



# The Intelligence and Security Committee:

## A Select Bibliography

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Author: Alexander Horne and Diana Douse

Section Home Affairs Section

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This paper is essentially a short selective bibliography of resources on the Intelligence and Security Committee.

The Intelligence and Security Committee (ISC) was established by the *Intelligence Services Act 1994* to examine the policy, administration and expenditure of the Security Service, Secret Intelligence Service (SIS), and the Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ). The Committee has developed its oversight remit, with the Government's agreement, to include examination of intelligence-related elements of the Cabinet Office including: the Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC); the Assessments Staff; and the Intelligence, Security and Resilience Group. The Committee also takes evidence from the Defence Intelligence Staff (DIS), part of the Ministry of Defence.

The Prime Minister appoints the ISC Members after considering nominations from Parliament and consulting with the Leader of the Opposition. The Committee reports directly to the Prime Minister, and through him to Parliament, by the publication of the Committee's reports.

The Members of the Committee are subject to Section 1(1)(b) of the *Official Secrets Act 1989* and have access to highly classified material in carrying out their duties. The Committee takes evidence from Cabinet Ministers and senior officials. The Committee is currently chaired by Sir Malcolm Rifkind. Previous Chairs include: Dr Kim Howells; Margaret Beckett; Paul Murphy; Ann Taylor (now Baroness Taylor of Bolton); and Tom King (now Lord King of Bridgwater).

This note includes links to the Committee's annual reports, proposals for reform (most relevantly the [Green Paper on Justice and Security \(CM 8194\)](#) published in October 2011) and some further reading.

A debate on the Committee's work will be held on 21 November 2011.

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## 1 Main Documents

The Intelligence and Security Committee has its own website, where most relevant documents can be obtained:

<http://isc.independent.gov.uk/>

The recently published Green Paper on Justice and Security contains useful background material about the Intelligence and Security Committee, including detail of recent reforms and proposals for change (to make the Committee a statutory committee of Parliament and to make it more transparent).

[Green Paper on Justice and Security \(CM 8194\)](#)

An oral statement on the Green Paper was made on 19 October 2011 (see: [HC Deb 19 October 2011 cc899-910](#)).

Sir Malcolm Rifkind, the current Chair of the Committee, also issued a [press release](#) on the same day, strongly welcoming the publication of the Green Paper. He observed, amongst other things, that:

The Green Paper also contains proposals for reform of the oversight arrangements for the UK intelligence community. I am pleased that the Government has accepted the vast majority of the Intelligence and Security Committee's own proposals in its Green Paper published today. This is a strong endorsement of our desire to modernise and strengthen parliamentary oversight of the intelligence community in this country. If implemented in full, the ISC will become a Committee of Parliament with greater authority, effectiveness, resources and credibility. It will significantly enhance oversight of the United Kingdom intelligence community in a manner in which Parliament and the public can have full confidence. These are significant reforms which I hope will earn widespread support.

The Intelligence and Security Committee's 2010-11 [Annual Report](#) (Cm 8114) was presented to Parliament by the Prime Minister in July 2011. The [Government Response \(Cm 8168\)](#) was published in October 2011.

Information about previous debates is also available on the [Parliament website](#).

Sir Malcolm Rifkind gave a speech on [Intelligence Oversight](#) in November 2010.

Previously, in the last Parliament, the Government had proposed a number of reforms in its [Governance of Britain White Paper](#) (the proposals for reform can be found between pages 59-61). A Division was held on these proposals on 17 July 2008 (see [HC Deb 17 July 2008 cc499-502](#))

## 2 Criticisms of the ISC by the Joint Committee on Human Rights

The role of the Intelligence and Security Committee has been subject to some comment by the Joint Committee on Human Rights in a series of reports, including:

- [Allegations of UK Complicity in Torture](#) HL 152/ HC 230 2008-09
- [Counter-Terrorism Policy and Human Rights \(Seventeenth Report\): Bringing Human Rights Back In](#) HL 86 / HC 111 2009-10

### 3 Recent Press Coverage

[“William Hague lifts the lid on UK spying operations”](#), The Guardian, 16 November 2011

[“William Hague hails not so secret spies”](#), BBC, 16 November 2011

[“Security and intelligence agencies to give evidence in public for first time”](#), BBC, 21 June 2011

[“Intelligence and Security Committee wants more power”](#), BBC, 13 July 2011

[“Spies facing budget squeeze and more oversight”](#), BBC, 13 July 2011

[Binyam Mohamed: How MI5 misled parliament's intelligence and security committee”](#), The Guardian, 1 February 2010

### 4 Further Reading

Hugh Bochel, Andrew Defty, Andrew Dunn (University of Lincoln), [Parliamentary scrutiny of intelligence and security beyond the Intelligence and Security Committee, or is parliament interested in intelligence?](#), Political Studies Association Annual Conference 2010

Hugh Bochel, Andrew Defty, Andrew Dunn (University of Lincoln), [Scrutinising the secret state: parliamentary oversight of the intelligence and security agencies](#)

Alexander Horne, [Complicity in Torture? Some Legal and Political Challenges for the Security and Intelligence Services](#), World Defence Systems, December 2010

Garry Hindle, [Is it time to give parliamentary oversight of intelligence some teeth?](#) Royal United Services Institute

Speech by Sir John Sawers, the chief of the Secret Intelligence Service [Britain's Secret Frontline](#), Society of Editors, October 2010

[A Selection of Speeches by the Director General of the Security Service](#), MI5

[“The Price of Secrecy”](#), *The Economist*, 18 November 2010

[The All Party Group on Extraordinary Rendition](#)

[Government reply to Allegations of UK Complicity in Torture Cm 7714](#)

[Letter to the Intelligence and Security Committee on Alleged UK Complicity in Torture](#) Human Rights Watch (February 2010)

[Rendition Cm 7171 \(July 2007\)](#)