

Delivering Border Security

December 2024

1. The UK border is a vital strategic asset, protecting us from international threats, enforcing our domestic laws and underpinning our legitimate systems to enable our citizens to go about their lives freely and confidently.
2. Border security is fundamental to both our national security and economic security. Threats to the UK from serious and organised crime, including organised immigration crime, terrorism and hostile state actors are rapidly evolving and so are the techniques used to penetrate our border, bringing social and economic disruption to the UK and undermining public confidence. The first duty of Government is to protect its citizens and we must not only keep up with, but stay ahead of these threats.
3. The Border Security Command (BSC) was established on 5 July 2024 and is being led by Martin Hewitt CBE QPM. The BSC will lead and drive forward the required step change in the UK's approach to border security. It will, for the first time, provide a clear and long-term vision for border security, bringing together and providing leadership to all parts of the system that work to maintain the integrity of both our border and immigration systems, domestically and internationally.
4. With the collective agreement of the Home Secretary and Prime Minister, the Border Security Commander will set the government's strategic priorities for border security. The BSC will work closely with other government departments, including HMRC and FCDO, as well as operational partners, including Border Force, the National Crime Agency, Immigration Enforcement and Policing, to deliver on those priorities. This will ensure that our full range of capabilities, including that of our UK Intelligence Community, are maximised and brought to bear on those exploiting the UK border.
5. The BSC's first priority is tackling organised immigration crime (OIC) and reducing irregular migration to the UK. The threat from OIC is increasing in scale and complexity, spanning multiple countries, nationalities, and criminal methodologies. While the techniques used by organised crime groups (OCGs) to facilitate irregular migration are growing increasingly sophisticated, the demand for their services also continues to rise as a result of global instabilities, ranging from conflict to climate and economic factors.
6. The UK's border security continues to be undermined, particularly by the OCGs facilitating dangerous small boat crossings, and previous approaches to tackling OIC have led to OCGs adapting their methodology to continue to circumvent controls. A new approach is therefore needed, which considers the end-to-end process of OIC, targeting each stage to make facilitation unviable and prevent OCGs from operating. Learning from the success of our world-leading counter-terrorism system, our new approach to tackling OIC will:

- **Prevent:** disincentivise migrants and deter OCGs from participating in OIC.
 - **Pursue:** disrupt OCGs and their criminal activity.
 - **Protect:** detect and act on OIC at the border.
 - **Prepare:** manage, learn from and adapt the UK's response to tackling OIC.
7. To mobilise this new approach, the Government will redirect money previously earmarked for the Migration and Economic Development Partnership. The Home Secretary has agreed to invest £150m into new technology, capabilities and specialist officers for law enforcement, resourcing for the BSC and further investment in our international networks. The recruitment of 100 additional specialist intelligence and investigation officers to form part of a dedicated function to tackle OIC is well underway, as well as an uplift in the UK presence in Europol, new data analysis and technology capabilities in the National Crime Agency and expanded resourcing and activity in key source and transit countries for irregular migration.
 8. As set out in the King's Speech on 17 July 2024, the Government will introduce the Border Security, Asylum and Immigration Bill to modernise the asylum and immigration system. The Bill will create new, stronger powers for law enforcement agencies to tackle, investigate and prosecute OIC. The legislation will also enhance the sharing of data and intelligence between partners, improving the system's ability to assess and respond to OIC. Together, the provisions will enable smarter, faster and more effective interventions to strengthen the UK border.
 9. The BSC will continue to drive change beyond these legislative measures. It will seek out non-legislative reforms to better support law enforcement and wider partners to understand, identify and tackle OIC. For example, money laundering underpins and enables most forms of organised crime, allowing OCGs to further their operations and conceal their assets. The BSC will therefore establish closer working relationships with the banking sector to prevent the flow of illicit finance and degrade the profits of OCGs facilitating irregular migration.
 10. The new approach to tackling OIC will be underpinned and informed by the development of an end-to-end intelligence and threat picture for OIC. The BSC will work with partners to better understand the methodologies used in facilitating irregular migration and will ensure intelligence is assessed and distributed effectively across the system, maximising the ability of our operational partners to disrupt and dismantle the OCGs conducting OIC.
 11. OIC is a global threat, with no respect for national boundaries. Tackling it requires an international response, with governments and international organisations working together to develop strategic solutions and collaborative operations, across the whole irregular migration route, from source to destination countries. On 4 October 2024, the Home Secretary, with her counterparts from the G7, agreed a major international plan to tackle OCGs responsible for smuggling migrants, maximising opportunities for closer working to coordinate and amplify efforts in tackling OIC and reducing irregular migration.

12. The BSC will develop closer working relationships with international partners bilaterally and multilaterally to enhance the sharing of capabilities, intelligence, and knowledge. It will:

- Work with the EU and EU Member States as part of the Government's UK-EU reset to strengthen operational and legislative responses to OIC, including through maximising participation in Europol Operational Task Forces, to achieve better criminal justice outcomes;
- Demonstrate leadership and creativity in the international system's response to OIC, including through the Calais Group of Interior Ministers, the United Nations and other for a such as the G7 and G20; and
- Work with international source and transit country partners to disincentivise irregular migration to the UK, providing protection for and improving the long-term prospects of people in their home country or region, and enabling the swift and efficient return of those with no right to be in the UK.

13. Border security and the need for change goes beyond irregular migration. The BSC will, over time, evolve to reflect this. As well as the global instabilities that drive the displacement of people, global insecurities such as failing and corrupt regimes drive and enable the production and distribution of illicit commodities that penetrate our borders. Those looking to exploit our borders are also increasingly better equipped to do so as technology advances, and law enforcement must be able to stay ahead of the threat by developing its own capabilities. The BSC is therefore committed to improving the UK's wider border security by:

- Providing and overseeing a long-term vision for the border security system, underpinned by a clear set of shared outcomes, holding it to account through performance measures, evaluation and robust governance structures;
- Setting the system's strategic priorities, ensuring they are informed by a single and shared understanding of threat through the integrated use of intelligence, assessments, data and evidence;
- Ensuring the system has the appropriate resources, powers, capabilities, and mandates in place to deliver on the priorities set by the Government; and
- Leading and coordinating HMG's international delivery capability by building and strengthening relationships with international partners to reduce irregular arrivals to the UK.

14. Improvements to the UK's border security to tackle threats beyond OIC are already underway. The Government is committed to:

- Increasing pre-travel checks for people intending to travel to the UK to identify and prevent those who pose a threat from reaching our border;
- Delivering a new targeting and analytics capability to identify potential persons or goods of interest;

- Developing our watchlisting capability to enable decisions against individuals or goods of known concern to understand, prevent or manage their travel to or from the UK;
- Enhancing automation at the border to improve the detection of imposters; and
- Introducing Safety and Security Declarations on EU goods, improving our intelligence and subsequent ability to interdict threats crossing the border.

15. Through strong leadership, effective partnerships and the long-term vision of the new Border Security Command, we will deliver change.