

DEFENCE INSTRUCTIONS AND NOTICES

(Not to be communicated to anyone outside HM Service without authority)

Title:	Contact with the Media and Communicating in Public
Audience:	All service and civilian personnel
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Content:	Authorisation procedures for all MoD personnel – military and civilian – wishing to have contact with the media, or write or speak in public.
Sponsor:	Directorate of Communication Planning (DCP)
Contact:	DGMC-DCP Coord, Zone 1B Main Building Tel - mil: (9621) 82125; civ: (020) 7218 2125

We want our people – military and civilian - to talk and write about what they do so that the roles and achievements of the Armed Forces and MoD can be better understood. This document sets out the procedures for seeking authorisation and the considerations to be taken into account before doing so: What effect is the contact aiming to achieve? Does the benefit justify the time, cost and effort? Is there a risk to operational security or of disclosure of classified information? Would service ethos be compromised? Are there any patent, copyright, national security (of the UK or our allies) or international relations implications? Would it call into question political impartiality?

Purpose

1. This Instruction sets out the arrangements that all MoD personnel – military and civilian – must follow if they wish to have contact with the media, or write or speak in public on Defence or related matters. These procedures have been put in place to ensure that national and operational security is upheld, and that standards of political impartiality and public accountability are met at all times. They are consistent with the Civil Service Code and Civil Service Management Code, and are reflected in the relevant Queen's Regulations for the Armed Forces and departmental civilian regulations (the Statement of Civilian Personnel Policy).

Applicability

2. This instruction applies to all members of the regular Armed Forces, the Volunteer Reserve Forces and members of the Regular Reserves undertaking service duties, cadets and civilian volunteers when on duty, and to MoD Civil Servants regardless of where they work, and Crown Servants within the Reserve Forces and Cadets Associations and their Council. Its provisions must be followed by MoD personnel in international organisations, Agencies and Trading Funds. It covers all public speaking, writing or other communication, including via the internet and other sharing technologies, whether on-duty, off-duty or in spare time, on issues arising from an individual's official business or experience or otherwise related to Defence.

3. It does not apply to contact with the HCDC (or other Parliamentary Select Committees) for which separate arrangements apply: advice on this can be obtained from the MoD HCDC Liaison Officer – tel (020) 7218 6169 or mil 9621 86169. Nor does it cover the signing of No. 10 e-petitions, which personnel may sign in a personal capacity (i.e. they should make no reference to their rank or being an employee of MoD). Personnel wishing to create or submit e-petitions must seek appropriate authorisation as set out in this DIN.

4. The DIN does not cover public communication by the Ministry of Defence Police relating to criminal investigations, which are dealt with independently by the MDP press office, who are accountable to the MDP Chief Constable.

5. This instruction remains in force for an unlimited period unless explicitly superseded.

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SECTION 1: Introduction

6. It is the policy of the MoD and the Armed Forces to be as open as possible about defence activities and to explain the reasons for Government policies and decisions, provided that essential security is not compromised. The MoD must also comply with relevant legislation, such as the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the related public access rights that came into effect on 1 January 2005. All members of the Armed Forces and MoD civil servants are encouraged to engage with the public about what they do. However, such contact must be properly authorised to ensure that the level and nature of the contact is appropriate, as well as to protect individuals against possible misreporting.

7. All contact with the media or public disclosure of information by members of the Armed Forces and MoD civil servants must be authorised in advance, where this relates to an individual's official business or experience or is otherwise related to Defence. Engaging in such activities (including the acceptance of payments in contravention of Section 7 below) without obtaining authorisation at the appropriate level may result in administrative or disciplinary action being taken, which in the most serious cases could ultimately lead to dismissal or discharge.

SECTION 2: Communicating effectively

8. Presentational aspects are an integral part of all MoD activity and decision-making. It is a core task of all personnel to consider how to portray their activities in an interesting and accessible way, for both the internal and external audiences. Everyone – military and civilian – should look for opportunities to explain what defence is about, and to communicate the roles and achievements of the Armed Forces and MoD, to the public and other stakeholders – whether face to face, through briefings, in response to enquiries or in writing.

9. New and emerging internet technologies present significant opportunities for communicating with the public. Service and MoD civilian personnel are encouraged to use self-publishing on the internet or similar channels to communicate with the public directly, but should ensure that the rules on prior authorisation, conduct and behaviour, collective and personal security, use of official IT, data protection and communicating in public are followed.

10. Before contacting the news media or communicating in public the following factors should be taken into consideration:

- What effect is the contact aiming to achieve?
- Does the benefit justify the time, cost and effort?
- Is there a risk to operational security or of disclosure of classified or personal information?
- Would service ethos be compromised?
- Are there any patent, copyright, national security (of the UK or our allies) or international relations implications?
- Would this call into question political impartiality?

11. Individuals who are likely to engage with the media should undertake appropriate training to develop the skills necessary to do so effectively. Courses are available internally from the Defence Media Operations Centre. Contact details can be found at Section 9. Personnel seeking to have contact with the media or communicate in public should familiarise themselves with the Department's latest Top-Level Messages which are available on both the MoD's intranet and external website.

12. The **Director-General Media and Communication (DGMC)** has ultimate official authority for internal and external communications including all matters related to contact with the news media and communicating in public. DGMC staff will consult Ministers as necessary. Personnel who are in any doubt about the need to obtain authorisation should seek advice from the appropriate DGMC contact at Section 9 before committing to communication with the media or to writing or speaking in public.

13. DGMC consists of 3 directorates:

- **Director Communication Planning (DCP).** DCP is responsible for the MoD's strategic communication planning and should be consulted at an early stage in all policy formulation where there might be presentational issues and in the drafting of any related Ministerial submissions.
- **Director News (D News).** D News is responsible for the handling of specific announcements or news events. The D News Press Office deals mainly at the strategic/national level. D News has a network of Regional Defence Press Officers who handle tactical/regional level issues and have delegated authority to authorise contact with the news media. D News Press Office also deals with tactical/regional issues that have potential to become national issues.
- **Director Defence Public Relations (D Def PR).** D Def PR is responsible for longer term engagement with print, broadcast and internet media, including approaches to or from feature writers and documentary makers, and for internal communications. The Service Assistant Directors (ADs) in D Def PR also advise D News on news handling issues.

SECTION 3: Contact with the News Media

14. DGMC (specifically, D News Press Office and Regional Defence Press Officers) are the Department's professional advisers on communicating with the news media and are the officially sanctioned channel for dealing with them. The guiding principle for all contact with the news media is that it must be referred, through the line manager/chain of command, to the appropriate D News staff (see para 23). This includes writing letters to newspapers, contributing to online debates, or participating in radio or television programmes (including phone-ins) on any topic related to official defence matters. It also includes contact with the media when attending outside events, e.g. at conferences and seminars, and invitations to media representatives to speak to briefings, courses, study days or other departmental events.

15. If a journalist makes contact with a civil servant or member of the Armed Forces requesting information that falls within the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (or other information access legislation and regulations), or requests are received for contentious information from any source, the D News Press Office must be consulted. If it is necessary to telephone a journalist who has submitted an FOI request to clarify or refine its terms care should be taken to keep the conversation focused on the matter at hand. A note of the conversation should be made immediately.

16. Where approval is given to communicate with the media the range of topics that can be covered, and the terms of the engagement (e.g. background, on the record), will be agreed at the time of authorisation. Individuals should not comment upon or disclose official information beyond that agreement. The individual should report back to D News Press Office or the Regional Defence Press Officer who approved the contact. This helps to protect individuals in the event of any subsequent misreporting and ensures any appropriate follow-up action is taken.

17. Contact with News media is always handled by D News unless a specific delegation has been made. Within these delegations such personnel may engage with specified media outlets without recourse to higher authority subject to the following caveats:

All delegations are formally recorded in agreed formal job descriptions or terms of reference.

Any issue that is judged could be considered novel, contentious or of strategic importance is referred to D News via the chain of command.

These individuals must ensure they keep records and inform the D News Press Office or the Regional Defence Press Officer of all media contacts and the information communicated. Requests for such delegations should be sought from DNews.

SECTION 4: Communicating in Public

18. DGMC staff are the Department's professional advisers on communicating with the public. They will consult MoD policy branches as appropriate. MoD civil servants and members of the Armed Forces must seek prior permission if they wish to speak, formally write or otherwise communicate in the public domain on defence issues, before entering into any commitment.

19. Examples of communicating in public are:

- Publishing material (for example books, articles, papers for academic qualifications, or any other text, audio, still images, video or other content) or submitting material with the intention or likelihood of publication, in any medium (print or electronic) available outside Government.
- Self-publishing or otherwise releasing material on the internet or similar sharing technologies, for example through a blog, podcast or other shared text, audio or video, including via mobile devices;
- Formal speeches and presentations at conferences, private engagements or other events where the public or media may be present;
- Completing external organisations' questionnaires, taking part in external surveys, polls or contributing to external studies or research projects;
- Contributing to any online community or shared electronic information resource available outside Government, for example a bulletin board, newsgroup, wiki, online social network, multiplayer game or other information-sharing application.

20. In all cases, the impact of the material must be considered carefully, both in terms of the effect on its intended audience but also on any unintended audience through any wider coverage by the media. All personnel must make every effort to minimise the scope for misreporting and misrepresentation and avoid straying beyond the issues that they have been approved to speak on. Individuals should ensure that they seek authorisation in sufficient time to allow proper consideration of their request.

SECTION 5: Authorisation for Contact with the News Media and Communicating in Public

Senior Personnel (1* and above and civilian equivalent)

21. With the exception of cases where specific delegations have been issued by DGMC, all personnel of 1* rank and civilian equivalent must seek approval from DGMC before accepting any invitation to speak or write publicly – whether through the media or some other channel. Requests should be submitted at least 14 days in advance to DGMC through the attached proforma.

22. All personnel of 2* rank and above and civilian equivalent require Ministerial approval. In practice this will be arranged through a DGMC-chaired weekly planning meeting which will advise if a formal submission is required. Requests should be submitted to DCP Co-ord (see Section 9) at least 3 weeks in advance to allow time for due consideration, and, if necessary, a submission.

Below 1*

23. **News Media.** Except where specific delegations have been issued by DGMC (see para 17) personnel must first go through their line manager/chain of command (Commanding Officer (CO) or Head of Department or Division), and consult local media staff. The authorisation process is as follows:

- a. For contact with Regional/Local News Media.
 - (1) Commanding officers of the rank of Colonel and below (and equivalents) may speak to regional or local media on routine matters relating specifically to their own area of responsibility. They should not be drawn on other issues. A record should be kept of this contact, and the Service Media Operations staff and Regional Defence Press Officer should be kept informed. Contact with regional/local media on issues outside an individual's own responsibilities require prior authorisation.
 - (2) For all other cases DGMC Regional Defence Press Officers have delegated powers of authorisation from D News. Service or TLB Media staff must ensure that the Regional Defence Press Officer is informed of proposed contact at the regional/local level. The DGMC Regional Defence Press officer will refer contentious issues to the D News Press Office. Where there is a risk of a regional/local issue becoming a national issue, D News Press Office will take over the lead handling responsibility. This reflects DGMC's primacy in all matters relating to news media and communicating in public.

- b. National News Media. D News' Chief Press Officers will be required to authorise all contact with the national news media, whether it be proactive or reactive. D News will seek advice as necessary from the single-service ADs in D Def PR and will judge whether Ministers need to be consulted.
- c. International Media or contact with media abroad. Permission for any contact with international media in operational theatres is determined by DGMC in conjunction with PJHQ. Outside operational theatres, there are a significant number of visits which include interaction with foreign media. Where this occurs at local or regional level, it is normally sufficient for permission to be granted by the relevant service Command media staff or defence attaché. Where there is the potential for foreign national media to be involved, D News Press Office is to be informed. Procedures for contact with international media in UK are the same as per national media.

24. **Communicating in Public other than through the News Media.** In all cases, personnel must first go through their line manager/chain of command to ensure the considerations at para 10 have been appropriately addressed. If so, the individual's line manager/chain of command (Commanding Officer (CO) or Head of Department or Division) may authorise the contact. Where there is potential for controversy, media or national interest advice must be taken from the relevant Media staff and/or Secretariat branch. If this is the case, subsequent clearance by DGMC is required, using the following channels (who will ensure D News are informed where media contact is involved).

- Navy personnel through their chain of command to the AD Def PR(Navy).
- Army Personnel through their chain of command to the AD Def PR(Army).
- RAF Personnel through their chain of command to the AD Def PR(RAF).
- Civil Servants through their management chain to DCP.

All personnel should bear in mind that apparently single-service issues can have implications for the reputation of all three services.

25. Material on medical issues should be sent first to Service Medical Directors who will consult with DMSD (specifically with D Med F&S) if the topic is or could be contentious. D Med F&S will confirm with Service Medical Directors who will then forward it with their recommendations to DCP.

26. Personnel should be aware that at all times their comments in public might be reported and publicised. It is an individual's responsibility to observe and comply with the Official Secrets Act and with any other applicable laws, such as copyright/patent. Classified or commercially sensitive material must not be disclosed, and individuals should avoid conflicting with MoD or Government policy. The security or other national interest of collaborating countries must be fully protected, even where UK interests are not directly affected.

27. Where permission to publish outside MoD is granted this will apply only to the material as submitted. Further permission is required if alterations of fact or opinion are made. The granting of permission to publish does not confer official endorsement of the material (either of its factual content or the opinions or views expressed) and this should be made clear to publishers.

28. Articles or notices for in-house MoD or service publications on non-controversial topics can be submitted direct to in-house editors through COs or line management. However, the same guiding principles apply. Internal publications that also have an external profile (e.g. if they are available on subscription or on the internet) must follow the procedures for external clearance at paras 24-25 above.

29. Where there is a significant cost to MoD or a significant number of MoD personnel are being asked to speak at a specific external conference or event Ministerial approval is likely to be required regardless of the rank/grade of those involved. In such cases, the appropriate MoD policy lead will need to set out the case as to why the proposed overall level of attendance outweighs the cost to the taxpayer in terms of time, effort and money. In any cases of doubt DGMC-DCP should be consulted.

SECTION 6: Operational Security

30. Experience shows that adversaries take a close interest in information put into the public domain by our people and look for opportunities to use it to their advantage. All personnel are reminded of the paramount requirement to protect operational security. They must also avoid actions that might damage relations with other nations or harm the security or other interests of collaborating countries. Personnel must not pass on any classified or other information that has not been authorised for release, including to friends and family. Personnel wishing to speak or write about their experience in an operational theatre must consult PJHQ media ops staffs regardless of whether they are still serving in that theatre.

SECTION 7: Payment for Speaking to the Media and Public Speaking and Writing

31. The principle applying to the issue of payments to serving personnel is that they are paid once for their work. It is a normal part of the duties of serving service and civilian personnel to explain their work in public and this should not attract additional payment. Serving military and civilian personnel must not accept payment, royalty or fee for any activity which would, or could be perceived to, involve the disclosure of official information or draw on official experience. This includes all contact with the media such as interviews, articles or briefings, and any other public disclosure (e.g. books, public speaking, conferences etc). Where an organisation offering payment insists on making a donation to charity the choice of charity must lie with the organisation offering the payment.

32. Payment to an individual for information or speaking may only be authorised if the subject matter falls entirely outside their MoD work or experience, does not use official information and has been prepared in an individual's own time, without using any MoD resources. Examples could be historical works or fiction. COs/Heads of Department or Division should be consulted in the first instance to ensure this is the case. If in doubt they should take advice from their Media Operations and/or Secretariat staff who should in turn consult DGMC staff in accordance with para 23 if uncertain. If authority to proceed is given individuals must make clear that they are not acting in an official capacity.

33. Defence academics who believe they may have a case for being paid for academic research must first seek approval from their Commanding Officer/Head of Division. If content that there is a potential case COs/Heads of Division should contact Director DCP before giving approval to proceed.

SECTION 8: Summary

34. Communicating with the media and directly to the public about Defence matters is an intrinsic and important part of all Defence activities. Contact with the media by members of the Armed Forces and MoD Civil Servants must be authorised at the appropriate level. Personnel who are in any doubt about the level of authorisation required should go through their line management or chain of command, including taking advice from the relevant Media Operations and/or Secretariat staff. They in turn will seek advice from DGMC.

SECTION 9: Contact points

For proposed contacts with the national News Media:

Defence Press Office (London):

D News Chief Press Officers:

Tel:	Mil:	9621 82906	Civ:	020 7218 2906 or
	Mil:	9621 84677	Civ:	020 7218 4677

DII Email: DGMC-DNews CPOEquipandOps
or
DII Email: DGMC-DNews CPOPolandPers

For contact with local or regional media

Regional Defence Press Offices:

Scotland:	Mil:	94740 2004	Civ:	0131 310 2004/5
North East:	Mil:	94777 2433	Civ:	01904 62433
North West:	Mil:	94554 2219	Civ:	01772 260219
Midlands:	Mil:	94461 2338	Civ:	01743 262338
Wales:	Mil:	93762 2218	Civ:	01446 744044
Eastern:	Mil:	95331 7149	Civ:	01480 425346
South East:	Mil:	9621 83259	Civ:	020 7218 3259
South West:	Mil:	94321 2347	Civ:	07768 671427

For Single-Service issues, contact the relevant service AD -

D Def PR (Navy) AD:

Tel: Mil: 9621 87903 Civ: 020 7218 7903
DII Email: DGMCD-DEF PR NavyAD

D Def PR (Army) AD:

Tel: Mil: 9621 84385 Civ: 020 7218 4385
DII Email: DGMCD-DEF PR ArmyAD

D Def PR (RAF) AD:

Tel: Mil: 9621 87905 Civ: 020 7218 7905
DII Email: DGMCD-DEF PR RAFAD

RAF personnel should submit manuscripts for clearance to the Publications Clearance Branch (Air) in the first instance.

Tel: Mil: 95233 8156 Civ: 020 8833 8156
DII Email: AHB-PCB

For any other issues including clearance of requests by officers of 1* above to speak or write in public:

DCP Coord

Tel: Mil: 9621 82125 Civ: 020 7218 2125
DII Email: DGMCD-DCP Coord

For details of training courses at the Defence Media Operations Centre contact the training school admin officer:

Tel: Mil: 95232 6072 Civ: 01895 816072
Email: UXB-DMOC-TRGADMIN

Service Media Operations staffs

Land

Tel: Mil: 94331 3246 Civ: 01722 433246
DII Email: LF-Media&Comm-AD

Air

Tel: Mil: 95221 6431 Civ: 014944 96431
DII Email: Air CmdSecCS-Media & Comms DACOS

Fleet

Tel: Mil: 93832 5370 Civ: 02392 625370
DII Email: FLEET-DCS-INFO-MEDIA DACOS

PJHQ

Tel: Mil: 9360 46029 Civ: 01923 846029
DII Email: PJHQ-J9 HD MEDIAOPS

