

Defence Ministerial Committee(08)5th Meeting

DEFENCE MINISTERIAL COMMITTEE MEETING

13th NOVEMBER 2008

SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS

1. At the Defence Ministerial Committee meeting on 13 November 2008, the Committee discussed: the examination of the Equipment Programme; inquests into the deaths of MOD personnel; and received an update on information assurance and data handling.
2. On the examination of the Equipment Programme, SofS summarised the Department's current position, which the Committee noted. In doing so it:
 - a. agreed that the Department faced a major challenge in trying to reduce the gap between the resources allocated to the Defence budget and the aspirations of the Equipment Programme, particularly in the early years of the programme; and
 - b. agreed that the Department would have to take decisions in the next few weeks, to address the situation. The package of measures it decided on had to be one that struck the right balance, provided more than a short term solution; and when analysed and communicated, the rationale behind it needed to be clear.
3. On inquests into the Deaths of MOD personnel. The Committee welcomed the briefing it received from the Head of the Defence Inquests Unit (DIU), and noted its content. In doing so the Committee:
 - a. recognised the seriousness of the issue and the fundamental importance to the families of those who had died on operations of how the Department handled inquests, and the wider impact of inquests on the public perception of the MOD;
 - b. welcomed the work that had been undertaken by the DIU across the Department and noted the work that the services had done re-emphasise the importance of inquests; and

- c. noted the example of Land Command, who had recently held a series of briefings for Commanding Officers on this issue;
 - d. agreed that whilst the Department had improved in the way it handled inquests in terms of speed and the support it provided to bereaved families, there was still more room for improvement. The Defence Board was asked to examine and report back on what more could be done to ensure that operational lessons learned were translated in to day to day practice.
4. On information assurance and data handling, the Committee welcomed the update it received from the Department's Chief Information Officer (CIO). The Committee noted the progress that had been made since Sir Edmund Burton's report earlier in the year. In doing so the Committee:
- a. noted that whilst good progress had been made, there still remained much to do, in particular to embed the importance of information management within the Department's culture and instil a proper understanding of the supporting rules and regulations;
 - b. agreed that to achieve success, the Department needed to be transparent about its problems in this area and the Committee should receive regular progress updates.

14 November 2008