for Gatwick late on 24 February. HMS Cumberland departed Benghazi for Malta with around 200 evacuees including nearly 70 British nationals.
- 3.13. In London, call-waiting times were up to 90 minutes. The FCO call-handling team was further reinforced and special police capacity, under existing FCO arrangements, was put on standby to take over call-handling. In the event, on the afternoon of 24 February, given the scale of demand, the decision was taken to transfer call-handling to the FCO's outsourced partner, Teleperformance, in Bangor, Northern Ireland. Staff from the FCO's Emergency Response Team (ERT) flew to Northern Ireland that afternoon in support.
- 3.14. On 25/ 26 February four further FCO-chartered flights departed Tripoli. On 26 February an RAF aircraft left Tripoli for Valletta carrying several Embassy staff. On 26 and 27 February UK military flights extracted British nationals and others from the Libyan desert and oilfields, transporting them to Valletta. FCO organised a further three charter flights from Valletta to Gatwick on 27 and 28 February. On 27 February HMS Cumberland again departed Benghazi with around 200 evacuees. A full breakdown of MOD contributions to the evacuation is as follows:

24-Feb	Tripoli	C130
24-Feb	Benghazi	HMS Cumberland
26-Feb	Tripoli	BAe146
26-Feb	Nafoura (desert)	C130
26-Feb	Waha (desert)	C130
27-Feb	Zella/Darah (desert)	C130
27-Feb	Camp 103 (desert)	C130
27-Feb	Samah/Beda (desert)	C130
27-Feb	Benghazi	HMS Cumberland
02-Mar	Benghazi	HMS York
06-Mar	Benghazi	HMS Cumberland

4. The contingency arrangements that all Posts have in place, including the registration of resident British nationals and dual nationals who may wish to leave in a crisis.

Existing arrangements: Post planning

- 4.1. Emergency planning is a core function of FCO work. It is mandatory for our Posts (Embassies and High Commissions) to have plans to deal with incidents involving British nationals including events which may lead to evacuation.
- 4.2. In countries with a risk of events that might trigger an evacuation, Posts must have a Civil Contingency Plan (CCP). This provides for the voluntary departure of British nationals and other Eligible Persons (EPs) usually by commercial means, but potentially involving officially assisted evacuation by civilian or military means.
- 4.3. Whether a Post has a CCP depends on its country's risk-rating (see below). All Posts must also have a Post Emergency Plan (PEP). This differs from a CCP in that it deals with a variety of crises ranging from earthquakes and other natural disasters to terrorist attacks, air/road accidents and pandemics, which, while serious, are unlikely to lead to an evacuation.
- 4.4. CCP country risk ratings are:
 - **no risk**: negligible risk of an event that may lead to an evacuation. Posts in these countries are not required to prepare a CCP.
 - **low risk**: unlikely but possible that an event might lead to an evacuation within the next two years; and/or a country which has experienced civil unrest or large-scale natural disaster within the past five years. These Posts must have a CCP, which should be updated annually.
 - **medium risk**: possibility of an event that might lead to an evacuation of British nationals within the next 12 months. CCP to be updated every six months.
 - **high risk**: significant risk of an event that might lead to an evacuation within the next 12 months. CCP should be updated at least every three months.

Heads of Mission, in consultation with the relevant FCO geographical department, are responsible for deciding which risk level applies to their country. Risk levels are reviewed regularly and CCPs amended accordingly. Particular attention should be given to reviewing and updating Plans in the run up to elections or other events which may give rise to civil unrest.

- 4.5. Key features of a CCP include: key risks that may lead to successive stages of the Plan being activated; the number of British nationals and other EPs believed to be in-country (both residents and tourists), including analysis of geographical distribution and seasonal fluctuations; arrangements for communication with the British community; details of other nationals for whom the Post has responsibility in a crisis; co-operation with other diplomatic missions; details of designated Place(s) of Safety (PoS) for evacuees and main evacuation routes; visa requirements for entry into country and for exit to PoS; and lists of key local contacts including police, hospitals, local authorities, businesses, schools etc, which have to be reviewed quarterly.
- 4.6. A CCP has four levels of alert, each triggered by events on the ground:
- Stage 1: Rising tension. Sustained, isolated, minor unrest/unrest in specific areas; effective policing; no widespread problems;
 - Stage 2: Sustained and serious unrest. Police control limited. Threat of serious widespread unrest or war. Post assess host government is no longer able to provide adequate protection to the community;
 - Stage 3: Sustained, serious and widespread unrest or war. Security forces no longer in control of situation and/or British nationals specifically targeted. Post assess situation has deteriorated to point where lives are in danger;
 - Stage 4: As Stage 3. No safe commercial transport available.

These levels of alert map onto our travel advice alert framework – see Travel Advice Chapter 7.

- 4.7. Posts in medium and high risk countries are additionally required to include a country-specific triggers matrix showing how the potential crisis scenarios at each of the CCP alert stages would lead to activation of the CCP and changes to Travel Advice. This should identify specific political/economic/security related developments and their likely impact on British nationals (and other EPs) living or travelling in the country concerned.
- 4.8. All Posts with CCPs should exercise their Plan at least annually. High and medium risk Posts should conduct at least two exercises annually.

Existing arrangements: registration of British nationals overseas

- 4.9. Since the beginning of 2008, the FCO has operated a global, voluntary, online registration service called LOCATE for British nationals visiting or living overseas. LOCATE is considered in more detail in Chapter 7.

- 4.10. Dual nationals (people who hold British and another nationality) who are living or travelling in their country of second nationality may also register on LOCATE. The FCO's "Support for British nationals: A guide" (published in 2009) explains that the FCO would not normally provide consular assistance in such cases, but that an exception to this rule might be made if there was thought to be a "special humanitarian reason" to do so. In this context, Posts are required to include dual nationals in their civil contingency planning.

Recent experience

- 4.11. Libya was a medium risk country. Its CCP was exercised in July 2010 and updated in November 2010. It included options for evacuation by land (to Tunisia and Egypt), air and sea.
- 4.12. The Embassy in Tripoli had close contacts with other EU missions and with other Embassies (notably Turkey, Canada and Australia). The Embassy supported the efforts of the Irish Government to assist Irish nationals who wished to leave Tripoli, making contact with Irish nationals at the airport in Tripoli and through contact with the Irish Embassy in Rome. The Irish Government has commented to us that "the UK operated a very professional operation in a difficult and complex arena" and described its experience of working with the FCO crisis unit in London as "absolutely first class".
- 4.13. Embassy staff in Libya had been monitoring signs of potential unrest, particularly a Facebook campaign by opponents of the government calling for demonstrations on 17 February and an end to the Qadhafi regime. The assessment by the Embassy was that this was unlikely significantly to affect Tripoli, but could have greater impact on Benghazi in the east of the country.
- 4.14. On 8 February, the Embassy held a meeting with their consular "wardens" (volunteers who act as a link between Post and local British communities). The wardens network included representatives from major employers in Libya, eg UK and US energy companies, who were responsible for cascading information to employees as well as to other British nationals known to them. Wardens, in Libya and elsewhere, are a tried and tested means of communicating with the British community, in addition to internet and mobile messaging.
- 4.15. On 15 February, the first day of significant demonstrations, the Embassy was represented at a meeting of EU Consuls, which looked at the possible requirement for evacuations if unrest escalated. Regular, informal contacts with EU Partners and other Embassies continued. On 18 February, London and Post switched onto a "crisis footing" when clashes in the East led to an upgrading of FCO's Travel Advice to advise "against all but essential travel to Eastern Libya" (CCP Stage 2).

- 4.16. On 20 February, following deterioration of law and order in Benghazi, which led to riots in towns near Tripoli, and subsequently to the release of thousands of detainees from the prisons to support Qadhafi, the FCO's Travel Advice for Libya was further amended to advise against all but essential travel to Libya. This change was shared with the warden network which helped to disseminate it amongst the British community. There was regular contact between Embassy staff and the wardens.
- 4.17. Liaison between the Embassy and the major international oil and gas companies with British national staff in Libya was pursued through the warden network. The larger companies have their own evacuation plans. The smaller companies have less well established contingency plans and some sought assistance from the Embassy. However, many of the British nationals employed by these companies are permanently resident in Libya, have strong ties (including Libyan families) and decided not to leave.
- 4.18. The Embassy worked closely with Partners' missions to facilitate evacuation of each others' and other countries' nationals throughout the crisis.
- 4.19. The decision to use Malta as the Point of Safety for the Libya evacuations followed the decision, agreed with the Maltese Government, to base the military-run Evacuation Co-ordination Cell in Valletta (see Chapter 10). HMG agreed to take responsibility for all nationals who were evacuated on British ships and planes to Malta and for British nationals evacuated to Malta by other countries. In handling the evacuation, staff from the British High Commission in Valletta had the support of other resident missions and honorary consuls present on the island. For all those nationals arriving on British charters who were unrepresented in Malta, HMG agreed to fly them either by commercial or charter flight to the UK. High Commission staff, rapidly augmented from London and the region, were responsible for these arrangements when the Evacuation Co-ordination Cell opened on 24 February.

Conclusions and recommendations

- 4.20. All Posts have a Post Emergency Plan (PEP), which includes a Business Continuity Plan, and those Posts which are required to do so also have a CCP. One of the key elements of each is the roles and responsibilities which are assigned to staff in a crisis. Other common elements include procedures, contacts, etc. We recommend that in future Posts should have a single crisis management structure in their plan with added detail, as appropriate, covering civil contingencies, business continuity and other emergency scenarios (eg natural disaster, terrorist attack). These should include updated country-specific triggers for escalating a Post's crisis response. This will draw on experience of which are the crucial decisions to make at each stage, clarify who will make the final decision and list factors that should be considered to ensure developments/other decisions are not missed. (See Chapter 13 on "Integrating

Decision Making in London and at Post”). A key early decision should be one to move onto “crisis footing” in London and at Post. This decision sends an important signal and will have the following consequences: increase of resources devoted to crisis planning/action, dropping of other work, communication of move to crisis footing to Consular and Political DGs and Ministers’ offices, agreement of who will be Gold, Silver and Bronze Commanders and who will be the Junior Minister responsible. The decision to move to “crisis footing” should be made by Silver-level consular/political Commanders.

- 4.21. The recent crises have shown once more the value of regularly updated and exercised CCPs. Plans should continue to be updated and exercised annually at least. The FCO moved quickly in the wake of the initial crises to deploy specialist consular staff to other Posts in the region to review existing plans and make recommendations further to improve preparedness. This included: verifying details held by Posts of the numbers and location of British nationals in their countries; stress testing evacuation routes and refining country-specific triggers for escalation of CCPs. Work was initiated in early March 2011 to test the robustness of certain Plans.
- 4.22. **Revised CCP guidance for Posts, including on triggers and mapping of British nationals in-country, is being developed by CMD as a matter of urgency and will be issued to all Posts and followed up with short notice stress testing in all high risk Posts worldwide.**
- 4.23. **Failure to update or exercise a CCP, according to the schedule set out should be raised by London (CMD) with the Head of Post within four weeks of a deadline being missed. An agreed timeline for update/exercise must be put in place within a further four weeks.**
- 4.24. **Heads of Post should ensure that exercising and updating Plans at Post is always a “whole of mission” exercise, which thus familiarises all staff with their roles in a crisis situation. Exercising and updating Plans should also involve staff in Posts in designated Places of Safety, with the plans detailing their roles and responsibilities.**
- 4.25. **Posts should ensure that designation of another country as Post’s Place of Safety always involves consultation with the other Post concerned and the host government. Posts in Places of Safety should ensure that, where possible, formal agreements to operations in their host country are in place in advance of a crisis.**
- 4.26. **CMD will carry out a regular audit of which Posts/countries fall into which CCP risk category. Posts should ensure that plans for all medium and high risk Posts must include a regularly updated triggers matrix. Triggers should be tailored to country-specific circumstances and should set out**

potential political, economic and security related developments, which could impact on British nationals and trigger escalation and potential evacuation.

- 4.27. **Posts and CMD should ensure that plans must always be clear what responsibilities UK Posts have for other nationals, including unrepresented EU or Commonwealth nationals. Given potential immigration issues, the FCO and the UK Border Agency (UKBA) have agreed a mechanism for UKBA to be consulted before any such responsibilities are agreed.**
- 4.28. **Contacts with employers of British nationals overseas are critical, particularly in times of crisis and should be reflected in Posts contingency plans.** Posts must make local arrangements to keep in regular touch with employers locally. FCO officials hosted a round table discussion with oil and gas company representatives on 14 March. The meeting discussed options to improve sharing information about the location of, access to, and communications with British nationals employed in the MENA region to assist with evacuation planning. The FCO will develop a high level network of contacts in the business sector with a view to sharing information used to inform decisions around Travel Advice changes and evacuation of British nationals.
- 4.29. **The establishment of a network of Regional Crisis Advisers (as already set out in the Consular Strategy 2010-2013) will be accelerated to bolster contingency planning in medium and high risk Posts.** Their role, which would be broader than that of Consular Regional Directors, would be to ensure that Posts in their region have appropriate crisis plans in place, that the plans are regularly exercised and that staff are adequately trained. Crisis work would also need to be a significant part of the job description of other staff in overseas Posts. Crisis Management Department in London (see Chapter 5) would provide guidance to the network.

5. Contingency arrangements that Consular Crisis Department have in place and the triggers and procedures for establishing a single integrated crisis unit in the FCO, and moving to 7 day, and 24/7, working

Existing Arrangements

5.1. CCD's contingency plans fit within the framework of Cabinet Office guidance on emergency procedures, which provides that:

- All departments should anticipate and assess risks on a regular basis and plan how a crisis will be managed, including key roles and responsibilities;
- Planning should be “flexible and scalable”, contain a media and communications strategy and be regularly reviewed;
- Sufficient resource should be made available for planning and departments should have the capacity to provide required levels of staff, with appropriate security clearance, for the duration of the crisis;
- There should be a facility with appropriate IT in place (e.g. for classified information) which can be up and running within one hour of a decision to activate and can operate 24/7;
- Training should be in place covering how the department plans for crisis and the roles and responsibilities of key staff in a crisis;
- A cohort of staff not involved in day to day crisis planning should also be trained in crisis management to augment crisis response;
- Plans should be regularly tested and exercised.

The guidance states that “the worst case planning assumption for crisis working is one month of 24/7 working followed by six months of extended hours, but this is only likely to apply to the most serious crises.” The FCO Crisis Centre had been operating on extended hours since 15 January and moved to 24/7 working on 22 February. It remained on a 24/7 footing until early April.

5.2. The FCO has invested in both facilities and staff to deal with crises in recent years, especially since the Asian tsunami in 2004 and the Lebanon evacuation in 2006. The FCO has a Crisis Centre with secure IT facilities, meeting rooms, a secure video teleconference facility, and a call centre with capacity for over 20 call handlers. This can be supplemented with additional space in the emergency unit, which also has a sleeping area. A wide range of FCO staff are specifically trained in crisis response, including volunteers in RDTs or ERTs.

- 5.3. Following the Georgia crisis of summer 2008, the FCO developed the concept of the Political Crisis Response Team (PCRT), designed to augment policy teams in London in the event of a political crisis. Staff in RDTs, ERTs and PCRTs have all been deployed in the multiple crises of early 2011.
- 5.4. CCD has been responsible for consular crises and the consular element of wider crises. It is permanently based in the FCO's Crisis Centre. The FCO's geographical directorates lead on broader crises, except for a terrorism or hostage incident, where Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) lead. CCD's main objectives are to ensure that the FCO responds effectively to consular crises overseas. It does this by developing and coordinating crisis policy, plans and best practice and ensuring duty of care to staff in a crisis. As of February 2011 it comprised seventeen staff: a senior member of staff, a mid-ranking (D6) deputy, four (C4/C5) team leaders, eight junior (B3) desk officers and three support staff. The Head of CCD is on call 24/7 and a roster system operates to ensure that a CCD Duty Operations Manager can call for support from other members of CCD or RDTs.
- 5.5. The FCO mans a Global Response Centre (GRC) 24/7, which is part of CCD and provides out of hours contacts, including responding to media inquiries, and is the first point of contact for British nationals overseas in the event of a consular emergency. If GRC staff considers the Crisis Centre needs to be activated they would alert CCD, who take the decision. During normal office hours, an FCO geographical department or overseas Post might make first contact with the Crisis Centre. The FCO Press Office and Digital Diplomacy Department (DDD), which is responsible for FCO coverage of new media, both also operate 24/7.
- 5.6. CCD is responsible for the London Crisis Managers Guide (LCMG), which sets out the immediate actions to be taken in response to a crisis as well as the roles of ERTs and RDTs, crisis management staffing, communication of public information, family handling etc. This has been used primarily by CCD's core staff.
- 5.7. The LCMG sets out the London crisis management structure, including roles and responsibilities, particularly focussed on an essentially consular crisis. It envisages the assignment of a senior (i.e. Senior Management Structure (SMS)) official as crisis co-ordinator, with overall responsibility for the strategic level of crisis response, reporting directly to Ministers. The guide also envisages a crisis manager (leading on key operational issues, e.g. RDTs, ERTs, chartering planes), an operations manager (responsible for follow-up to the crisis manager's decisions and managing the operational response) as well as members of staff responsible for coordination and support of RDTs, operational issues, consular case work and liaison with the police, MOD, and/or airlines.

- 5.8. The guide also provides basic information on procedures for evacuations and military support. The LCMG envisages CCD staff taking on the main responsibility for key functions in a crisis with a consular dimension, irrespective of its size. The LCMG had not been updated since February 2010 (although previously it had been updated roughly five times a year), as CCD were planning a significant revision of the guidance for crisis management arrangements.
- 5.9. The FCO, like other Government Departments, is also required to have a separate Business Continuity Plan. In this context, the FCO already uses a “Gold, Silver, Bronze” structure, similar to the police and other emergency services, to delineate responsibilities for handling a business continuity incident, for example a major incident in London significantly affecting the FCO’s ability to operate as normal.

Recent Experience

- 5.10. As noted above, when the situation in Libya began to deteriorate over the weekend of 18/19/20 February, the FCO Crisis Centre had already been working extended hours (up to 12-14 hours daily) since mid-January as a result of the consular and political crises elsewhere in the Middle East and North Africa, particularly in Tunisia and Egypt. It had handled the events in Tunisia and Egypt, helping 3,000 British nationals in Tunisia and 2,000 in Egypt to leave, including chartering flights to evacuate over 200 people from Egypt.
- 5.11. CCD and Middle East and North Africa Directorate (MENAD) staff had been working in the Crisis Centre from 15 January. Director MENAD was crisis co-ordinator and Deputy Director MENAD and the Head of CCD worked as crisis managers, on the political and consular aspects of the crises, respectively. Around 20 members of MENAD staff were working in the Crisis Centre in the week of 14 February. By 25 February, a total of 80 staff worked in the Libya Crisis Units (54 Consular, 26 Political) in addition to those in other FCO departments who were working full time on Libya, but were not located in the Crisis Centre.
- 5.12. As the situation in Libya deteriorated, the Crisis Centre responded, with additional staff being deployed at short notice. On 21 February, a request was made to UKBA to second a member of staff to the Crisis Centre. Early on 22 February, a request for ERT volunteers was sent. Later that day, the FCO Chief Operating Officer sent a general call for volunteers, including asking FCO directorates to consider releasing staff. The Crisis Centre was further reinforced and worked past midnight, moving to 24/7 working on 23 February. From 23 February the FCO’s Human Resources Directorate (HRD) provided additional help to CCD with staff rostering. On 24 February, HRD set up a dedicated team to ensure full staffing of the Crisis Centre.

- 5.13. The move to 24/7 working in the Libya Crisis Centre and the reinforcement of the centre as work on the evacuations intensified and the Christchurch earthquake happened introduced a large number of new staff. Many were not specifically trained or experienced in consular and/or crisis work. The Ministerial and media focus on the evolving evacuation effort increased the range of demands on the Crisis Centre and the importance of effective co-ordination.
- 5.14. Throughout the crisis, Estates and Security Department (ESD) were involved, helping to ensure that FCO staff and families were evacuated or safely accommodated in affected posts across the MENA region and advising on safe closure and abandonment procedures to protect the diplomatic estate.

Staffing the Crisis Centre

- 5.15. During previous - discrete and smaller - crises, CCD had retained responsibility for recruiting volunteers to supplement staff working in the Crisis Centre. But this was not sustainable with the concurrent and ongoing crises faced in February 2011. As noted above, Human Resources Directorate (HRD) set up a dedicated team on 24 February. Also on 24 February, 8 hour shifts began for volunteers in the Crisis Centre (previously, staff had worked 12 hour shifts). The PUS asked Directors General to focus increasingly on the MENA crises and their implications. On 28 February, the PUS wrote to FCO Directors to ask them to continue to release officers at all grades to staff the crisis, and to do so for longer periods of time. On 8 March, the PUS issued a message to all staff repeating the call for volunteers, stressing that the crisis would “be the main focus of the Office’s work over the coming weeks, maybe months”.
- 5.16. This effort produced sufficient numbers of volunteers to staff concurrent crises. The units were nearly continuously fully staffed, even when the Japan and Bahrain consular operations were in full flow. The changes in the requirement for staff presented initial challenges, however, with volunteers being asked to report for night shifts at short notice, often after a day’s non-crisis work. A further complicating factor at the escalation of the Libyan crisis was that many schools were on half-term break and double the average number of London-based staff were on leave. Many staff returned to work early in response to the crisis.
- 5.17. Staff at all grades across the FCO responded well to calls for volunteers, often at extremely short notice. This included the FCO’s junior Band A and B staff, at a time when announcements were being made on the future of the workforce structure which particularly affected them. However there were some difficulties in matching up the roles required and the skills that staff had.
- 5.18. Where pre-existing systems were in place, with staff identified, trained and put on call in advance – i.e. RDT or ERT rosters - arrangements worked well. Staff

responded quickly to calls to report to work and understood their roles and responsibilities.

- 5.19. With large turnovers of staff in the Crisis Centre, shift management and handing over between shifts initially proved challenging. An induction pack, including guidance on how to hand over when shifts changed was produced. Continuity was improved when staff were released from their parent departments for longer secondments (i.e. a week or more on shift in the Crisis Centre).

IT and information flows

- 5.20. The number of emails sent across the FCO network – London and overseas - rose by 150% between early February and March. Maintenance work on servers which might have led to disruptions was suspended. Changeovers of staff and use of large and growing electronic distribution lists posed challenges for information exchange and management.
- 5.21. Information & Technology Directorate (I&TD) responded rapidly and flexibly. On 28 February, the Chief Information Officer granted approval for the creation of single, role-defined e-mail accounts (i.e. multiple staff having access to a single email account). Subsequently, staff were given access to shared mailboxes, reducing the amount of e-mail traffic.
- 5.22. For the Bahrain and Yemen crises, and for the first time in the Crisis Centre, I&TD used e-Teams (SharePoint, a secure online portal that can be accessed around the world) to set up restricted web pages to which staff could upload information. This minimised the quantity of information kept on the shared file structure, reducing the need to email documents. I&TD also provided increased IT support to the Crisis Centre.
- 5.23. The FCO contracts out its IT support, with the current contract for IT support provision expiring in January 2012. Service Level Agreements (SLAs) for IT support set out agreed timeframes for responding to requests, including, for example setting up e-mail distribution lists. While these timelines were adequate for non-crisis periods, the crisis situations stretched IT Helpdesk staff. During the Libya crisis, the contractor agreed to prioritise requests for support from the Crisis Centre, generally exceeding their SLA targets.

Media

- 5.24. When the Libya crisis started, the FCO's Press Office doubled their weekend staff coverage and reallocated staff to the crisis. They participated in the twice daily video conferences with officials in London and overseas. Each RDT included a press officer. Throughout this period, Press Office monitored the media and handled dealing with the press and offered advice to Ministers and officials, for example on the likely press coverage were the evacuation of

British nationals to be delayed. Consular Directorate communications staff were brought into the Crisis Centre to lead on drawing up press lines and call scripts. Digital communication was also essential during the crisis. The FCO uses four regional hubs (London, Singapore, Washington and New Delhi) to maintain its 24/7 coverage. The Digital Diplomacy Department (DDD) in London has overall responsibility for web content, working with Press Office to ensure consistency. The FCO and overseas posts use websites, Twitter, Facebook and Skype to put out messages, e.g. Travel Advice to British nationals. DDD also monitor issues raised online by British nationals.

- 5.25. These tools enhanced the FCO's ability to contact British nationals and deal with their queries online, although the problems British nationals had in accessing the Internet, especially in Libya, inevitably reduced the effectiveness of digital media. Moreover, while the use of these tools was effective, it was reliant on accurate and timely information, which was not always available (especially given the lack of clarity of the facts on the ground in Libya) and not always communicated quickly to all the right people (due in part to turnover of staff in the Crisis Centre).

Parliamentary work

- 5.26. Although Parliament was in recess at the start of the Libya crisis, MPs were in touch with the FCO asking for help and information for their constituents, though at peak caller times, many found difficulty in getting through. The public helplines should remain the main source of information for members of the public concerned about friends and family but in future incidents, we will push information to MPs through appropriate channels passing on key information about the crisis, our response and how members of the public should register their concern and details on how MPs can most effectively make representation on behalf of their constituents.
- 5.27. When Parliament resumed on 28 February, drafting responses to Parliamentary questions was assigned to staff working in the Crisis Centre, but the pressures of other work and staff turnover meant that it was at times difficult to maintain coordination between those drafting responses for consular and political parliamentary questions. In order to remedy this, a Libya Crisis Parliamentary Relations Unit was set up on 7 March to deal with crisis- related parliamentary questions and to provide a single point of contact for Libya-related parliamentary issues. In future crises, in instances of increased non-representational enquiries from MPs, we will also establish a dedicated Parliamentary Relations Team (PRT) led cell that handles any increased non-consular / non-constituency questions from MPs. Where military operations are also involved, we will ensure close liaison with the MOD, who should lead on the release of any military operational detail.

“Life support”

- 5.28. Crisis work can involve long, often high pressure, shifts. The environment in which staff work should not impede their ability to respond effectively. During early stages of the Libya crisis, a number of challenges arose. There was no contract in place for the provision of food out of hours. The air conditioning broke down leading to high temperatures in the Crisis Centre over 26-27 February. The Crisis Centre was not cleaned out of hours, including over the weekend.

Conclusions and Recommendations

- 5.29. As noted above, the LCMG sets out functions and procedures for operating in a crisis, particularly a mainly or exclusively consular crisis. But it did not contain an overall organogram for a wider crisis unit structure, e.g. covering both political (i.e. foreign policy) and consular functions. Nor did it provide full guidance on the functional support, e.g. from HR and IT, required to sustain a Crisis Centre, particularly over an extended period of time when large numbers of temporary staff need to be deployed. While other guidance was available on the FCO intranet, it was not always readily accessible to staff who needed quick access. These issues have now been remedied.
- 5.30. CCD’s contingency arrangements reflect the Cabinet Office guidance. FCO staff at all levels responded well to calls to volunteer. I&TD responded flexibly and quickly to the different priorities and tasking required by the Crisis Centre. HRD, with CCD, managed to provide large numbers of staff at short notice. CCD, working closely with MENAD and Posts, handled the crises in Tunisia and Egypt, evacuating over 5,000 British nationals.
- 5.31. In line with Cabinet Office guidance, contingency planning was predicated on shorter and more discrete crises rather than the unprecedented set of complex and concurrent political and consular crises in the Middle East and North Africa, and the parallel consular emergencies presented by the earthquakes in New Zealand and Japan. The FCO guidance envisages CCD forming the core of a response to a time-limited crisis. This model is right, but could not be sustained over multiple and on-going crises. The system responded well to this challenge, but was nevertheless placed under increasing strain as volunteers, many of whom were largely untrained in crisis management and/or consular work, began to arrive in the Crisis Centre.
- 5.32. The relationship between the political and the consular is key and needs to be considered at the strategic level. CCD already take a “whole of office” approach, but the perception – indeed practice – that they lead on consular issues and geographical departments on the political means that crisis work is often seen within the FCO as a mostly “consular” discipline. Embedding crisis

work as a core part of “Diplomatic Excellence” and training a wider range of staff would help.

- 5.33. CCD was too small and its staff too heavily loaded with ongoing crisis work to induct adequately the large numbers of volunteers coming into the Crisis Centre. Not every shift had a member of CCD staff on it. CCD were, understandably, not resourced to undertake the planning and execution of multiple and concurrent crises on this scale. The written guidance on systems and processes, including on information management, could have been more thorough and prescriptive – for instance, setting out clear triggers or procedures for scaling up a response, e.g. on when to involve HRD in staffing the Crisis Centre, as well as the involvement of I&TD, Estates and Security Directorate and others. These have now been put in place.
- 5.34. The FCO has moved quickly to identify lessons from experience of the Libya episode and the particular challenges provided by so many concurrent crises, most involving a political, as well as a consular, dimension. CMD has produced an updated induction pack for all Crisis Centre staff. CMD has also developed a generic crisis structure. Clear templates for handover and logging actions have been deployed. The structure of the Libya and other crisis teams, the Crisis Centre and relevant HR information, as well as relevant political briefing and maps, has been updated on the FCO’s intranet, accessible to all staff. The relevant web page received 1052 hits on its first day alone.
- 5.35. The FCO, at the direction of the Board, has made recommendations for further improvements to be made. These include measures to: improve rostering of FCO staff in the Crisis Centre (actioned); increase the number of staff in CMD (actioned), including seconding a military planning officer (actioned); strengthen the cadre of crisis-prepared staff in London (by creating a London Crisis Response Team or LCRT, building on the existing PCRTs) (in hand); increase training for key staff in London (in hand); improve information flows (including guidance for handover and clear descriptions of roles) (actioned); enhance IT support (including e.g. use of SharePoint and enhanced helpdesk support for CMD) (actioned); improve the life support systems, including the provision of food and out of hours cleaning (actioned).
- 5.36. The FCO has also reviewed its command and control procedures for crises and has adopted a “Gold, Silver, Bronze” structure, where the “Gold Leader” has overall responsibility, accountability and strategic oversight of the crisis; “Silver leaders” have considerable delegated authority, including financial authority, implement the decisions made by the Gold leader; and “Bronze leaders” have responsibility for key functions and teams and operate at a tactical level.
- 5.37. It is unlikely that the recent scale of crisis response will be needed on a regular basis, if at all. Given the pressure on FCO resources, it will be important to

respond proportionately to the risk of future crises. However, most of the recommendations already made by FCO officials are relatively low cost.

5.38. The FCO has set itself a robust and realistic new level of ambition for crisis management and will ensure that it is adequately resourced. While the series of crises of the first months of 2011 have been unprecedented, we judge that it is reasonable for the FCO to plan to handle one enduring (i.e. more than one month) and two shorter term crises concurrently.

5.39. In order to meet that requirement, FCO planning for crises, including staffing in CMD, is being upgraded. This enhancement builds on, rather than replaces, the existing arrangements. In practice, that means:

- a) CMD Staffing: An expanded CCD, renamed Crisis Management Department (CMD), has been given lead responsibility for further developing a “whole of London” approach to crises (except for terrorism-related crises, where Counter Terrorism Department should continue to lead), integrating political, consular and other aspects. CMD will remain within Consular Directorate, but will explicitly have a wider vocation to embed crisis management throughout the FCO. CMD is being reinforced with more staff to reflect this new responsibility, including secondments, for longer periods, from other Government Departments, to increase the depth of CMD’s experience and knowledge and build on existing links with, e.g. the Civil Contingencies Secretariat. Business Continuity Unit should continue to work closely with CMD, but should not be included in it to avoid conflation between London business continuity and overseas crisis work.
- b) Command and Control/Information Management: The FCO Board has agreed a single, integrated FCO crisis management structure, with lead responsibility at DG or Director level, based on the “Gold, Silver, Bronze” model, and a generic crisis unit structure, covering roles and responsibilities and outline team structures. CMD are also revising guidance for staff, including on decision-making frameworks, handovers, managing information effectively and functional (HR, IT and other) support.
- c) Communications: The Press Office and DDD media handling teams should remain outside the Crisis Centre (and on their own rosters). The Generic Crisis Structure Organogram includes a Silver level ‘Strategic Communications Manager’ (seconded from the Communications Directorate) to maintain oversight of both the political and consular communications and information management, to ensure consistency in all public/media messaging and briefing, whether political, consular or a mixture of the two and to ensure that public messaging is being factored into the decision-making process. The Silver-level manager will be supported by a team of specially trained B3 and C4 officers drawn from outside CMD. In addition, some roles should continue to be staffed/supported by DDD staff in the Crisis Centre, as appropriate (eg support for FCO website, Twitter and Facebook work).

In future crises we will send information direct to **MPs** (key information about the crisis, our response and how members of the public should register their concern). We will also establish a dedicated PRT led cell that handles any increased non-consular / non-constituency questions from MPs.

- d) Wider preparedness: to ensure awareness of likely responsibilities in crisis activation and oversight, there will be annual exercises and all senior London staff, including members of the Board and Ministers, will be inducted and trained in crisis management, as are all Heads of Mission and deputies overseas already. Each Directorate should participate annually in the crisis management workshops CMD already offers, to expose a wide range of staff to crisis training.
- e) Reinforcing the Crisis Centre: FCO will update its plan for a shift in staff resources during a time of crisis. The plan will be scalable, ranging from e.g. a time-limited consular emergency requiring ERTs and RDTs, to a major, on-going crisis or crises requiring a significant refocusing of staff resources. HRD and CMD will have defined roles with regards to providing manpower for a Crisis Centre. Directorates will pre-identify numbers of staff who could be deployed in a variety of crisis scenarios and should designate a Crisis Centre liaison officer.
- f) Creating a volunteer cadre: CMD and HRD will present proposals for better identifying staff and skills available in London for staffing the Crisis Centre. This will take forward the proposal to create a London Crisis Response Team (LCRT) to provide a cadre of volunteers with relevant skills, experience and training to reinforce the Crisis Centre. The LCRT will include members of staff with communications experience to be embedded, as appropriate to the scale of the crisis, in the Crisis Centre to improve information flows and to reinforce the consular communications team. This should be in addition to the communications co-ordinator mentioned above. CMD staff should be rostered on to every shift working in the Crisis Centre. A skills register for London-based staff and those at Post will be created to allow smoother up-scaling in the event that staff outside the volunteer cadre need to be brought in.

6. Triggers and procedures for sending out an FCO Rapid Deployment Team and an MOD Operational Liaison and Reconnaissance Team to plan and prepare for operations on the ground

Existing Arrangements

Rapid Deployment Teams

- 6.1. Following the Bali bombings in 2002, the FCO created Rapid Deployment Teams (RDTs) to provide consular assistance to British nationals in the event of a large-scale emergency overseas. An RDT is an additional short-term enhancement aimed at augmenting - but not replacing - Post's resources. They report to the Head of Post in support of the Post's Emergency Plan and/or CCP. There are no specific events which would automatically trigger the deployment of an RDT. CCD's decision to deploy one is a judgement based on the scale of the event, the number of British nationals potentially involved and the ability of the Post concerned to manage an appropriate response.
- 6.2. Where an RDT is not appropriate, Post may call for extra resources from the Regional Resilience Network (RRN). This is a volunteer cadre of consular officers overseas, who can be called upon at short notice to deploy to another Post in the region.
- 6.3. The objectives of an RDT will depend on the specific situation but could include: identifying those eligible for assistance; delivering assistance in difficult operating environments; establishing links with local authorities and emergency services; ensuring cooperation with other agencies; ensuring medical care is received quickly; identifying the dead and injured; providing support to the families; making arrangements for timely evacuation and repatriation.
- 6.4. RDTs are staffed by volunteers, most with previous consular or overseas experience. They receive intensive training on crisis situations, including a two day evacuation exercise. There are around 80 active RDT members in London, more than 30 in North America and more than 40 in Asia Pacific. At any time there are ten RDT staff on call in London and a further eight on both the North America and Asia-Pacific rosters. Before October 2010 these rosters had 20 and ten members respectively but were reduced in a streamlining exercise, as a direct result of the need to make cost savings and improve systems and processes within the department. It was judged that this would not have a significant operational impact – RDT members were advised that additional teams may be 'cold called' in the event of a crisis in order to increase capability for further deployments. In addition, CMD may identify appropriate RDT members for a deployment based on their experience and skills, and certain members may also be cold called if not already on the roster on that given

week, if they possess relevant skills. If it becomes apparent that deployment may be necessary CCD will discuss requirements with Post and select team members from the roster accordingly. They will be put on stand-by until a final decision is taken to deploy, from which time it is possible for an RDT to be deployed within four hours. If all those on the roster are deployed volunteers will be sought to staff the roster. Those on the roster are eligible to receive an on-call allowance.

- 6.5. At any one time there are at least three RDTs available for deployment. They are based in London, North America and the Asia Pacific region. Teams are typically made up of eight FCO staff and deployments usually last one to two weeks. A risk assessment is made before each deployment involving input from CCD and the Post on the known security issues. Estates and Security Directorate, FCO are also involved in an advisory capacity, but it is for CCD to make the decision to deploy.
- 6.6. A Team Leader (who has received specific leadership training) is selected by CCD and has overall responsibility for management of the team and its welfare. They will act as senior level liaison with local authorities and emergency services. A Deputy Team Leader may assume responsibility for some of the Team Leader's duties, deploy to a secondary location or alternate shifts with the Team Leader. A Press Officer is provided by the FCO Press Office. Their role is to agree press lines, keep FCO Press Office updated on the media situation and to protect the RDT from media intrusion.
- 6.7. The team will also include an officer responsible for ensuring the deployment and maintenance of appropriate communications equipment, an officer to deal with the logistical aspects of the operation, an information management officer responsible for keeping a log of events during the deployment and updating CCD on a daily basis and consular liaison officers, responsible for communicating with Distressed British nationals (DBNs) and their families.
- 6.8. The FCO can also ask for staff from other government departments or organisations to be part of an RDT. Staff from UKBA may be required to ensure that those entering the UK have the necessary passports or visas. Red Cross personnel can offer practical and emotional support to the distressed as well as the RDT members themselves. Before Libya, RDTs had been deployed on 43 different occasions with teams ranging in size from one member (St Lucia, November 2010) to over 100 (Lebanon, July 2006).
- 6.9. The specific role of an RDT during an evacuation situation will depend on the level of evacuation. Where the FCO has advised British nationals to depart by available commercial means an RDT may be involved in an assisted departure where they offer consular assistance and information to those wishing to travel (i.e. flight availability, departure times etc). They may also be called upon to

issue travel documents and UKBA staff may be required to arrange visa waivers e.g. for dependants of British nationals.

- 6.10. If the FCO has taken the decision to organise its own evacuation options, e.g. charters, or the situation has deteriorated to such an extent that military assets are being used, the role of the RDT will include identifying and processing those eligible to travel as well as providing wider consular assistance. A key aim is to ensure the EPs are in a safe area.

Operational Liaison and Reconnaissance Teams

- 6.11. If a situation develops that may require an HMG-assisted evacuation, the Head of Mission via the FCO in London may seek MOD assistance. The MOD may decide to deploy an Operational Liaison and Reconnaissance Team (OLRT) to gain a better understanding of the situation on the ground and to begin planning. OLRTs in support of evacuations can be deployed only with the FCO's agreement and deployment is usually declared to the host government.
- 6.12. OLRTs are on permanent stand-by. The team reports to MOD on the situation on the ground from a military perspective. They will work alongside the Defence Attaché (if there is one) and also make use of the Post's Overseas Security Manager. The standard team will number eight but they can range from two to 16 (or more) members. The team will typically be led by a Lieutenant Colonel and consist of personnel with experience in intelligence, operations, logistics and communications.
- 6.13. Wherever possible OLRTs will liaise with host nation authorities, partners, possible coalition partners and other agencies and organisations already in the region. They will review any current security plans in place (not just CCPs) and update them as necessary. Outside of a crisis OLRTs also conduct routine country visits to advise Posts on security issues and to help review CCPs.

Recent Experience

- 6.14. 11 RDTs were deployed during the crises in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya. This involved 46 FCO staff (15 of whom were deployed to more than one country and some of whom have since been deployed to Japan). UKBA and British Red Cross personnel were deployed with several RDTs. Operations in Egypt and Malta were bolstered with staff from RRNs.
- 6.15. In Tunisia, one RDT was deployed and was responsible for assisting British nationals in getting on to scheduled flights. In Egypt four RDTs were deployed and they played a role in assisting British nationals get access to scheduled flights as well as processing those on government charters. For the Libya evacuation, six were deployed; one to Libya and the others to Malta or on military assets.

- 6.16. CCD recognised early in the Libya crisis the requirement for RDT support in Tripoli. A team was put on stand-by on 18 February. The Embassy made a request to CCD for RDT support on 20 February. Following delays with the Libyan Embassy in obtaining the relevant visas, the first team was deployed on 22 February to Malta and, with assistance from the High Commission in Valetta, was able to travel on an Air Malta charter, arriving in Tripoli the next morning.
- 6.17. In the interest of speed CCD decided to deploy an additional RDT to Tripoli, but to disregard the requirement for visas. CCD's view was that the RDT could at least work airside, in conjunction with the Embassy team at the airport. This team was scheduled to depart on the first UK charter flight, but that flight's technical difficulties led to CCD agreeing with BP that the team could fly on its charter flight into Tripoli arriving in the evening of 23 February.
- 6.18. On its arrival on the morning of 23 February, the first RDT joined with the Embassy team who had set up operations outside the VIP terminal, a separate building to the side of the main airport terminal as it was not safe to set up any closer. British nationals had been arriving since first light - there were 70 already gathered at the meeting point - and continued to arrive at a steady pace despite the poor weather, which added to the challenges of operating in circumstances of chaos and some danger. Two Embassy cars were used to offer shelter to the most vulnerable and the Embassy was subsequently able to acquire three buses in which British nationals were able to take refuge.
- 6.19. Security at the airport had deteriorated dramatically. The main terminal and the area outside had been occupied by thousands of mainly Egyptian and Tunisian nationals. The infrastructure had broken down with few airport or airline staff on duty. Getting through the crowds required UK official teams to help British nationals push through the crowds. Security was minimal and crowd control by the Libyan authorities consisted of firing live shots into the air or administering indiscriminate beatings.
- 6.20. RDT members went into the airport to try and identify British nationals. They split up and, waving a Union Flag and wearing high visibility jackets, trawled opposite ends of the airport. Conditions in the terminal were highly charged and violent. At one stage the crowd outside the terminal surged forward breaking through the airport windows leading to a stampede through the terminal. The RDT inside the terminal were able to escort a group of 28 British nationals to safety, with the help of one of those nationals, who happened to be a former member of HM Forces. Libyan authorities were deliberately disrupting the communication and power networks. Communications between London and the RDT, as well as between the team at the airport and the Embassy, were intermittent.

- 6.21. The BP flight (with the second RDT) arrived in Tripoli at 1753 on 23 February. Libyan officials refused the team entry into the country, but the RDT, working airside, was instrumental in ensuring that the BP flight was able to leave again that evening. BP staff did not fill the flight so the RDT and Embassy agreed with BP to use the extra capacity to accommodate as many British nationals as possible. The flight left in the early hours of 24 February.
- 6.22. The RDT and Embassy teams worked in extreme conditions with minimal life support. Some worked in shifts of more than 24 hours with little or no rest before returning to duty. Without Embassy support the RDT would not have been able to function as effectively as it did. Only locally-engaged Embassy staff had authorisation to go airside and one of them was instrumental in enabling flights to leave and to enable access through the airport for the British nationals.
- 6.23. The Non-Combatant Evacuation Operation Co-Ordination Cell (NEOCC) in Malta (see Chapter 10) was responsible for co-ordinating the multinational military assets. Five RDTs (including most of the team that had not been able to stay in Tripoli) were sent to Malta or deployed onto naval vessels to assist evacuation operations. The RDTs became part of a group of multinational consular officials aboard each military deployment to identify and process EPs and a member of FCO staff was then embedded in the NEOCC to co-ordinate this multinational RDT force. Military assets were only used if the security risk was judged as acceptable. Daily threat assessments were made and the assessment was never greater than ‘low’.
- 6.24. OLRTs were deployed to Cairo and Tripoli to assist planning for charter and military evacuations. The Tripoli OLRT arrived at the same time as the RDT and set up operation in the Embassy itself and concentrated mainly on supporting the NEOCC.

Conclusions and Recommendations

- 6.25. RDTs have proven to be an exceptional and essential tool for responding to crises. Feedback from UK nationals assisted by RDTs and other FCO staff during the evacuation operations in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya has generally been very positive. Feedback from the RDTs themselves has also been positive. They regard the training they receive as excellent. However, in general, they agree that their teams need to be bigger and should be deployed sooner in order to be able to offer the best assistance. They also consider that the purpose and role of RDTs is not widely understood at Posts overseas.
- 6.26. RDTs, RRNs and OLRTs provide additional expertise, equipment and relief for the local Embassy staff. The following arrangements have been integrated into crisis guidance. **Early deployment is important for success and the decision to deploy should therefore be taken as soon as possible by Consular Silver**

Command (including over-ruling where Post have not yet requested/ accepted the need for a deployment), in particular once a move to “crisis footing” has been made. Posts should understand that they do not need to wait until evacuation is imminent to request RDT and OLRT support.

During any pre-crisis period, Post should agree with CMD triggers for the deployment or an RDT (as happened in crisis planning for Yemen and Syria in March-May). CMD will arrange for the advance application for visas for high risk countries where they anticipate deployments, although as we have seen in a recent case, this process can also face delays and we need to be imaginative in using Regional Resilience to help reinforce posts.

- 6.27. During crises, FCO personnel are potentially operating in dangerous situations. CMD, as noted above, is responsible for approving RDT and RRN deployments and takes into account the FCO’s duty of care to staff. However, staff are sometimes required to make their own risk assessments during a crisis. Ultimately, it should be for the PUS or his designee to take decisions in sensitive cases.
- 6.28. The rostering of RDT members was a challenge owing to the scale of the crisis. The FCO has reviewed whether it should return to the previous system of 20 people on the London roster. We judge this is not necessary but have put in place a procedure to immediately increase numbers on the roster as a crisis emerges. RRN staff can usually arrive at the scene of a crisis quicker than an RDT and the FCO will look to provide some crisis management training to key RRN staff to prepare them, should it be necessary to deploy them in this way.
- 6.29. **The pool of RDT staff could be increased by speeding up recruitment.** The FCO is exploring how the pool of RDT staff can be increased by training larger groups and by increasing the geographical area from which the Regional RDTs are drawn. The FCO is also exploring further opportunities for RDTs to train with the MOD to increase inter-operability. CMD are currently exploring further options for training RDTs, including the regional RDTs and will recruit new members this year. Recruitment and assessment procedures are being reviewed.
- 6.30. The number and scale of the recent crises around the world has tested the resilience of the RDT network. Out of 160 active RDT members worldwide, 46 were deployed during the crises in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya and a third of those were deployed more than once. **FCO senior managers should remain ready to encourage RDT volunteers’ managers to release them from their regular duties for training and deployments.**
- 6.31. The recent crisis has reinforced the important role of OLRTs. They are essential for military planning but also invaluable in planning other evacuation procedures. To increase understanding of each others’ roles, briefings on the role of OLRT and RDT are now included in all relevant FCO and MOD

training. **Heads and Deputy Heads of Mission will be briefed fully on the role of OLRTs as part of their mandatory crisis training. An FCO-MOD Service Level Agreement (Chapter 10) should include provision that OLRTs deploy with RDTs unless there is no obvious need.**

7. Changing Travel Advice, communicating what this requires British nationals to do, and what this means for updating our registers of British nationals in preparation for evacuation.

Existing Arrangements: Travel Advice

- 7.1. The Travel Advice pages on the FCO's website are the primary communication tool with British nationals travelling and resident overseas. They include a travel summary which highlights areas of countries (or entire countries) to where it is recommended British nationals should not travel. The section on safety and security covers the threat from terrorism, crime and political unrest, and highlights potential dangers of internal travel. Other sections offer advice and information on local law and customs, entry requirements, natural disasters and health.
- 7.2. The FCO published a Review of Travel Advice in a 2004 Command Paper laid before Parliament. This review concluded that the processes for producing travel advice were sound, though editorial changes could sharpen its impact. It recommended that we continue to issue prescriptions against travel in situations of non-terrorist threat, but that we should limit such prescriptions in the case of terrorism to those where there was a severe and imminent threat. These recommendations are being followed today. There were more limited internal reviews in 1999, 2001 (in response to 9/11), 2002 and 2010 (following the flu pandemic of 2009, Thailand unrest and earthquakes in Haiti and Chile). The internal reviews mainly adjusted format, presentation and delivery.

Changes to Travel Advice

- 7.3. Posts work closely with the FCO geographical departments (who lead on Travel Advice), CCD, the Travel Advice Team, FCO Press Office/Newsdesk and Global Response Centre to update Travel Advice, including proposing changes. In making decisions, the safety of British nationals is our main concern. Ministers are **always** consulted where:
 - a change to the level of advice is proposed;
 - there is disagreement between those involved (eg Post, Geographical Department, Consular) over the proposed change;
 - the proposed change would be particularly sensitive for the country concerned (for example, having a significant economic impact);
 - the proposed action is out of line with that of key partners; or
 - the change is likely to generate significant UK media interest.

In 2011 we made the following number of updates to the country travel advice pages: January – 316 updates; February – 274; March – 511; April – 273. The total

for January-April 2011 was 1,374. During the corresponding period last year (Jan-Apr 2010) we made only 823 updates.

7.4. Submissions to the Foreign Secretary are required where:

- there are substantive changes because of terrorist threats, including any increase or decrease in country threat level;
- the intelligence-based threat from terrorism is of such extreme concern (e.g. specific, credible large-scale or endemic to affect British nationals severely) as to warrant advising against all travel.

Advice to Ministers must include;

- clear reasoning for the change;
- views of Post;
- who has been consulted, and whether anyone disagrees with proposed actions;
- media aspects (e.g. whether there will be a press release);
- views of other key countries;
- when/how we would consider reverting to the previous position, what are the triggers for change (especially when the Travel Advice is being upgraded);

7.5. Where it is decided to issue a press release on the change, geographical desk officers liaise with Press Office/Newsdesk and Travel Advice Team (or, out of hours, the Global Response Centre) so that the timing and content can be co-ordinated with publication of the updated Travel Advice on the FCO website.

7.6. There are four broad travel advice stages (see table below). These can be applied in combination to all or part of a country.

7.7. Travel Advice is advice. It is for individuals to assess the facts and decide, for example if their trip is essential.

Alert Framework

7.8. The Alert Framework shows how deterioration in security in the affected country is reflected in messages to British nationals and in Travel Advice.

Stage	Messages to the British Community	Travel Advice Guidance
1: Alert or avoid	Advise British nationals/EPs to be alert to any threats (demos, unrest, conflict etc). Advise British nationals/EPs to avoid specific areas as appropriate.	Factual amendment – be alert. Advise against travel to specific areas.
2: Non-essential British nationals	British nationals/EPs with no pressing business (including tourists) advised to	Advise against all but essential travel.

leave	leave country (or parts of country) by commercial means.	
3: All British nationals leave	All British nationals/EPs advised to leave country (or parts of country) by commercial means.	Advise against all travel.
4: Assisted Evacuation	HMG assisted evacuation.	Advise against all travel & include evacuation information.
2/3/4: Stay Put	Advise British nationals to remain in their homes or hotels until transport is available, or until the situation improves.	Advise British nationals to remain in their homes or hotels and to take appropriate precautions.

Travel advice levels map onto CCP levels. As set out above, CCPs of medium or high risk overseas Posts should contain an annex on potential alert triggers reflecting this framework.

7.9. A proposal to upgrade Travel Advice typically originates from the FCO’s geographical department, based on the following criteria:

- advice from Post because of serious escalation of situation;
- information received from the travel industry about a deteriorating situation;
- decisions by partners to change Travel Advice, including to evacuate their nationals (especially US, Australia, Canada, New Zealand and EU partners).

Existing arrangements: communication with British nationals during a crisis

7.10. As noted above, LOCATE is the FCO’s online tool designed to help the FCO assist British nationals in a crisis. It consists of two databases: one for public registration by British nationals, and a second as a crisis tool for logging the details of missing persons. Before LOCATE, registration was largely done by Posts using paper processes and/or locally designed databases to record names, addresses and contact details of resident British nationals.

7.11. In October 2010 there were approximately 50,000 active LOCATE account registration accounts. According to IPPR (“Global Brit: making the most of the British Diaspora” – 2010) 5.6 million British nationals live permanently overseas and 70 million overseas trips were made by British nationals in 2009.

7.12. Although there have been spikes in LOCATE registrations in crisis affected and neighbouring countries, the level of registration remains extremely low. Most G20 countries offer some form of public registration with varying degrees of

success. The majority of these countries have achieved at best around 5% total coverage of their overseas nationals.

7.13. Registration of, and keeping in contact with, nationals resident or travelling overseas is a challenge in normal times, but heightened during a crisis as:

- most are long-term residents rather than tourists or business visitors; residents are less likely to check Travel Advice regularly;
- long term resident British nationals may trust their own assessment of the situation above Travel Advice which they perceive is for visitors;
- only a small proportion of long-term resident or visiting British nationals are registered with and therefore known to Post;
- when internet and telephone communications are disrupted during a crisis it is harder and slower to disseminate key messages to those on LOCATE.

Recent Experience

Travel Advice

7.14. The FCO was commended by ABTA for its Travel Advice during the Egypt crisis. Contacts on the ground at Red Sea resorts, in Cairo and with ABTA and tour operators in London, allowed the FCO to confirm that the violence in Cairo had not impacted on the Red Sea area, and therefore Travel Advice was not amended for those areas, which avoided unnecessary negative impact on the UK travel industry. The FCO has, however, been criticised by some travellers who had wished to cancel trips to Egypt due to safety fears, but were unable to obtain refunds from their travel company as the areas they visited were not affected by unrest and as a result were not covered by restrictions in the Travel Advice.

7.15. During the course of the Libya crisis, Travel Advice was amended as follows:

18 February: advise against all but essential travel to Benghazi, Ajdabiya, Al-Bayda, Al-Marj, Derna and Tobruk.

19 February: against all but essential travel outside of Tripoli.

20 February: against all but essential travel to the whole of Libya.

4 March: against all travel to Libya.

After the Libya evacuations, the FCO, in parallel with urgent work to stress test CCPs (Chapter 4), conducted a rapid internal review of Travel Advice in the light of the recent crises in North Africa. A number of the recommendations are included below.

LOCATE Registration and Crisis Databases

- 7.16. During the recent crises, the LOCATE registration system proved ineffective. Large numbers of resident British nationals had not registered, making it impossible to contact them or to establish via LOCATE an accurate account of the numbers affected and thus scale of the crisis.
- 7.17. LOCATE's crisis database was initially used by call handlers in the Global Response Centre/Emergency Response Teams to record information taken from callers, either those in Libya in need of consular assistance or family and friends enquiring about missing relatives or seeking information. But LOCATE was not designed as an evacuation tool; the system did not contain all the required data fields; it was incompatible with MOD data systems; and it could not be accessed by the FCO's call centre outsource partners (Chapter 8). The risks and the resources associated with the use of multiple data sources are considerable. It was difficult to ascertain how many British nationals were actually involved in an incident.

Conclusions and Recommendations

- 7.18. **The safety and security of British nationals overseas must remain the primary driver for changing Travel Advice.** Political concerns that a level change could influence the crisis or negatively impact on the commercial interests of the UK and/or other country concerned cannot override potential risk to British nationals. This should remain at the core of the FCO's approach.
- 7.19. **It remains essential that all substantial updates to Travel Advice be cleared through the set procedures described above.** To ensure consistency, all substantive changes should be agreed by Consular Silver command. All FCO staff in relevant departments should be familiar with the processes for considering and amending Travel Advice through guidance and training. Those responsible for Travel Advice within the Crisis Unit must be clearly identified.
- 7.20. **Advice to British nationals in the event of an evacuation or assisted departure must be sufficiently clear and detailed in the Travel Advice that it can be followed in a crisis.** It must be consistent with messages on other channels e.g. through contacts with the ERT and media. It is ultimately the responsibility of the individual to judge risk in their response to the advice. **Travel Advice should be clear on potential financial charging for assisted evacuations and the cost to British nationals.**
- 7.21. **The FCO has reviewed the Travel Advice Alert Framework** set out above bearing in mind the need to emphasise that ultimately decisions to travel to, stay in or leave a country are for individuals to take on their own responsibility, on the basis of the best available information, from FCO and other sources. This is already the case in that individuals must ultimately judge for themselves

what constitutes “essential” travel. The new Travel Advice Alert Framework sets out clearly, at each CCP stage, the key messages that should be used to influence the behaviour of those who are considering travel to a country/region, those who are already visiting and those who are resident. It includes a range of explanatory language that can be drawn upon to help guide individuals to make decisions. This includes advice to “consider leaving”, which was used after the Japan earthquake and during unrest in Syria and which allowed individuals to make judgements about how risk-averse an approach to take. The Travel Advice Alert Framework continues to be integrated into the CCP alert levels (and the revised decision-making matrix).

7.22. **During a crisis, responsibility for maintaining regular contact with airlines, tour operators and other representative organisations, companies and NGOs operating in the country concerned will be switched to CMD.** Objectives are to:

- inform them of changes to Travel Advice so they can actively draw the attention of British nationals to the advice;
- ask them to encourage British nationals to register in high risk countries;
- help refine mapping of the numbers of British nationals in-country.

7.23. **Similarly, as a crisis develops, Post and CMD will decide on responsibility for proactive communications with British nationals, including using social media, to compile names and locations of British nationals and EPs.** The Crisis Casework Team in CMD will lead on following up cases raised by relatives in the UK, including in the media

7.24. The FCO is exploring options for crisis SMS alerts for specific countries or regions delivered through Mobile Network Operators (MNOs). This is in its early stages and all of the main UK MNOs have been approached to partner the FCO in this project. Broad participation will be important to the project’s success. **FCO will accelerate work on crisis SMS texting to transmit Travel Advice changes and/or to contact British nationals, given the shortcomings of web-based and other means of contacting British nationals overseas in a crisis. This should include investigating how to ensure a service available to all UK mobile phone subscribers.**

7.25. The effectiveness of public registration systems such as LOCATE was examined by FCO officials in late 2010, given the continuing low rate of uptake (less than 1% of British nationals resident overseas and a fraction of British travellers are registered). In early 2011, officials concluded that LOCATE public registration did not meet business needs - to find and assist those British nationals in a crisis who need help - and that we should move away from a single online ‘just in case’ registration tool and instead further develop our use of a wider range of more effective methods of communicating with British nationals in a crisis, such as social media (Facebook, Twitter),

warden networks and other outreach to the British community and key partners/websites and Smartphone applications. FCO will explore whether it is more appropriate to have a system of 'just in case' registration in our most high risk posts. The value of doing so has been emphasised by recent experience.

- 7.26. Recent experience has also shown that the LOCATE crisis database (the behind-the-scenes element to LOCATE used by FCO call handlers to record details of British nationals who may have been affected by a specific crisis) does not meet our needs for evacuation or assisted departure planning, which can involve mapping the location of British nationals as well as data sharing with partners such as the MOD or external call handling facilities. As a result, during the recent crises, the FCO developed a 'people tracking' system (essentially an excel spreadsheet and outreach to British nationals and their employers in the affected areas) to help clarify the location and numbers of British nationals and Eligible Persons (EPs).
- 7.27. CMD will work closely with our overseas posts to help them develop a **suite of crisis communication tools for pushing out information to British nationals** in a crisis which are appropriate to their local needs and which supplement centrally managed tools such as a +44 crisis texting service. They will also look at how we **gather information from British nationals or their concerned friends/relatives in a crisis for evacuation planning and assistance purposes** – crisis communication tools such as social media and outreach work are crucial sources of information for this process. Finally, they will consider how we can better **share information with partners such as the MOD or call handling centres.**

8. Escalating call handling from Post/Global Response Centre, to the Emergency Response Team in Consular Crisis Department, to the outsourced arrangements in the Police or with commercial outsourcing partners

Existing Arrangements

8.1. There are broadly two types of scenario (depending on scale), requiring additional public call-handling assistance:

- natural disasters (earthquakes, hurricanes, volcanoes, tsunamis), terrorist incidents and transport accidents. In these incidents, call-handlers are required to take information from members of the public who wish to report their relatives or friends as potentially involved in the incident;
- a potential evacuation of British nationals from a third country as the result of a deterioration in the security situation. In incidents of this sort, call-handlers need to take information from callers in order to register British nationals for evacuation.

Call-handlers are also required to respond to high levels of calls resulting from political instability and deteriorations in security overseas (before an evacuation has become necessary). The FCO's 'emergency line' is activated to handle calls from concerned people in that country as well as in the UK.

8.2. In a crisis potentially involving British nationals the Post(s) must immediately contact Consular Crisis Department. Posts should operate as if British nationals are involved until it is established otherwise. Once Post has determined that an incident is likely to have affected British nationals in significant numbers, the Head of Mission or Deputy activates the Post Emergency Plan (PEP), including a Post Crisis Centre (PCC) located close to, but separate from, the telephone call-handling centre, in order to facilitate a two-way information flow.

8.3. The purpose of the call-handling centre is to register details and process information from callers about relatives, friends, colleagues, who may be involved in the incident. A member of staff at Post should manage the centre. Their role is to:

- brief call-handlers and ensure the call-handling is consistent with the information provided in press lines, Travel Advice and by Consular Crisis Department;
- support call-handlers who have questions on using the LOCATE crisis database system;
- handle any difficult calls, refer any special cases to Consular team and CCD and provide updated casualty information to the Post's Crisis Manager.

- 8.4. If it becomes apparent that it is a major incident, Post contact CCD (out of hours in London, the 24/7 Global Response Centre) to consider activating an Emergency Response Team (ERT) in London. Consular Crisis Department can set up an ERT within 60 minutes.
- 8.5. Call-handlers, whether in London, Post or in the outsourced arrangements, should be provided with a script, which details the latest sit-rep and consular advice. Call scripts are usually updated by Consular Crisis Department and must be in line with public messaging through the Travel Advice via the FCO website or other social media.
- 8.6. In London, the GRC provides initial out of hours service. Depending on the nature of the crisis, and the number of calls being received, the GRC will be supplemented in the first instance by volunteers from the Emergency Response Team (ERT). Should the number of calls continue to escalate, the full 28-strong on-call ERT can be established. At the time of Libya, there was no fixed threshold, in terms of call volume and waiting times, for a decision to establish an ERT or to further escalate call handling. An escalation framework has since been established.
- 8.7. The ERT is managed by CCD and is a cadre of FCO staff trained in specialist call-handling, who volunteer to go on a weekly on-call roster. Guidance and Standard Operating Procedures for ERT call-handlers are thorough and accessible via the FCO intranet system. As with staff on Rapid Deployment Team (RDT) rotas, ERT volunteers are financially compensated (£84.84 per week) for having to remain in London and be one hour from the office while on 24-hour call during the week.
- 8.8. The ERT primarily operates from a specialist call centre in the Consular Crisis Centre. ERT staff may be deployed to call centres elsewhere in the UK to assist with outsourced call-handling arrangements. The ERT's role is to:
- deal with distressed members of the public with sympathy, understanding and calm practicality while obtaining the necessary information to help locate and identify their missing loved ones;
 - manage public expectations while informing of any developments; and
 - ensure that all relevant information about the crisis gleaned from contacts with the public is passed on to senior FCO decision-makers and other concerned agencies.
- 8.9. The ERT uses an Automated Call Distribution (ACD) telephone system. ACD uses technology that routes incoming phone calls when they are answered by a computer phone system and which distributes incoming calls to a specific group of telephones. It also allows the use of voice messaging to direct callers

through a call tree. The use of the call tree is kept to a minimum in order to prevent caller frustration during a crisis. The ACD has a call divert option that permits calls to be diverted to other emergency teams (outsource partners) without the need to re-advertise emergency numbers. This system has proved useful when escalating call-handling in consular crisis situations.

- 8.10. The ACD monitors the caller volumes and numbers of callers in the queue, which is shown on the screen in the ERT team leader's room. There is also a computer linked to the ACD system that gives in depth statistics such as average call waiting times. This should allow the ERT team leaders and Consular Crisis Department to gauge when it is appropriate to request additional staff to answer the phones, or to escalate call-handling to outsourced partners.
- 8.11. Call volumes and waiting times can vary enormously, with spikes during peak hours of the day, such as when the emergency number is advertised and following TV bulletins, with lows during the night. The lead-in time required to set up and escalate call handling is, as noted above, 60 minutes from Post to ERT and 2-4 hours from the ERT to the FCO's outsourced arrangements.
- 8.12. The FCO has outsourced call-handling partners, including a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Association of Chief Police Officers of England, Wales and Northern Ireland. These arrangements were put in place following the Asian tsunami crisis in 2004. The police response is on a regional basis (across nine regions) and based on the current Police National Information and Coordination Centre (PNICC) on-call rota.
- 8.13. Call-handling is escalated to the police only if the scale or nature of the crisis necessitates police support to the FCO by opening the Casualty Bureau. The FCO's public emergency number is re-routed using ACD to whichever police force is designated to provide services at that time.
- 8.14. In the event of a mass evacuation scenario, FCO call-handling can be escalated to the alternative outsource partner, a company called Teleperformance based in Bangor, Northern Ireland. Teleperformance were originally contracted by the FCO to provide general Travel Advice call centre operations. They were first used in a crisis contingency capacity during the volcanic ash crisis in 2010.
- 8.15. Calls involving complex consular cases, involving vulnerable British nationals (minors, elderly, disabled) or hospitalisation/death, are forwarded by the frontline call centre (whether FCO or outsourced) to a team of FCO consular case workers, specialists in dealing with distressed British nationals. Case workers keep in contact with the individual and/or family concerned offering consular advice and updating individuals on the case as necessary.

Recent Experience

- 8.16. Call-handling was originally handled in Tripoli in conjunction with Global Response Centre in London. An ERT was established in the FCO on 19 February, to take calls on Libya and Bahrain.
- 8.17. On the evening of 21 February calls to the Tripoli Embassy emergency number were diverted to the London ERT. Early on 22 February a further request for additional ERT volunteers to handle the Christchurch and Libya calls was issued. At 0800 on 23 February significant call waiting times were being reported by callers to the Libya emergency number and FCO Press Office were receiving similar complaints. Although the ERT team leader was monitoring waiting times, for technical reasons that were later resolved, call waiting times were not shown on call-handling screens in the Crisis Centre.
- 8.18. By late morning on 23 February call waiting times of up to one hour were recorded. At 1220 Consular Crisis Department called down 9 additional staff to support ERT call-handling. By mid-afternoon caller waiting times were reduced to 15-20 minutes and remained at this level throughout the evening. Judging these waiting times to be unacceptably high, FCO senior management called in additional ERT reinforcements (they arrived around 2300) and began to explore options for outsourcing. As there were no existing arrangements to mobilise commercial outsource partners out of hours, senior management instructed CCD to explore whether it would be possible to make use of the police facility (even though the scenario in question was not within the scope of the agreed MoU).
- 8.19. During the early hours of 24 February, it was agreed that the police were not best placed to assist with calls in this case, as it was not a mass casualty event of the type envisaged in the FCO/ACPO MoU. Although the police had offered support on handling volcanic ash calls, they were untrained in offering broader consular support. However, the police agreed they would remain on standby to offer assistance if necessary.
- 8.20. By 0800 on Thursday 24 February call waiting times were up to 90 minutes and the call-handling team was further reinforced by officers from the FCO Corporate Pool (a pool of officers who are between permanent assignments and who can be deployed temporarily). At 1200 the ERT Team Leader recommended moving call-handling to Teleperformance, and the Head of Consular Crisis Department agreed. At 1515 Teleperformance took over call-handling on Libya and four ERT members were sent to Teleperformance offices in their Northern Ireland call centre to assist the handover and assure quality. According to their statistics, Teleperformance's average answer speed was 66 seconds. Arrangements have been put in place to ensure a quicker escalation of call-handling.

Conclusions & Recommendations

- 8.21. Although the scale and concurrence of the recent crises was unprecedented, FCO call-handling arrangements and processes proved not to be adequate. Callers experienced waiting times considerably in excess of government/industry norms. There were insufficient numbers of trained call-handlers to boost the internal ERT, delays in call-handling escalation, inadequate arrangements with the outsource partners and incompatible IT systems.
- 8.22. Important changes have been made to procedures to ensure rapid escalation of call-handling where required. Out of hours call-handling outsourcing is being put in place. Handovers between Silver Commanders and also between ERT Team Leaders will always include an assessment of call volumes. The IT call-tracking device is fully functioning and will be maintained. The ERT Team Leader is under instructions to inform Silver Command once call waiting times or dropped calls have reached a certain (much lower) level. If additional crises emerge, Silver Command should make an immediate decision on where the calls from the new crisis is handled (with the assumption that outsourcing will be employed asap).
- 8.23. The external call-handling centres did not have access to LOCATE. LOCATE does not contain many of the data fields that the MOD required for evacuation planning. A separate MOD spreadsheet was created to capture the data gathered by the call-handlers and effectively replaced LOCATE as the primary tool for tracking and contacting British nationals in Libya.
- 8.24. **The FCO is enhancing its call-handling arrangements to ensure it has the flexibility necessary to handle calls in a way most appropriate to the situation** (i.e. internally with expanded, well-trained and well-briefed capacity **or** making use of more sustainable and rapidly deployable outsource arrangements that ensure provision of accurate and regularly updated information to pass on to callers). Decisions on call handling escalation/outourcing will be made by the Silver Consular Commander. The FCO will explore how to increase IT inter-operability with its call handling partners.
- 8.25. **A call-handling escalation framework has been implemented.** As with other aspects of crisis management, in order to anticipate likely spikes and sustained increases in demand, **the framework considers not only the current level of Travel Advice, but also other relevant factors** including:
- an estimate of the number of British (and dual) nationals in-country;
 - the number of recent visits to the country's travel page on the FCO's website (although not all visits to the website are made by British nationals);
 - size of the British commercial interest;

- the number of daily/weekly direct scheduled and charter flights (indication of the number of British tourists).
- 8.26. **Once calls are outsourced, arrangements need to provide for a high quality response.** An ERT Liaison Officer will always be sent to the outsource partner to ensure quality of responses and feedback information and quality assurance to FCO Silver and Gold Commanders. Teleperformance already operate a question escalation process. If one of their call-handlers does not know the answer to a question this is logged and presented to CCD, who reflect the answer in updated call scripts. It is important that this is done and that calls which have not been fully dealt with in the first instance by the outsource partners are returned rapidly and proactively, by them or by FCO staff.
- 8.27. Feedback commented on a lack of general knowledge of Libya and its geography by call-handlers. This may have been either because call scripts were not up-to-date or lacked detail, although many were relatively detailed and included, for example, maps of Libya and key cities. **Core scripts should be frequently updated with Frequently Asked Questions**, reflecting relevant consular issues, e.g. information on passports, visas and Undertakings to Repay (UTRs), as well as up-to-date crisis information.
- 8.28. Call-handling is part of the public face of the FCO. Callers assume that they are speaking to an FCO member of staff. The FCO needs to ensure that **all call-handlers maintain high standards of operation**. During the various crises, a number of untrained staff volunteered to help out and provided assistance. But many were unfamiliar with the work and did not know how to use the system. **The FCO is re-visiting the number of staff in the ERT cadre and on the on-call rota** and will increase the number of trained staff available for duty.
- 8.29. **Outsourced call-handling should be the subject of a competitive tender to allow for proper evaluation to secure best value for money, and should include a capability to mobilise outsourcing out-of-hours.** At present the FCO has ad-hoc arrangements with Teleperformance (first used during the Ash Cloud Crisis in 2010), as the FCO's contract is limited to non-emergency Travel Advice call-handling. **New emergency and Travel Advice call-handling contracts should be put in place as soon as possible. It will be important for any outsourced arrangements to reflect FCO standards and values in relation to dealing with the public.**

9. Commencing commercial charters (air, sea and land) to evacuate British nationals, and managing our relationship with the charter companies

Existing arrangements

- 9.1. FCO Civil Contingency Guidance describes the procedures for chartering commercial transport, both locally and internationally. In practice the option is rarely used. Before the recent crises the FCO last chartered an aircraft for evacuation in January 2005 in response to the Asian tsunami. HMG takes the view that assisted departures should, where possible, make use of regular commercial transport. Even where there has been a sudden deterioration in security and a surge in the number of British nationals wanting to leave, the FCO has in the past been able to work with scheduled transport providers to assist departure.
- 9.2. In a crisis where British nationals' safety and security were at risk, the FCO would seek to assist their departure to a Place of Safety. The most appropriate option would depend on the circumstances of each case:
- Recommend departure by regular scheduled transport (e.g. Tunisia 2011). This is generally the FCO's preferred method for British nationals to leave a country facing civil unrest.
 - Assisted departure by regular scheduled transport (e.g. Thailand 2008, Libya 2011). There may be cases where civil unrest doesn't stop scheduled transport running, but where it is still difficult for British nationals to gain access to it. In these cases the Government will assist British nationals in finding transport. For example, in the Thailand airport crisis in 2008 the British Government worked with airlines to make sure British nationals could buy tickets for spare seats on scheduled flights.
 - Assisted departure by scheduled transport supplemented by chartered transport (e.g. Egypt 2011, Libya 2011). The FCO will consider chartering commercial transport when there are insufficient commercial means to leave, or where access to these means of exit are curtailed by difficulty getting tickets (eg if internet down and ticket offices closed). If commercial transport was available but insufficient to meet demand the FCO could charter additional transport. In such cases the FCO would normally request those travelling to pay for their seat. This happened in Egypt in February 2011 and in Bahrain and Japan (except for those directly affected by the tsunami) in March 2011.
 - Civilian evacuation by chartered transport (e.g. Kuwait 1990, Libya 2011). If scheduled commercial transport is unavailable the FCO may still be able to charter commercial transport for British nationals. In these cases the FCO would normally waive costs, but this would require HMT agreement if we wish to reclaim costs via the EDR. These cases are less likely to obtain since the factors leading to scheduled transport stopping may apply to charters too (e.g.

closure of airspace). In this case the FCO would consider escalating the evacuation to involve the use of military assets.

- 9.3. As a crisis unfolds the appropriate evacuation response may change. Factors triggering a change will include an assessment of the safety of British nationals (which will be reflected in FCO Travel Advice), the availability of commercial means of transport, and the actions taken by others (e.g. EU partners and others).
- 9.4. When the FCO decides to charter transport it has a range of options:
- Direct Procurement. The FCO can make a Request for Transport to the air or maritime services markets. Posts can do this locally with approval from CCD. Usual HMG procurement guidelines would normally apply, but in a crisis the FCO Commercial Director may waive the requirement to approach multiple suppliers.
 - Co-operation with Other Government Departments. The FCO can consult other government departments to approach their suppliers. For example, the Ministry of Defence has a panel of pre-approved commercial air and maritime service brokers.
 - Use of DFID/FCO Framework Agreement. In 2010 the FCO formalised its preferred approach for chartering air services by joining a Framework Agreement with the Department for International Development (DFID). This established a preferred broker for our procurement of air services and set out the level of service we would expect. It allows for small aircraft (12-50 passengers) to be provided within 4 hours (eg for despatch of an RDT) and for larger aircraft to be provided in an unspecified time frame, but with an understanding that time is of the essence. The broker's fees are pre-agreed through a competitive process and services must be available 24/7. The FCO provides the broker with its requirements. The broker then goes to the air services market on the FCO's behalf, solicits offers from airlines, provides quotations to the FCO, and procures services once the FCO gives the go-ahead. The Framework Agreement allows for, but does not require, the airlines to provide an immediate alternative if their flight is unable to take off (a so-called redundancy arrangement). The current broker is Air Partner.
- 9.5. Chartering transport, even when attempts are made to recover costs from passengers, is an expensive option. The FCO would normally provide this transport only if there was a demonstrated need and that it was judged to be a proportionate and cost effective response. The cost of a passenger plane will vary according to the location and current market conditions. The two flights from Egypt cost £178,894.
- 9.6. The chartering of transport for an evacuation will usually involve a ministerial decision. The FCO's Permanent Under-Secretary and Finance Director will normally be consulted since significant expense may be incurred. However, once Ministers have decided to assist departure senior officials can authorise individual charters within their delegated financial authority.

Recent Experience

- 9.7. In the Egypt crisis the FCO chartered two aircraft to evacuate a total of 222 British nationals and dependants. At this time the FCO was advising against all but essential travel to Cairo. Commercial airlines were still flying, but the FCO assessed that there was a risk of insufficient supply for British nationals wanting to leave. Ministers decided to charter an aircraft on a cost recovery basis, i.e. British nationals would need to pay for their flights, or make a commitment to the Government to do so (an Undertaking To Repay or UTR). The FCO arranged the flight through our Framework Agreement and the plane arrived in Cairo 24 hours after the decision to deploy.
- 9.8. The ground arrangements for the charter flight were handled largely by the RDT which had deployed ahead to Cairo airport, under the authority of the British Ambassador. They processed people wanting to take the charter: assessing eligibility, taking payments (or UTRs), creating manifests, and checking clearances for visa nationals. The first charter to leave Cairo was delayed owing to difficulty ensuring that all those on board would be given clearance to enter the UK. As a result of this delay the UK Border Agency arranged for its own staff to be included in subsequent RDT deployments.
- 9.9. In the Libya crisis FCO ministers first authorised the chartering of aircraft on 19 February. These flights were planned to take British nationals to Tripoli from Benghazi, where unrest was focussed at that time. British nationals were still able to leave Tripoli by commercial means if they so wished. However, the planes were prevented from leaving Benghazi by the security situation there.
- 9.10. On 21 February, as the security situation in Libya deteriorated, two British airlines were still running scheduled flights out of Tripoli. Ministers nevertheless decided to charter a flight to enhance supply. The FCO contacted its broker under the Framework Agreement. Quotes were received and a flight was confirmed before midnight. The flight was arranged to depart on the morning of Wednesday 23 February because Libyan landing permits were taking between 24 and 48 hours to be granted. It would have been exceptional to leave without a landing permit.
- 9.11. The situation changed from 22 February, with reports of France and Germany both sending military planes, and the two British scheduled airlines having decided to cease scheduled operations. The Foreign Secretary agreed on 22 February that because commercial means of departure were no longer realistically available for British nationals, we would waive the charges for charter flights. The FCO urgently explored other options for additional flights, including the option of underwriting chartered BMI planes.
- 9.12. Early on the morning of 23 February BMI informed us that they would not be able to provide chartered planes. The FCO also took a decision that the charter flight arranged through the broker should depart without a landing permit. This was based on advice from Tripoli that other aircraft were successfully applying

for clearance while airborne. This caused an unexpected delay as the airline needed to confirm that its insurance covered a flight without a landing permit. The issue was resolved and departure time was revised for early afternoon. In the meantime a fresh crew was brought in to ensure that the flight would not be held up by limits on their on-duty time. However, in the early afternoon the pilot discovered a technical fault that took several hours to fix. Once the fault had been resolved, the plane flew to Tripoli late that evening.

- 9.13. A second charter was requested on the morning of 23 February and departed the UK on 24 February, with several more thereafter. In total ten flights were chartered to evacuate British nationals from Libya, including those from or via Malta.
- 9.14. The FCO's chartering of flights from Bahrain in March 2011 took into account experiences from Egypt and Libya. Since scheduled airlines were still operating the flights were provided on a cost recovery basis, i.e. passengers would be asked to pay. To mitigate against the risk of one aircraft failing, the FCO chartered three aircraft, two for 17 March from Bahrain to Dubai, and one for 18 March from Bahrain to London. The first flight was cancelled owing to lack of demand.
- 9.15. Two flights were chartered to assist the departure of British nationals from Japan, flying from Narita to Hong Kong.
- 9.16. During the crisis or pre-crisis periods in Cote d'Ivoire, Syria and Yemen we have maintained extremely close contact with charter providers to ensure we can move quickly if necessary, but we have not yet had need to do so.

Conclusions and recommendations

- 9.17. The FCO's arrangements for chartering transport cover a range of potential situations and provide for significant flexibility. They have recently been strengthened with the appointment of a pre-approved air services broker with DFID and the development of a process map for aircraft chartering. The recent cases in the Middle East and North Africa were the first time that the new arrangements had been tested and some lessons have been incorporated immediately – for example in the embedding of UKBA personnel in RDTs, and the need to consider backup options for flights, i.e. to ensure sufficient assets are available even if a problem occurs with one plane.
- 9.18. **CMD will develop further its relations with the aviation industry and its understanding of the requirements and limitations of charter flights.** Access to the MOD's aviation or maritime specialists, or training for a specialist in CMD would be beneficial. Discussions with MOD on this point, as part of the development of an FCO-MOD SLA, will support access to MOD expertise. This would ensure Ministers can be presented with solutions that take full account of the costs and limits of air charters. Sufficient CMD staff should also be trained on the procedures for chartering transport.

- 9.19. **It is essential that consideration of the need to charter aircraft and to put charters on stand-by is made at the earliest appropriate point.** The revised decision-making matrix makes clear that, during any pre-crisis planning stages and definitely at the “alert and avoid” stage, chartering options should be routinely explored (as they were for Bahrain and Syria in March/April 2011) and put on stand-by (as they were in Cote d’Ivoire in April 2011). The matrix also prompts decision makers to think through the likely speed of escalation of the crisis and how many or how few non-military evacuation options there are. If options are few and/or rapid escalation is more likely, planning for charters or military options should be brought forward.
- 9.20. **The Libya experience highlights the need for any decision to charter to include whether to provide a redundancy capability, i.e. a backup plan in case of flight failure and the FCO is already implementing this.** A redundancy capability may be possible in contracts with some airlines. These would generally be airlines with a large enough fleet to have more than one unused aircraft in the same location - and with sufficient crew available. If advised by the broker that this option is available, it should be considered, but insisting on it before exploring the market will limit available services. Instead redundancy could be provided for by reserving more than one plane.
- 9.21. **The FCO will ensure it has access to specialist legal advice for its charter contracts.**
- 9.22. A flight can only be definitely reserved by making a confirmed booking, and so is likely to incur significant - up to 100% - cancellation charges. Redundancy will thus be costly and should be considered on a case by case basis. **The trigger for such arrangements should be the likely or definite unavailability of alternatives and the urgency of needing guaranteed flights by a given time.**
- 9.23. In situations of civil unrest there is a significant chance that procedures for granting landing permits will not be operating normally. Judgements will need to be made on a case by case basis whether flight can be commenced without permits, as in the Libya case, with these being sought only as the flight approaches the country’s airspace. Another option in these situations, as well as providing for fast initial evacuations, could be for the FCO to have a military passenger aircraft on 24/7 standby that would be able to take off before receiving a landing permit. This would entail an arrangement whereby the MOD provided the FCO with an aircraft within a specified time and to a specified location. FCO and MOD would need to cover this in detail in a Service Level Agreement (SLA) (see next chapter).
- 9.24. Developing the relationship with the broker under the FCO/DFID Framework Agreement should help the FCO’s ability to procure commercial air services effectively in future. **This should always involve early contact with the broker to consider options for evacuation.** A non-disclosure agreement now in place means the broker can scope out the market early without revealing

FCO planning for evacuation. In addition, FCO security clearance could be prearranged for members of the broker's staff so that they could join the Crisis Centre at an early stage when air charter solutions were being considered. This may make it more difficult to approach other brokers or airlines, so would need to be carefully considered. In any case CMD should ensure that the broker is aware of which FCO officials have authority to contract through them.

- 9.25. **The FCO is also improving its arrangements with other brokers and airlines.** Although there is an operational advantage in building up a relationship with the pre-approved broker, and a financial benefit to using the pre-agreed pricing structure, there may still be benefits in approaching other brokers, particularly when sufficient time exists to consider a range of options. This could extend the geographical scope of possible charters, and may increase the number of airlines available to the FCO.
- 9.26. **The FCO and MOD have agreed to formalise arrangements to be able to draw on the MOD's panel of air and maritime services providers.** This could be included in a SLA between the FCO and MOD on evacuation procedures (see next Chapter). The MOD could also be asked to provide logistics support and act as the interface between the FCO and chartering companies under an agreed SLA.
- 9.27. **Crisis Centre or Post should also sustain and develop co-ordination with major consular partners** (e.g. large companies in country) to take advantage of spare capacity going into and leaving the crisis country.
- 9.28. The FCO's arrangements for chartering maritime or land transport are not as well developed as for air services. CMD have already strengthened their arrangements. **FCO will supplement the proposed arrangements with the MOD by tendering for a Framework Agreement with a brokerage firm, or panel of firms, that could provide global, 24/7 land and maritime chartering.**

10. Commencing military operations (air, sea and land) to evacuate British nationals, including in coordination with ongoing commercial operations

Existing arrangements

- 10.1. When the military assist a departure it is termed a Non-Combatant Evacuation Operation (NEO). The FCO and MOD have long-standing arrangements for co-operation on NEOs, as set out in [*“Non-Combatant Evacuation Operations: Joint Warfare Publications 3-51”*](#) of 2000, which is currently under revision and will take account of this review.
- 10.2. Doctrine has evolved since then, in particular through the experiences of the Lebanon evacuations in 2006 and cross-Whitehall planning for other possible evacuations. During the Lebanon crisis several partners were evacuating their nationals independently, leading to complex co-ordination and a sub-optimal use of resources. The main innovation since then has been the establishment of an international NEO Co-ordinating Group, which consists of those nations willing to work with each other in the event of a civilian evacuation. In the event of a crisis, members of this group can suggest the establishment of a multinational NEO Co-ordination Cell to oversee and improve the efficiency of a multinational evacuation.
- 10.3. The decision to deploy UK military assets to assist an evacuation is taken by the Defence Secretary in consultation with, and usually following a request from, the Foreign Secretary, based on the advice of FCO and MOD lawyers. Once this decision is taken the MOD takes over operational control of the evacuation, informed by the FCO’s requirements and working in close co-ordination with FCO and other Government Departments. Sea, land and air options will be considered, and commercial options may be included in the overall response. In any case the MOD will seek to deploy an OLRT early to support operational planning (see chapter 6).
- 10.4. There is no set trigger for when the military would start planning for a NEO, although the need to consider a decision has been integrated into the revised decision-making matrix. The decision to start planning may be a request from the FCO, as noted above, or it may be based on an independent MOD assessment that such a request was likely to be forthcoming, and may be completed well in advance.

Recent Experience

- 10.5. During the February 2011 Egypt crisis, military involvement was limited to the deployment of an OLRT to support the British Embassy’s activities.
- 10.6. In the Libya crisis the role of the military was more significant. MOD officers from the Permanent Joint Headquarters (PJHQ) were embedded in the FCO crisis unit from 21 February and an OLRT was authorised to deploy to Libya the same day. At about the same time the FCO requested and MoD agreed that

military assets in the Mediterranean (HMS Cumberland) should move to international waters near Libya. These were precautionary and planning measures, and there was no decision made on the deployment of military assets to Libya until the morning of 23 February, when the Foreign Secretary discussed the issue with the Defence Secretary. That decision enabled the military to step up their planning.

10.7. The key components of the British NEO were:

- military assets in the Mediterranean and, with the consent of the Maltese Government, in Malta;
- the Joint Forward Operating Base in Malta;
- military direction from the PJHQ in the UK;
- policy direction from the MOD;
- MOD/PJHQ officers located in the FCO Crisis Centre as the main FCO-MOD co-ordination point.

10.8. Together they mapped the location of British nationals in Libya and planned air and sea operations to evacuate them. The operations included the collection of British and third-country nationals on Royal Navy ships at Benghazi port, the use of Hercules aircraft to pick up evacuees at Tripoli airport, and complex operations to evacuate British nationals from remote locations in the desert.

10.9. In addition to the British NEO, there was extensive co-ordination with other nations' militaries. The UK anticipated this and suggested to our partners that we establish the first NEO Co-ordinating Cell. The decision to establish the NEOCC was a planning measure taken by PJHQ officers on Tuesday 22 February. The MOD evaluated potential locations and identified Malta as their preference. They agreed with the FCO that we would offer our partners to host the NEOCC in the British High Commission in Malta. The Maltese Government's support and assistance in this was essential and invaluable. The NEOCC in the High Commission hosted 16 nations including the US, Canada, Australia, France, Germany and Italy. These nations provided Military Liaison Officers who together co-ordinated daily missions to Libya. This meant that UK military missions could evacuate the nationals of our partners when possible, and likewise our partners could evacuate British nationals. In total 458 British nationals were evacuated by British military missions, 202 British nationals on our partners' military missions, and 1170 of our partners' nationals on British military missions.

10.10. The NEOCC based in Malta had civilian and commercial elements to it. The civilian element was the reception and processing of evacuees in Malta by the High Commission. For this and related purposes the High Commission's team grew from 3 UK-based and 8 locally engaged staff to about 50, including officers from UKBA and DFID, in little over a week. The High Commission

liaised with the Maltese Government to ensure that they were informed about and content with operations conducted from their territory. Commercial transport was also part of the operation. The FCO arranged for commercial charters to take British nationals from the reception centre in Malta to the UK. In some cases where the UK had evacuated third country nationals from Libya, the local embassy would take responsibility for their citizens. In other cases they would be brought to the UK where the local embassies were requested to be on hand at Gatwick to meet them.

Conclusions and recommendations

- 10.11. The evacuation operation from Libya was the most complex in recent history, and the use of military assets was both effective and necessary. UK leadership in the multi-national operation, and the daring and complex desert evacuation missions, was widely regarded as effective and impressive.
- 10.12. There are lessons that the FCO can draw from the experience. The first is that early MOD involvement in a consular crisis enables early planning for a military evacuation. Inevitably in some crises this will lead to planning that never gets used. But this is a small investment compared to the potential rewards from having a military option available early. To embed this early co-operation, the **FCO will put in place a SLA with the MOD to deploy designated officers from PJHQ and MOD's Military Strategic Planning to the FCO Crisis Centre when it is activated.** They should be involved in regular FCO planning outside of crisis-time, and ensure that the facilities (e.g. IT) in the Crisis Centre are fit for MOD's purpose. **In turn FCO should request that MOD provide IT capabilities for FCO officers to embed in Military Strategic Planning and PJHQ.**
- 10.13. **The Service Level Agreement should also describe: the circumstances when military assets could be used; the FCO and MOD decision-making process, including the role of COBR; provision for joint planning and exercising including annual cross-Whitehall exercises; and cost sharing (see next chapter).**
- 10.14. FCO/MOD working level communication could be improved through recommendations we have made on the running of the FCO Crisis Centre (Chapter 5). It could also be improved by a better understanding between FCO and MOD of each other's needs, ideally through the Service Level Agreement.
- 10.15. **We recommend that the planned update to ["Non-Combatant Evacuation Operations: Joint Warfare Publications 3-51"](#) include recent advances in doctrine and the role of a NEOCC, especially building on the experience of Malta.** It should, if possible, be a more concise document, which should inform Posts' contingency planning. **The role of a NEOCC should be reflected in updated FCO Consular Guidance. FCO posts that may be used as staging posts or Places of Safety for a NEO should be identified early by CMD and asked to draw up plans for how they would host a NEO or a NEOCC.**

These plans should include details of required personnel reinforcements, including an Overseas Security Manager and a Secure Technical Services Manager.

- 10.16. The NEOCC proved a successful innovation for co-ordinating the multinational evacuation response at an operational level. However, there is scope for the UK and its partners to work more closely to co-ordinate at a strategic level, e.g. agreements on which ally might lead an evacuation from different countries. **We recommend tasking the cross-Whitehall NEO Working Group with taking this forward, building on existing arrangements.**

11. Financing the various options

Existing Arrangements

- 11.1. For evacuation of UK nationals, two key financial issues concern (a) FCO's charging policy for British nationals in an assisted evacuation and (b) arrangements for HMG funding of evacuation operations.

Charging policy

- 11.2. Where evacuations are carried out with military assistance, it is HMG's standard practice, as set out in the FCO's Consular Guidance, to waive charges for British nationals and other Eligible Persons. This is on the basis that military evacuation is a last resort; commercial carriers have stopped; and other routes out are too dangerous.
- 11.3. Where commercial flights continue to operate, but a decision is made to provide additional assistance to British nationals and other Eligible Persons, for example by chartering aircraft, the practice is for a charge to be levied through a UTR. Obtaining UTRs is one of the key conditions for FCO access to the Emergency Disaster Reserve (EDR). The fee for a flight is generally based on a single fare charged by a commercial carrier, with infants under two going free and children charged two-thirds of the full price, in line with common industry practice. For example, in the case of the Cairo evacuation, a charge of £300 per person was levied through a UTR. Reimbursement is sought on a similar basis from nationals of other countries assisted.
- 11.4. In practice, decisions around charging are taken on a case by case basis, with reference to the PUS and FCO Ministers.

HMG funding

- 11.5. Where a consular crisis emerges, the FCO will activate the Crisis Contingency Fund (CCF), held by CCD. The CCF is not capped and can be increased during the year if there is an unusually high number of crises. For example, the Fund began 2010/11 at £500,000 and has since increased to £2 million. In inactive years, underspends can be reallocated to other consular activity. The Fund covers the costs of CCD and Posts' efforts to assist British nationals and other Eligible Persons. All crisis-related costs, including deployment costs for ERTs and RDTs, and overtime and other costs for crisis reinforcements, are met from this budget.
- 11.6. Where the costs of a crisis overseas involving British nationals exceed £150,000, the FCO may apply to the EDR to help fund costs incurred, as long as the criteria governing access have been met. Claims to the EDR are made at

the time of the Spring Supplementaries¹. The principal costs that can be claimed include those associated with the setting up of call centres, the FCO package of assistance to victims of terrorism and their families and the deployment of RDTs. Also covered are the costs arising from the evacuation of British nationals, but FCO must demonstrate that it has made all reasonable efforts to recover its costs, for example by charging evacuees for charter flights. Money recovered is subtracted from the EDR claim.

- 11.7. The EDR is funded from the Emergency Consular Premium element of the passport fee, and is an accumulating fund that crosses financial years. Decisions on claims to the EDR are made by the Treasury (HMT). Approval should be automatic if the criteria are met. Without access to the EDR, FCO must either reallocate resources committed to other activities, or risk overspending on its budget.
- 11.8. In the FCO's 2010 Spending Review settlement, covering the period to 2014/15, HMT confirmed that arrangements for the EDR would continue unchanged, with the access level remaining at £150,000 per crisis. However, HMT officials have since argued that access to the EDR cannot be claimed for costs incurred in the previous Financial Years. Given that the last point in the Financial Year when access can be claimed is the Spring Supplementaries (January) this would appear to preclude the FCO having EDR access for the last quarter of the financial year. The FCO has not agreed this.
- 11.9. As lead Government Department, FCO bears primary responsibility for funding the UK's contribution to delivering evacuation operations, and will normally agree in advance to reimburse costs incurred by other Government Departments such as the Ministry of Defence. Where military assistance is involved, and provided FCO has first ensured that the use of military resources is the only viable or cost effective solution, MoD will normally recover only marginal costs (i.e. the net additional costs which would not have been incurred had the activity not taken place). FCO would normally seek to recover those from the EDR. There is no standing agreement with MOD: MOD will draw up a Strategic Planning Directive for each crisis on which they are required to provide significant support.

Recent Experience

Charging policy

- 11.10. When Travel Advice was upgraded to advise against all but essential travel to Libya there were still commercial flights operating out of Tripoli. The Foreign Secretary agreed that, should commercial options no longer be available - as

¹ Supplementary Estimates are used to seek authority from Parliament for additional resources or to reallocate existing resources to new activities.

proved to be the case - charges would be waived. In the event, British nationals were not charged for FCO charter flights or evacuation by military assets. Where British nationals and other EPs were evacuated to Malta, FCO also funded short-term hotel accommodation in Valletta and flights from Malta to the UK. Not charging for this assistance means that FCO will not be able to charge these costs to the EDR.

- 11.11. In the case of FCO charter flights out of Bahrain, because scheduled airlines were still operating the flights were provided on a cost recovery basis, i.e. passengers were asked to pay. For the same reason passengers who used the FCO charters out of Japan were also asked to pay, other than those British nationals directly affected by the tsunami.

Conclusions and Recommendations

- 11.12. While final decisions on evacuation charging should remain with Ministers, **FCO should clarify the policy with regard to charging individuals for assisted evacuations, perhaps in a new version of the Consular Guide, last published in 2009.** The aim would be both to ease the process of decision-making in a crisis and help manage public expectations. As things stand, the prospect of free flights on FCO charters if commercial options become unavailable might discourage some British nationals from following Travel Advice to depart a crisis region at the stage when seats are still available on commercial carriers.
- 11.13. Difficulties over charging among other government departments (OGDs) have arisen in the past and can arise because the rules concerning where costs will fall, or under what conditions they can be recovered, have not always been fully understood. These tend not to delay operations or deployment –they are usually resolved after the event. Nevertheless, **FCO should discuss with HMT and other relevant departments the possibility of establishing guidelines covering all UK Departments and official bodies (including UK Police) governing the funding of consular and non-consular crises overseas.** Costs should lie where they fall or, at most, other departments should recover only marginal costs from FCO, and these could be reclaimable against the EDR, given the cross-Government interest in the safety and security of UK nationals overseas.
- 11.14. **Arrangements for access to the EDR should allow for coverage throughout the financial year.** This might mean at least part of it being held by FCO, which could be returned to HMT if unused, or rolled over to the next year. HMT and FCO are actively discussing this recommendation.
- 11.15. **FCO should ensure that, at the start of a crisis, a team of finance experts comprising one officer from Finance Directorate and one from the Consular Resources team is assigned to the Crisis Unit.** This team would

have specific responsibility for focussing on appropriate procurement processes, ensuring a proper financial audit trail, advising colleagues on issues such as novel and contentious expenditure, owning policy on the maximum limit for UTRs, and ensuring that the Finance Director and PUS' office are aware of the overall financial picture.

12. Concluding Evacuation Operations

Existing arrangements

- 12.1. Every crisis is different and decisions on when and how to conclude evacuation operations will depend on the situation. For this reason, there is currently limited guidance on the procedures for winding down such operations. Decisions, which involve Ministerial approval, have to be taken according to the situation on the ground, often at short notice, and must take into account the safety of those officials involved in any evacuation process.
- 12.2. The FCO's ability to evacuate British nationals and other EPs from a crisis or to sustain an evacuation depends on a number of factors including security, staffing of evacuation points, ability to deploy assets to enable an evacuation and availability of exit routes. Safety of FCO staff is paramount and decisions on when they are evacuated from a crisis situation are based on security assessments. Once evacuated, the ability to communicate with British nationals remaining in-country and to assist with departure becomes limited.
- 12.3. A Place of Safety is where an EP exits the evacuation chain and is no longer reliant on diplomatic or military assistance. The FCO is responsible for assisting EPs to reach a Place of Safety but EPs are usually responsible for their own onward travel and domestic arrangements beyond that point.
- 12.4. An evacuation of British nationals can have implications for other government departments, although a decision on their obligations in an evacuation will require Ministerial approval. CCD is responsible for liaising with these departments and it is important that this is started at an early stage and maintained thereafter. The MOD provides invaluable support to the FCO on evacuation route planning. Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) is responsible for domestic arrangements for evacuees who require assistance on arrival in the UK. UKBA is responsible for arranging immigration clearance for dual nationals, dependants and nationals of third countries entering the UK. The Department for Transport acts as the interface between the FCO and the civilian and charter airlines.

Recent experience

- 12.5. When assisted departures ceased on 27 February, the FCO continued to advise British nationals of remaining options for departure from Libya through its Travel Advice, which also advised those remaining in Libya to register. FCO officials were in contact with as many registrants as possible to offer advice on exit options.

12.6. At the end of March, the FCO was aware of some 315 British nationals still in Libya (including around 45 journalists and crew). Around 95 of those had indicated that they wished to remain in Libya and a further 133 had indicated their wish to leave. Since then, the FCO has provided consular assistance to over 200 British nationals and their dependants who have left Libya. The FCO has continued its liaison with other governments to identify further potential evacuation options. Where options have been identified, details have been communicated to British nationals remaining in Libya who still wished to leave through updated Travel Advice and, where possible, directly to those registered. The FCO maintains links to Governments with representations still in Libya in order to provide emergency and necessarily limited assistance to any British nationals remaining there.

Conclusions and recommendations

12.7. **Drawing on recent experience, the FCO, in consultation with OGDs, should develop more detailed guidance on how to conclude an evacuation operation**, including specific triggers which might apply to each stage of that process, while recognising that no two cases will necessarily be the same.

12.8. Liaison with domestic government departments is vital, in particular for the final stages of an evacuation operation, and the right information needs to be passed to the right people at the right time. **The FCO should keep OGDs informed at all points of an emerging crisis to facilitate the decision-making process. We recommend formalising current arrangements through a cross-Whitehall network to ensure OGD involvement in all phases of evacuation planning.**

12.9. Communicating to British nationals and other EPs when an evacuation operation will conclude will remain critical so that they can take their own responsibility for deciding whether to leave or not. Responsibility for onward travel arrangements for evacuees beyond a PoS should remain the responsibility of the individuals concerned, but where practical, the FCO should help EPs to make their own arrangements for onward flights. **As noted above, the exceptional circumstances in which the FCO will pay should be reflected in updated public guidance, as part of our wider contract with UK nationals who work, live and travel abroad.**

13. Integrating decision making structures at Post and in London

- 13.1. The preceding Chapters provide detailed recommendations and lessons learned on individual aspects of managing an evacuation operation. This Chapter describes how the individual processes will be integrated and co-ordinated so that decisions can be made on a shared understanding of the most up to date facts, made at the most effective level and made in a timely manner.
- 13.2. Each crisis is different. The response caused by meeting a trigger in one crisis will not always be the same as the response caused by meeting a trigger in the next crisis. Over-planning can risk inappropriate responses being decided upon (eg “Our plan says that because x has happened then y must be our response”) and it risks narrowing perspectives so that emerging and novel developments are missed. Any plan needs to leave sufficient room for judgement.
- 13.3. The FCO believes that current crisis planning tools could be enhanced by the development of a strategic-level decision-making matrix, based around the four CCP levels. To be of most value during a crisis response, the matrix has to maximise the gains from proper scenario planning while also retaining sufficient flexibility to ensure an agile and rapid response to developments, including, if necessary, responding in ways HMG has not previously used in crisis situations.
- 13.4. The matrix, which is currently under development, should highlight the points at which judgements on CCP level, travel advice level, deployment of RDTs/OLRTs, charter flights and militarily supported evacuations might be made. It also sets out who in London or at Post should make the final decision.
- 13.5. In the UK, decisions will need to be made at Foreign Secretary/Ministerial level, Gold, Silver and Bronze command level. Some decisions can be made within the FCO, some require consultation/negotiation with other Whitehall Departments. In-country decisions will also need to be made at a variety of levels: by the Ambassador, by the local Silver and Bronze Commanders, by the RDT and OLRT team leaders. Whoever is making the decision, the processes should be as flat as possible - adding layers to decision-making leads to delay/paralysis of response.
- 13.6. Any decision-making framework should draw on lessons learned from previous crises while also being flexible enough to ensure new developments are properly assessed and the most appropriate response is selected. During use, it should prompt decision-makers to think through: whether decisions on pre-identified issues need to be made at that point or whether they should be postponed; whether any factors have emerged that are not covered by previous country-specific planning; what our response should be and who should be informed/consulted. It is important that a clear and predictable rhythm of meetings (internal to London, Post and London/Post) is established to enable

open sharing of key information. Clear lines of communication outside these meetings should also be established.

- 13.7. The twice-daily pattern of sit-reps (used to inform senior FCO personnel, Ministers and COBR in larger crises) will be used to communicate key developments on the ground and key decisions made. It should comment on common issues such as travel advice and call handling volumes (and handling status). The sit-rep will also include a paragraph on possible developments and risks over the period before the next sit-rep with an indication of what options are available if these issues emerge.

ANNEX 1: Terms of Reference

Objective

To examine the FCO's arrangements for leading the evacuation of British nationals in a crisis

Scope

The Review will consider:

- The contingency arrangements that all Posts have in place, including the registration of resident British nationals and dual nationals who may wish to leave in a crisis
- The contingency arrangements that Consular Crisis Department have in place
- Triggers and procedures for:
 1. Establishing a single integrated crisis unit in the FCO, and moving to 7 day, and 24/7, working
 2. Sending out an FCO Rapid Deployment Team and an MOD Operational Logistics and Reconnaissance Team to plan and prepare for operations on the ground
 3. Changing Travel Advice and communicating what this requires British nationals to do, and what this means for updating our registers of British nationals in preparation for evacuation
 4. Escalating call handling from Post/Global Response Centre, to the Emergency Response Team in Consular Crisis Department, to the outsourced arrangements in Hendon and Bangor
 5. Commencing commercial charters (air, sea and land) to evacuate British nationals, and managing our relationship with the charter companies
 6. Commencing military operations (air, sea and land) to evacuate British nationals, including in coordination with ongoing commercial operations
 7. The financing of the various options
 8. Concluding evacuation operations

ANNEX 2: Consultation

The following were invited to contribute to the consultation phase of this review:

External organisations

ABTA Travel Association
Air Partner (Charter company)
AITO* (Assoc.of Independent Tour Ops)
Astreaus Airline
Blake Emergency Services
BP
British Airways
British Air Transport Association
British Council
Cabinet Office
Control Risks (Risk Consultancy)
Dept for Communities & Local Gvmnt
Department for International Devpt
Easy Jet
International SOS
MOD – MSP, Ops Dir, JFHQ
Monarch/First Aviation
Oasis Overland (Travel Company)
Permanent Joint Head Quarters
Red Cross
Shell
Thomas Cook
TUI/Thomson/First Choice
Titan Airways
UKBA
Virgin Atlantic

Other Governments

Australia
Austria
Bulgaria
Canada
France
Germany
Ireland
Italy
New Zealand
Serbia
Spain
The Netherlands
Turkey
USA

Annex 3: Glossary

British nationals (includes British citizens, British Overseas Territories Citizens, British Overseas Citizens, British Protected Persons, British Subjects, British nationals (Overseas) and dual British nationals)

CCD - Consular Crisis Department (since renamed Crisis Management Department), FCO

CCF – Crisis Contingency Fund

CCP – Civil Contingency Plan

CMD – Crisis Management Department (formerly CCD), FCO

CTD – Counter Terrorism Department, FCO

DCLG – Department for the Communities and Local Government

DFT – Department for Transport

DDD - Digital Diplomacy Department, FCO

Dual National – a person who holds British and another nationality

EDR - Emergency Disaster Reserve

EP - Eligible Persons - all categories of British National including tourists; Diplomatic Staff and dependants; dual British nationals; unrepresented EU nationals for whom the UK has accepted responsibility through an informal bilateral agreement with another EU member state; unrepresented Commonwealth nationals for whom the UK has accepted specific responsibility and where numbers are limited; other foreign nationals for whom the UK has accepted responsibility in bilateral arrangements. As HMG's policy is not to split families in an official evacuation, the spouses/recognised partners and children of British nationals are also considered to be EPs regardless of nationality.

FCO – Foreign & Commonwealth Office

GRC - Global Response Centre

HMG – Her Majesty's Government

HMT – Her Majesty's Treasury

HRD – Human Resources Directorate, FCO

I&TD – Information and Technology Department, FCO

LCMG – London Crisis Managers Guide

MENAD – Middle East and North Africa Directorate, FCO

MOD – Ministry of Defence

MoU – Memorandum of Understanding

NEOCC - Non-Combatant Evacuation Operation Co-ordination Cell

OLRT - Operational Liaison and Reconnaissance Team

OGD – Other Government Department

PEP – Post Emergency Plan

PoS – Place of Safety - a place in a nearby country or a different part of the same country to which evacuated nationals can safely be taken in the first phase of an evacuation operation. It can also be the UK if there is no nearer/more easily accessible PoS.

PUS – Permanent Under Secretary

RDT - Rapid Deployment Team

RRN - Regional Resilience Network

SLA – Service Level Agreement

SOPs - Standard Operating Procedures

UKBA - UK Border Agency

UTR – Undertaking to Repay