

British Monarch: Homeland Security top Priority, North Korea and Iran will be addressed

British Homeland Security State

By [Global Research](#)

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Editorial Note

The British Parliament was opened by Queen Elizabeth II with a speech focussing on new security measures including immigration and border controls, as well as new powers granted to the British police.

The British Home Secretary's homeland security portfolio was a centre-piece of the Royal Speech to members of the House of Commons and the House of Lords. Counter-terrorism, state detention powers, border security, national biometric identification cards were mentioned, while emphasis was also put on confronting Iran and North Korea.

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Counter-terrorism and security were put at the heart of Tony Blair's last legislative programme as British leader yesterday, as Queen Elizabeth opened parliament amid a show of pomp and pageantry.

Along with security, strengthening the country's immigration service and tackling climate change also figured prominently on the government's "to-do" list for the coming year.

On foreign policy, there were renewed commitments to the Middle East peace process, continued support for Iraq and Afghanistan and pledges to address international concerns on the nuclear ambitions of North Korea and Iran.

But it was on counter-terrorism and security that the government would focus, said the Queen, dressed in her ceremonial robes and crown, as she gave her traditional set-piece speech to members of both chambers of parliament.

"At the heart of my government's programme will be further action to provide strong, secure and stable communities, and to address the threat of terrorism," she said from the House of Lords throne.

Britain has been on high alert since the July 7, 2005 attacks on London's public transport system which killed the four Islamist suicide bombers, 52 commuters and injured more than 700 others.

The Queen's speech provides only a skeleton of legislative proposals, but there has been speculation that any new counter-terrorism laws will see renewed efforts to increase the custody time limits for security suspects.

Blair last year suffered his first parliamentary defeat since coming to power in 1997 when he proposed holding people for 90 days without charge. A 28-day period was agreed instead.

Last weekend finance minister and Blair's likely successor Gordon Brown backed tougher measures - including 90-day detention - when the issue was revived by Britain's most senior policeman, Ian Blair.

Home Secretary John Reid is currently chairing a review of the country's counter-terrorism capabilities and resources.

Among the 29 bills sketched out were proposals to tackle some recent key subjects, including perceived inadequacies and a lack of focus on victims in the criminal justice system, plus concerns over immigration.

The 80-year-old monarch said a bill would be introduced to strengthen Britain's borders, tackle illegal immigration and make it easier to deport foreign criminals.

The government has put the fight against illegal immigration into its counter-terrorism efforts, using it to justify its controversial plan to introduce biometric identity cards, which also featured in the speech.

A scandal over convicted foreign criminals cost former home secretary Charles Clarke his job in May this year when it emerged that hundreds had not been deported after their sentences - and some had gone on to re-offend.

Debating the speech later, Conservative leader David Cameron called the proposals "repetitive and hollow", accusing Blair of playing the "politics of fear to cover up his failures".

But Blair - who will see few of his proposals enacted - was unrepentant.

He was also silent on Iraq when asked to endorse a parliamentary debate on an exit strategy, and played down reports of differences between London and Washington on the future direction for coalition troops and the Middle East.

Emphasis added.

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