

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE TOP LEVEL MESSAGES: MAY 2012

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MINISTRY OF DEFENCE TOP LEVEL MESSAGES

SECTION 1 – OPERATIONS

AFGHANISTAN

Top Line:

British forces are in Afghanistan for one overriding reason: to protect British national security by helping the Afghans take control of theirs. This means building up the capability of the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) so that they can prevent terrorist organisations, including Al Qaeda (AQ) from returning and posing a threat to the UK and our allies around the world. The UK Government does not seek a perfect Afghanistan, but a stable Afghanistan, able to maintain its own security and prevent the return of international terror groups such as AQ.

- The UK does not seek a perfect Afghanistan. There will be many challenges. But Afghanistan today is quite different to only three years ago:
 - The level of insurgent attacks are down.
 - Afghan security force capacity and capability is up.
 - More people able to achieve a basic standard of living and security.
- This UK is now in the final phases of its military mission. Transition to Afghan control, as agreed at Lisbon Summit in 2010, is on track, is realistic and achievable.
- International forces are gradually handing over security responsibility to the Afghans who will have full responsibility in all provinces by the end of 2014. This process allows UK forces to shift their efforts from combat to a train, advise and assist role. But UK and International Security Assistance Forces (ISAF) will continue to operate in a combat role, albeit a reducing one, in support of Afghan forces until the end of 2014.

UK Forces levels:

- The PM announced on 6 July 2011 that the UK will be able to reduce its force levels by 500 - from 9,500 to 9,000 - by the end of 2012, reflecting the continuing progress that is being made in the ANSF.
- The troop drawdown leading up to 2014 will be steady and measured. As the PM said in December 2011, "I don't want to see some massive cliff-edge in 2014 - I don't think that's practical. But I don't think we need to make hard and fast decisions at this stage."
- **At NATO's Lisbon Summit in 2010, ISAF nations agreed the principles of transition, which espouse an "in together, out together" approach. Over the coming years as transition progresses, the mission will gradually change from combat to support and by the end of 2014 the Afghans will control their own security. For about 50% of the Afghan population, this is already the case.**

ANSF/Transition:

- As of 29 February the Afghan National Army stands at 184,487 and the Afghan National Police at 148,932; both are on track to reach their November 2012 "surge" target numbers.¹ The ANSF's effectiveness is continuously improving, this is allowing them to increasingly take the lead in operations. UK and international partners continue to support the ANSF with operational training and mentoring.
- The ANSF have demonstrated that they can lead on security effectively and competently in areas that have already started the transition process. The second Tranche of areas to begin transition were announced by the Afghan Government on 27 November 2011 and have now been implemented, meaning that Afghan Forces have lead responsibility for the security of about half of the country's population. The international community will continue to support the

¹ Correct on 29 February 2012

ANSF beyond 2014. The UK, as part of its enduring legacy, will take the lead at the new Afghan National Army Officer Academy in Kabul.

- As part of this process, in 2013, the 5th and final tranche of transition will begin. From this point the ANSF will have lead security responsibility across the country. Though UK and ISAF forces will continue to operate in a combat role, albeit a reducing one, in support of Afghan forces until the end of 2014 the transition process will enable international forces to gradually shift the focus of their efforts from that of a combat role to one of training, advising and assisting.
- In April the Defence Secretary announced that the UK will provide £70m pa to support the development of the Afghan National Security Forces after British combat operations end in Afghanistan in 2014. The funding will be kept under review and will contribute to a \$4bn fund that Afghanistan and the International Community are putting together to ensure that Afghan forces can maintain their national security.

Security:

- The Afghan security situation continues to improve, but gains remain fragile. We must expect challenges ahead, particularly for the ANSF, as they take the lead on more operations and we should expect the insurgency to target areas that transfer to Afghan-led security control. The insurgents are also likely to continue to plan high-profile attacks to try to generate publicity and undermine Afghan public confidence about security, regardless of the cost to civilian life.

Reconciliation, including with the Taliban:

- We remain committed to supporting the Government of Afghanistan in its efforts to achieve an inclusive and sustainable political settlement. This is a challenging process which will take time. We need a political process which ensures that all Afghans - if they give up violence, renounce terror and respect the Afghan constitution - can play a part in shaping a strong, democratic and constitutional state.

Supporting Lines:

- The UK is part of a UN mandated NATO-led international mission in Afghanistan supported actively by 60 countries, including several Islamic countries. The UK's conventional force level in Afghanistan is currently 9,500, out of a total ISAF force of around 130,000 personnel from 50 troop contributing nations.² Reflecting the continuing progress that is being made in building up the ANSF and in line with President Karzai's stated aim that the Afghans will have full security lead across the country by the end of 2014. In line with this objective UK troop levels will reduce to 9,000 by the end of 2012.
- The international strategy involves protecting the civilian population from the insurgents, building up the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) and supporting more effective governance at every level.
- UK troops working alongside other ISAF and Afghan forces continue to make progress by driving out the insurgents and extending the authority and influence of the Afghan Government in Central Helmand. Helmand's security situation remains complex and there will be more tough fighting ahead as gains are consolidated.
- The sustained growth in the Afghan state and the Afghan National Security Forces' strength, capacity and capability is the driving force of transition.
- As at 18 Apr 2012, a total of 409 British forces personnel have died while serving in Afghanistan since the start of operations in October 2001. 279 personnel have been Very Seriously Injured or Wounded, and 280 have been Seriously Injured or Wounded³

²Source: ISAF

³Correct at 31 Mar 12. Source DASA

OLYMPICS

Top Line:

On 15 December 2011 the Defence Secretary announced that Defence would support the Home Office and Department of Culture, Media and Sport by providing up to 13,500 military personnel, at peak times, to the Olympic and Paralympic Games. Defence will play its part in both the security and ceremony of this national event and will contribute specialist skills and equipment to assist in delivering a safe and secure Games.

Supporting Lines:

- The Olympic and Paralympic Games (The Games) is a once in a generation event. The focus of the Government and everyone involved is to deliver a safe and secure Games that the UK and the world can enjoy.
- The Home Office, through the Police, have lead responsibility to ensure the safety and security of The Games, however the Armed Forces will be supporting them, and other civil and Olympic authorities, in a number of areas.
- The Defence contribution is proportionate to that deployed at other recent Olympic Games and the MOD is clear that it is operating in support of the Police and other Olympic Authorities, to help them ensure a safe, secure and enjoyable 2012 Olympics.

Defence Contribution:

- In providing support to the Police, and other civil and Olympic authorities, Defence will contribute up to 13,500 military personnel to the Games. This contribution will be based on extant Military Aid to the Civil Authorities (MACA) arrangements and will include a mix of capabilities across the Maritime, Land and Air domains including specialist capabilities and expertise.
- Defence will also support Olympic venue security operations, as well as ceremonial support and a small amount of real estate. A Military Contingency Force will also be available to respond to Olympic related civil emergencies.
- Support to the Games will be an important task for Defence in 2012. However, during The Games, Defence will maintain its commitment to the protection of the UK, to current operations in Afghanistan, and to other standing commitments worldwide, including the ability to respond to the unexpected.
- A comprehensive programme of training has been put in place for Military personnel to complete prior to the Games and a number of successful Air and Maritime security exercises have been conducted, culminating in Ex OLYMPIC GUARDIAN in London and Weymouth from 2-10 May.

For more information about the Defence contribution to the 2012 Olympics Games please see the [January 2012 Top Level Messages](#). Alternatively, please see the [Defence Secretary's announcement of Defence support to 2012 Olympic Games](#).

FALKLANDS

Top Line:

The 30th liberation anniversary of The Falkland Islands is on 14 June 2012. The MOD will commemorate the achievements of the Armed Forces in the 1982 campaign, emphasise the UK's continued commitment to the Falkland Island people, whilst supporting wider Government activity in the South Atlantic region.

Supporting Lines

- The MOD recognises the sacrifice made by the UK Armed Forces in 1982 to protect the UK's sovereignty and the right of the Falkland Islanders to self determination.
- The UK position on its sovereignty over the Falkland Islands (and South Georgia and the South Sandwich Island and the surrounding maritime areas) is absolutely clear. The principle of self-determination, enshrined in the UN Charter, underlies the UK's position on the sovereignty of the Falkland Islands.
- The UK is totally committed to defending the Falkland Islanders' right to self-determination. The UK maintains an effective capability to protect the UK South Atlantic Territories.

SECTION 2 – TRANSFORMING DEFENCE

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SDSR AND DEFENCE REFORM

Top Line:

Transforming Defence will deliver the Future Force 2020 structure set out in the Strategic Defence and Security Review (SDSR), supported by a smaller, capable and flexible department, within the resources available for Defence. It is the MOD's highest priority after operations and the programme is being personally overseen by the Defence Secretary.

Supporting Lines:

Transforming the budget – a legacy of affordability

- The Government has committed to bringing down the national deficit by reducing public expenditure. Defence is not immune from the UK's financial situation. Despite a reduction in Defence spending, the UK expects to continue to be in the top four military spenders in the world and to meet the NATO target of spending 2% of UK GDP on Defence.
- In July 2011, the Chancellor agreed that the MOD may plan on the basis of an uplift in equipment and equipment support expenditure of 1% above inflation in the years beyond the current Spending Review period. Together with the other changes announced, such as the Basing Review and the Reserves Review, the Department is close to achieving a sustainable and balanced Defence budget.
- By tackling the imbalance in the Defence programme, the Government has been able to commit to a range of new equipment programmes for which funding had previously not been identified.

Key Facts:

- By 2014/15, the budget will reduce by around 8% in real terms compared to 2010/11.
- The cost of operations is additional to the Defence budget and is met from the Government's Special Reserve. In the last financial year, 2010/11, £3.9bn was spent in support of operations in Afghanistan, Libya and Iraq.
- Over the next ten years we will be spending over £150bn on equipment and equipment support.

Transforming the front line – Future Force 2020:

Deterrent: in May 2011, formal approval to begin the assessment phase for the programme to replace the Vanguard-class submarines was granted, along with the review of alternatives to the Trident system. Progress has also been made on implementing the new nuclear assurances policy and the reduction in our nuclear weapon stockpile to no more than 180 warheads.

Maritime environment: the Royal Navy has fully implemented the SDSR force structure changes; decommissioning HMS Ark Royal, four Type 22, the amphibious landing ship RFA Largs Bay, the tanker RFA Bayleaf and the stores ship RFA Fort George. Good progress is being made with the

introduction into service of the Type 45 destroyers, the Astute class submarine programme, and the Carrier programme.

Land environment: the SDSR announced that the Army would be rationalising headquarters, converting one operational divisional headquarters to a force preparation role and removing one deployable brigade. The Army is on track to meet its commitments to reduce holdings of Challenger 2 tanks by around 40% and to reduce AS90 vehicles by around 35%. Progress towards building Future Force 2020 capabilities includes a planned increase in Defence funding between 2015 and 2020, meaning about £1bn will be spent on 14 new Chinook Helicopters and £1bn on refurbishment of the Army's fleet of Warrior vehicles.

Air environment: the Harrier has been withdrawn from service, and the airframes successfully sold to the United States. Tornado drawdown and Typhoon force growth remain on track. The new Voyager Future Strategic (transport) and Tanker Aircraft (FSTA) will replace the Air to Air Refuelling (AAR) capability and the passenger Air Transport (AT) fleets. The RAF's Air Transport Force is being rationalised as quickly as possible to consist of only the most modern and capable aircraft types - with A400M joining the fleet. The UK will gradually withdraw legacy fleets such as the C130 Hercules, Tristar, VC10 and existing Comms Fleet Aircraft as soon as new capabilities are introduced.

The Reserves: will play a greater role in future. Following the report of the Future Reserves 2020 Study Commission, around £1.5bn will be invested over the next ten years. It will allow a progressive adjustment of the Regular/Reserve balance while maintaining the land forces capability set out in the SDSR.

Redundancy: the three Services have announced redundancy programmes and a first tranche of MOD civil servants have accepted voluntary early release. Our civilian workforce has already fallen by almost 10% compared to the SDSR baseline and is on track to meet the SDSR commitment of a total fall of around 32,000 by the year 2020.

Basing: the SDSR announced the intention to bring back half of the UK military personnel from Germany by 2015 and the rest by 2020, and to deliver £350m per year from estate rationalisation. In July 2011, the **Defence Basing Review** made clear how these strategic, long term changes would affect the military footprint. RAF Marham will remain as a base for Tornado GR4 aircraft while RAF Leuchars will become an Army base. The Typhoon force will expand at RAF Lossiemouth, while Kinloss will become home to Army units.

Transforming the organisation – Defence Reform: Lord Levene completed his [Defence Reform Review](#) of MOD's structure and corporate culture to identify the changes needed to deliver the Future Force 2020 in June 2011. The Department has agreed his recommendations and a new blueprint for the MOD was published in December 2011.

- **To Date the Department has:**
 - Set up the new Defence Infrastructure Organisation;
 - Set up the new Defence Business Services Organisation;
 - Appointed the first Commander Joint Forces Command which stood up on 1 April 2012;
 - Introduced a new Army Command Structure;
- **Work has been taken forward to improve defence acquisition, including:**
 - Lord Currie's review of single source contracts, potentially saving up to £200m a year;
 - Publication of a White Paper on "National Security Through Technology: Technology, Equipment and Support for UK Defence and Security" on 1 February 2012;
 - Bernard Gray, the Chief of Defence Materiel, is developing a new Materiel Strategy and has set out options for the future of the Defence Equipment and Support Organisation;
 - Work continues to review and renegotiate up to 500 contracts with a value of £8bn.

SECTION 3 – SUPPORT TO PERSONNEL AND MEDICAL

THE ARMED FORCES COVENANT

Top Line:

The Government recognises the need to ensure our Armed Forces, veterans and their families have the support they need and are treated with the dignity they deserve. A new tri-Service [Armed Forces Covenant](#) was published in May 2011, together with 'The Armed Forces Covenant: Today and Tomorrow' which detailed the steps being taken to support the Armed Forces Community. An interim report on the Covenant was published in December 2011. The first statutory annual report will be published towards the end of 2012.

Supporting Lines:

- The Covenant defines the principles of removing disadvantage and allowing special provision in some circumstances in the access to public and commercial services. This has set a framework for policy making and delivery across Government and will improve the support available for the Armed Forces Community.
- The Armed Forces Act received Royal Assent on 3 November 2011. For the first time, this places a statutory obligation on the Secretary of State to report to Parliament each year on the Armed Forces Covenant.
- On 20 December 2011, the Secretary of State made an interim report on the Covenant. This report made a number of new commitments; outlined progress towards delivering the pledges the Government made in 2010 and 2011; and highlighted a number of improvements that have been made under the Covenant. For further information, please see the [MOD website](#).
- A new Ministerial Committee has been established to oversee Covenant work and ensure that momentum is maintained. The Prime Minister chaired the first meeting of this new Committee on 2 February 2012. The Committee will work closely with key stakeholders such as other Government Departments, charities and the Service Families' Federations to give them the opportunity to monitor progress.
- As part of the Budget on 21 March 2012, the Chancellor announced a range of measures which demonstrated the Government's commitment to honouring the Armed Forces Covenant, including £100m further investment in accommodation for Service Personnel and their families.
- More than 50 communities have signed their own 'Community Covenants' and £30m has been allocated to the Community Covenant Grant scheme over the four financial years from 2011-12 to 2014-15. Over £2.8m has so far been allocated to projects from the first three rounds of bids. The panel is expected to consider bids again in June 2012.

MEDICAL SUPPORT

Top Line:

The support to personnel injured on operations is of an excellent standard. All Armed Forces personnel are supported by dedicated and comprehensive medical services, including mental health support.

Supporting Lines:

Seriously Injured Personnel

- Medical care for wounded personnel is of a very high standard. The extraordinary quality of care given to the Armed Forces was recognised by the House of Commons Defence Committee in its December 2011 report.
- Operational casualties whose injuries are serious enough to require further treatment back in the UK are aeromedically evacuated as a matter of priority. The Queen Elizabeth NHS Hospital in Birmingham, is the primary reception hospital for military patients evacuated to the UK from overseas. The state-of-the-art facilities operating in partnership with the Trust offer injured soldiers the best possible care in a Military Ward, subject to clinical need.

- Patients requiring further rehabilitation care (including prosthetics) can be referred to the Defence Medical Rehabilitation Centre (DMRC) at Headley Court in Surrey. DMRC has 96 established in-patient beds with a further 19 beds being made available as a sensible contingency in the short term. In order to ensure continuity of services out to the end of current operations, a contract has been awarded for a new facility that will raise DMRC ward based capacity to 144 beds including appropriate therapy space. The project is on schedule to be delivered by June 2012.

Prosthetics

- Recent Service leavers who have lost a limb while serving will, where clinically appropriate, be entitled to receive from the NHS equivalent standard prosthetic care to that provided by Defence Medical Services. Dr Andrew Murrison MP led a review to examine NHS prosthetics services for veterans now and for the future. The Prime Minister announced that the Government is investing up to £15m to support Dr Murrison's key recommendations, including the introduction of national specialist prosthetic and rehabilitation centres for amputee veterans. For further details please see the DH website www.dh.gov.uk under A Better Deal for Military Amputees.

MENTAL HEALTH

Service Personnel

- The MOD provides mental healthcare for those Armed Forces personnel who need it, primarily through our 15 military Departments of Community Mental Health (DCMH) across the UK (plus centres overseas), which provide out-patient treatment. In-patient care, when necessary, is provided in specialised psychiatric units under contract with the NHS.
- In May 2010, the latest phase of a King's College study into the effects of deployment on the mental health of personnel confirmed the continuing low incidence rate of probable post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) for the UK Armed Forces. Alcohol misuse and common mental disorders were the most prevalent mental health problems. Service personnel are generally no worse off as regards mental health disorders compared with available data for the civilian population. Deployment on operations was associated with a small increase in symptoms of PTSD in Reservists, and Regular personnel in combat roles were more likely than those in support roles to report probable PTSD. The number of times that a member of the Armed Forces deploys to theatre does not increase their risk of developing common mental health disorders.
- The Armed Forces Mental Health Strategy provides a framework for the Chain of Command, DCDS(Personnel & Training) staffs and the Defence Medical Services to coordinate policy and focus efforts and resources to optimise levels of mental health in the Armed Forces. It applies primarily to serving personnel and Reserves, but it also covers the duty to ensure that Service families receive appropriate support and that ex-Service personnel, who are in need of help, are appropriately catered for through the NHS and in partnership with others.

Veterans

- The NHS is responsible for delivering veterans' healthcare, with priority treatment for Service-related conditions, subject to the clinical needs of all patients.
- MOD complements NHS services by providing a Medical Assessment Programme (with a similar service for Reservists) and by its £3m annual funding of treatment provided by the mental health charity Combat Stress.
- Armed Forces Networks are established in all of the former Strategic Health Authority regions and bring together the NHS, MOD within their regions and military charities. Their role is to champion the Armed Forces, their families and veterans within their areas, ensure veterans are able to access services and meet the requirements of the Armed Forces Covenant in ensuring that this community are not disadvantaged and, where appropriate, are given special treatment in accessing health and social care services.
- The Armed Forces Networks, MOD and the Department of Health work closely with the Devolved Administrations who have their own arrangements.

- Where a Serving person has had a mental health problem identified at the time of discharge that requires referral to a DCMH, that person may access care in a UK DCMH for up to 6 months beyond their discharge date.⁴

PAY AND ALLOWANCES

Top Line:

The Government is determined that members of the Armed Forces should receive a remuneration package commensurate with the vital role they play. The outcomes of the SDSR and the Spending Review are having far-reaching consequences in reducing Defence expenditure, although the full impact on pay and allowances is not yet clear. It is critical that change in these areas does not impact on the MOD's ability to attract, recruit and retain high calibre individuals.

Supporting Lines:

- The tax-free Operational Allowance (OA) for Armed Forces personnel serving in qualifying operational theatres was doubled on 6 May 2010.
- As part of measures to tackle the budget deficit, the Government's 2010 Emergency Budget announced a pay freeze for 2011/12 and 2012/13 for public sector workers, including the Armed Forces, except for those earning £21,000 or less who should receive at least £250 in these years. As part of the Autumn Statement announced on 29 November 2011, the Chancellor confirmed that the public sector pay freeze will end in 2013/14. However, pressures on the public finances and the need to protect jobs means that public sector pay awards, including those for the civil service and Armed Forces, will average at 1% for the two years following the pay freeze. Incremental progression will continue for eligible Service personnel during the pay freeze and the further period of pay restraint. The 2012 Armed Forces' Pay Review Body (AFPRB) report was published in 13 March 2012.
- Reductions in the Service Personnel allowances package (totalling £250m of the £880m spend) were announced on 20 January 2011.

PENSIONS

Top Line:

The Armed Forces Pension Schemes (AFPS) are widely recognised as good quality pension schemes which compare favourably with other public and private sector schemes. The AFPS are designed to reflect the special features of Service life, provide adequate retirement income and protection for dependants, and encourage retention as a key part of the overall remuneration package for Service Personnel.

Supporting Lines:

- A new Armed Forces Pension Scheme (currently referred to as Future AFPS) will be introduced from April 2015. As a part of this a Consultation exercise was launched on 29 March 2012 during which Service personnel will be asked their views on the new scheme. External stakeholders, including the Central Advisory Committee on Pensions and Compensation, the Forces Families Federations and the Forces Pension Society, will also be consulted.

REDUNDANCY

Top Line:

Following the SDSR, the shape and size of the Defence workforce (both military and civilian) is being addressed. The UK's Armed Forces are being restructured to meet current and

⁴ JSP 950, Leaflet 2-7-2, Section 11, paragraph 11.3.

emerging threats and so are undergoing some changes including a reduction in the combined size of the Royal Navy, the Army and the Royal Air Force by some 17,000 by 2015. Some of this reduction is being achieved through measures such as slowing down recruitment but the Department estimates that up to around 11,000 redundancies will be required. Planning is underway for Future Force 2020, which will see a further reduction in the size of the Army from 2015. The outcome of the SDSR will also result in a reduction of the number of civilian personnel by around 25,000 by 2015 and a further 7,000 by 2020.

Supporting Lines:

- On 17 January 2012 the Royal Navy, Army and Royal Air Force published the arrangements for Tranche 2 of the Armed Forces Redundancy Programme including details of the fields from which selection will be made and eligible personnel who wish to be considered were invited to apply by 28 February 2012.
- Tranche 2 will be the last tranche of redundancy for the Royal Navy and Royal Air Force, although a very small number of further redundancies may be required (for OF5s and OF6s and senior medical staff).
- Notifications of redundancy will be issued on 12 June 2012, from when applicants who are selected will serve up to 6 months' notice before leaving the Armed Forces, and non-applicants up to 12 months' notice. Anyone who wishes to leave earlier may apply to do so.
- Transition of those selected for redundancy will be managed through the appropriate resettlement package.
- All tranches will be complete by the end of March 2015.
- For the civilian workforce, the Department is committed to achieving the necessary reductions without recourse to compulsory redundancy wherever possible although this eventuality cannot be ruled out. The first Voluntary Early Release Schemes (VERS) launched in spring 2011, attracted applications from almost 14,000 staff, around 7,800 of whom were offered early release and just under 6,000 accepted. A further two-year VERS was launched on 7 November 2011 and some 12,200 applications were received. Departmental selection panels will consider the applications between January and May 2012.
- The Trade Unions were consulted prior to the launch of the civilian schemes.
- It is unlikely however that these measures will be sufficient to achieve the full reductions required and consideration is currently being given to a number of more targeted schemes. The MOD Trade Unions will be consulted on the emerging proposals in due course.

RECRUITMENT

- The Armed Forces depend on high-quality young people wanting to join the Services. Despite the reduction in the overall numbers of Service personnel, the Armed Forces are still recruiting and training to replace those personnel who leave the Services at the end of their contracts.

ARMED FORCES COMPENSATION SCHEME (AFCS)

Top Line

The AFCS provides compensation for injuries, illness and death arising from Service since 6 April 2005. War pensions are paid to veterans with injuries caused by their service prior to this date.

Supporting Lines:

- The AFCS covers all serving and ex-Service personnel and may provide a tax-free lump sum for pain and suffering, the size of which reflects the severity of injury or illness that has been sustained. Lump sum awards range from £1,200 to £570,000. The AFCS also provides benefits to eligible partners and children of Service personnel who die as a result of their service.
- For serious injuries and illness, the AFCS also provides an income stream known as the Guaranteed Income Payment. This is in addition to the lump sum and is a tax-free, index-linked monthly payment, paid from discharge until death.

- An Independent Medical Expert Group (IMEG) was established during the Lord Boyce Review of the Scheme in 2010 to advise on the appropriate levels of compensation for several specific injuries and illnesses, including mental health. The IMEG's first report was published on 9 May 2011. The IMEG is now looking at how to best compensate for hearing loss, mental health problems and service-caused illnesses. Its findings will be published this year.

HOUSING

Top Line:

Defence recognises the importance of providing decent living standards in maintaining morale on the front line and, despite the current financial challenges, continues to invest and target efforts on the most pressing accommodation issues. Military accommodation arrangements continue to represent good value for money for members of the Armed Forces, with charges well below market rates. A three year SFA (Service Family Accommodation) upgrade pause will take effect in 2013. However, elemental upgrades to bathrooms and kitchens are still programmed.

Supporting Lines:

- Significant progress has been made on accommodation and will continue, within the financial constraints which now exist.
- Establishing the new Defence Infrastructure Organisation shows the Government's commitment to improving the way estates and infrastructure services are delivered.

Armed Forces Home Ownership Scheme (Pilot): an MOD £20m, 4-year pilot shared equity scheme was launched in January 2010. To enable full-time permanent members of the Armed Forces who wish to remain in the Forces, and who have between 4 and 6 years' service, to buy a property in England. In FY 2010/11, the scheme attracted 1,300 applicants who were assessed as being eligible in principle. Of these, 128 had completed by 31 December 2011.

Extended eligibility for priority status to affordable housing schemes: in June 2011, the Housing Minister, Grant Shapps MP, announced that the highest priority will be afforded to Service personnel for all types of social housing in England. This work is currently in the consultation phase with the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) hoping to enact as secondary legislation in 2012. Service personnel have also been placed in the highest priority for access to the new FirstBuy scheme, which is designed to assist first time buyers.

Housing adaptation grants: seriously injured personnel in receipt of AFCS or War Pension Scheme (WPS) payments can access substantial grants to adapt their home for their disability. AFCS and WPS lump sum payments are not considered to be income when means-testing for Housing Adaptation Grants.

Disregard to compensation payments: AFCS lump sum payments are not considered to be income when assessing for affordable housing.

Local Connection: previously, Local Connection legislation meant that Service leavers received no recognition for having lived and worked in an area when applying for social housing. This has been amended in England, Scotland and Wales.

Priority Housing for Injured Service Personnel: ex-Servicemen and women who are seriously injured have priority for specially adapted social homes.

Service Families Accommodation: 96% of UK Service homes are now at the top two standards (of four) for condition⁵, with families no longer required to live in properties at the lowest standard,

⁵ Reference here is to Standard for Condition, not Grade for Charge.

although some still choose to do so. As part of the Budget on 21 March 2012, the Chancellor announced £100m of further investment in accommodation for Service personnel and their families. This funding will be available for Financial Year 2013-14. Council Tax Relief was also doubled in the Budget to some £600 for an average 6-month deployment. This will continue to be paid at a flat rate to all eligible personnel. This uplift came into effect on 1 April 2012.

EDUCATION

Free Further or Higher Education: Service leavers with six years' service, and who have previously been members of the Enhanced Learning Scheme, can apply for funding to cover tuition fee expenses for an additional qualification. This is up to and including degree level courses.

School Place Allocation: The School Admissions Code is designed to recognise the needs of Service children.

Special Educational Needs (SEN): local authorities and schools have received guidance reminding them of their obligation to ensure continuity of support.

Troops to Teachers: as part of the Schools White Paper, released in November 2010 by the Department for Education, the Government announced plans to develop a 'Troops to Teachers' programme which will sponsor Service leavers to train as teachers.

WELFARE

Top Line:

The welfare needs of Service personnel and their families remain a key priority. The Government is committed to providing the best possible support to deployed personnel and their families through the Deployed Welfare Package.

Supporting Lines:

Families: The Armed Forces have long-standing welfare structures in place to support Service families, including welfare officers, information and advice offices, chaplains, trained social workers, and other specialists. Families form a very important part of the Armed Forces community; they support Service personnel throughout their career and at times of enhanced stress, such as during deployments. The MOD continues to examine and improve the support offered, solely and in partnership with other government departments and charities.

Operational Welfare: the Deployed Welfare Package is kept under constant review to ensure it meets the needs of both the Service person and their dependants. Free phone calls are available for 30 minutes per week. Wi-Fi access has been extended in operational areas, texting and internet facilities have been improved in Forward Operating Bases and the Families Welfare Grant doubled. As a part of the Budget announced on 21 March the Families Welfare Grant was doubled. Thus, an additional £2m per year to support families of those deployed. This will allow local commanders to enhance the direct support that they provide for families while their loved-ones are deployed. This uplift comes into effect from April 2012.

Post: MOD and the Royal Mail continue to operate the Enduring Families Free Mail Service (EFFMS) for friends and families to send packages of up to 2kg to named personnel in Afghanistan as well as HM Ships in support. In April 2012, the Royal Mail issued 'shadow post codes' for all BFPO locations to help personnel serving overseas, or on ships and submarines, and families by improving access to products and services from the internet. It will also help personnel maintain a UK credit history recognised by financial service providers.

Rest and Recuperation (R & R): on 22 July 2010, the Government announced steps to maximise R&R for Service Personnel. Those deploying for six months will remain eligible for one period of

14 days R&R. Those who lose out on more than 24 hours of R&R, whether as a result of operations or as a result of disruptions to the airbridge, will be granted additional Post Operational Leave in lieu to compensate.

SECTION 4 - EQUIPMENT CAPABILITY

Top Line:

Success in Afghanistan is the top priority for Defence and the Government is fully committed to ensuring that the campaign is properly resourced, funded and equipped.

Supporting Lines:

- Significant improvements have been made in the equipment provided to UK Armed Forces on operations. Operational Commanders have a wide range of helicopters, protected vehicles, weapons, unmanned aircraft systems (UAS) and other key equipments at their disposal.

Key Facts:

Afghanistan Operations

- Over £5.6bn has been approved through the Urgent Operational Requirement (UOR) process on equipment to meet emerging threats and requirements for Afghanistan since Operation HERRICK began.

Protected Vehicles

- Deliveries of Protected Mobility Vehicles to Afghanistan continue. Over £2bn for more than 2,000 new Protected Mobility Vehicles has been approved since 2006, including the recently announced contract to buy 100 more next generation Light Protected Patrol Vehicle (Foxhound). The first vehicles are being delivered for training and deployment to Afghanistan should commence in 2012.
- In September 2011, MOD announced that the enhanced CVRT2 - Combat Vehicle Reconnaissance (Tracked) - fleet is now operational on the front line in Afghanistan.
- The fielding of the Warrior Theatre Entry Standard (Herrick) in June 2011, worth a total of around £40m which included the provision of a flexible modular armour system, an enhanced seating system, mobility improvements, and enhancements to the vision system.
- On 25 October 2011, the Prime Minister was joined by the Defence Secretary and the Head of the Army to announce that the Army's Warrior Infantry Fighting Vehicle will benefit from a £1bn upgrade. The Warrior Capability Sustainment Programme (WCSP) will extend the vehicles' service life to beyond 2040, ensuring that Warrior will continue to play an essential role in the future conduct of land operations. The upgrade programme includes an enhanced turret incorporating a 40mm cannon, fire on the move capability, electronic upgrades to support digital systems, and improved protection.

Counter- IED (C-IED)

- The Defence Secretary has reaffirmed the government's commitment to the MOD's CIED policy, including the enhancements agreed by the previous Government. C-IED capabilities continue to be bolstered, and work to institutionalise C-IED within wider defence is progressing well.

Personal Protection

- In July 2011, deliveries of the third and final tier of the multi-tiered pelvic protection system for troops in Afghanistan began. The three-tiered system of clothing and armour helps mitigate the effects of IED blasts.

Helicopters

- The fleet in-theatre includes the Chinook, Merlin and Sea King Support Helicopters, upgraded Lynx Mk9A Utility helicopters and the Apache Attack helicopter.
- In November 2011, the Merlin celebrated its 2nd anniversary of operations in Afghanistan. The Merlin is an all-weather, day-and-night, multi-role helicopter, used in both tactical and strategic operational roles, and performs tasks in Afghanistan which include picking up casualties and flying resupply missions.
- On 22 August 2011, the Defence Secretary announced a contract award for 14 new Chinook helicopters. The contract with Boeing to supply the Chinook heavy lift helicopters will provide a capability and resilience for operations now and in the future. Already the largest fleet in Europe, this new contract will bring the UK's overall number of Chinooks to 60.

ISTAR

- The UK Reaper Remotely Piloted Air System (RPAS) programme has now provided over 30,000 hours of high quality, persistent armed Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR) support to UK and ISAF forces in Afghanistan.
- Peter Luff MP, Minister of Defence Equipment, Support and Technology, announced in December that the MOD had placed a £40m contract for aerospace research with BAE Systems. The four-year Future Combat Air System (FCAS) Focused Research contract aims to sustain and develop the UK's critical technology and skills in this field. It will inform the MOD's unmanned air system strategy over the coming decades to ensure that the best use is made of these new technologies.
- The Hermes 450 unmanned air system has provided over 50,000 hours of support to UK Forces since it entered service in 2007.
- On 6 December 2010, the Prime Minister announced that funding will be made available to enable further increases in the UK Reaper RPAS capability. RAF Waddington in Lincolnshire has been selected as the preferred location for the basing of a key element of this additional capability, the Ground Control Stations. The decision to base the Ground Control Stations at RAF Waddington was informed by the fact that the Station is the RAF's ISTAR Hub with the required flying supervisory chain of command. Work has already commenced at RAF Waddington in preparation for the stand up of XIII Squadron, the arrival of the UK Reaper Ground Control Stations and associated equipment in 2012.
- At this stage there are no plans to base or fly UK Reaper aircraft in the UK as the aircraft are specifically required to be based in Afghanistan to support UK and Coalition Forces under Urgent Operational Requirement. However, in the future, as the Ground Control Stations will be based within the UK, RAF crews will be able to fly the UK Reaper aircraft remotely from the UK.
- The MOD intends to begin relocating 39 Squadron from Creech Air Force Base (AFB), Nevada to RAF Waddington once XIII Squadron is operational. The relocation of 39 Squadron will be phased to ensure there is no disruption to UK Reaper support to current operations. While there are a range of benefits of being collocated with the USAF at Creech AFB, the manpower requirements of 2 squadrons (39 and XIII Squadrons) will require qualified crews to be available for additional tours of duty on Reaper to reduce the training burden; in the long term, this requires both squadrons to be based in the UK.
- The Future Force 2020 will include strategic surveillance and intelligence platforms capable of providing wide area coverage as part of a broader ISTAR capability.
- Sentinel R1 aircraft have been integral to operations in Afghanistan and Libya. Providing wide area, all weather battlefield mapping of activity on the ground and able to conduct and support the full spectrum of 'scan, cue, focus' Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR) collect activity.
- Royal Navy Sea King Airborne Surveillance and Control (SKASaC) Helicopters are operating in Afghanistan providing Battlefield surveillance and tactical support to Ground Forces. Until recently, these aircraft were also operating from HMS OCEAN in support of Maritime and Air Operations in Libya.

- The Government has taken the difficult decision to take Sentinel out of service post Op HERRICK. Once Sentinel is withdrawn from Service, the loss of this platform will be mitigated through a range of other capabilities.

Tornado GR4

- The Tornado is making a key contribution to operations in Afghanistan and, until recently, Libya and has recently passed the one million flying hours mark. It provides a reactive, scalable, and precise range of effects that is currently unique to this aircraft.

Typhoon

- Typhoon is playing a vital Air Defence role in the UK and Falkland Islands and until recently to operations in Libya. It is capable of being deployed in the full spectrum of air operations, from air policing, to peace support, through to high intensity conflict.
- After control of the air had been secured over Libya, Typhoon's versatility allowed it to be re-rolled into the ground attack and ISTAR role, employing a mix of precision-guided weapons and the high-resolution targeting pod.

Rivet Joint/Airseeker

- On 19 March 2010, the MOD signed a bilateral agreement with the US Government to procure three RIVET JOINT aircraft and associated training and ground systems, known collectively within the UK as AIRSEEKER, to replace the Nimrod R1 aircraft. AIRSEEKER is scheduled to enter service in 2014. Prior to AIRSEEKER entering service, the UK's airborne signals intelligence capability and core competencies are being sustained under the auspices of the AIRSEEKER Co-Manning agreement; under this agreement UK personnel commenced deployed operations on co-manned USAF Rivet Joint aircraft in June 2011.

Strategic and Tactical Lift

- On 8 February 2012 the Prime Minister announced that the MOD will order an additional C-17 Globemaster, taking the number of aircraft in the RAF's fleet to eight. The newest C-17 will cost £200m and is due to come off the production line in March 2012. It is expected to enter service with the RAF in July 2012.
- The first two Strategic (transport) Tanker Aircraft, or FSTA are currently undergoing flight testing: the RAF will have fourteen in total, and they will be known as Voyager when they enter service. These aircraft will replace the Air to Air Refuelling (AAR) capability and the passenger Air Transport (AT) capability currently provided by the RAF's VC-10 and TriStar fleets.
- Voyager will be provided through a PFI service contract. Industry will own and manage the aircraft assets and provide the training services and approximately 25% of the manpower; however military missions will be flown by and under the control of the RAF.
- The RAF's Air Transport Force is being rationalised to consist of only the most modern and capable aircraft types. In addition to the RAF's fleet of C17 aircraft and Voyager aircraft, the Department has ordered 22 A400M aircraft, the first of which will be delivered in 2014.

Joint Combat Aircraft: Lightning II

- The Government remains committed to the US led Joint Strike Fighter (JSF) programme. The UK plans to transition to a combined fast jet fleet of JSF, named Lightning II, and Typhoon aircraft in the medium to long term.
- A 5th generation, stealthy, multi-role, all-weather, day & night, fighter/attack aircraft, Lightning II will operate from land bases and the UK's next generation Queen Elizabeth Class (QEC) aircraft carrier. It will give the UK a truly world-beating air power and combat ISTAR capability until well into the middle of this century. When the aircraft enters service later this decade, it will be able to conduct deep strike missions against a myriad of target sets defeating contemporary and future Integrated Air Defence Systems. Moreover, by conducting robust Integrated Air Operations, Lightning II will support friendly ground and maritime forces with close air support (CAS), long-range interdiction, anti-surface warfare and tactical reconnaissance.

Type 45 Destroyers

- HMS DARING was declared in-service on 31 July 2010 and is undertaking her first operational deployment.
- HMS DAUNTLESS completed her Operational Sea Training in spring 2011 and is now embarking upon her first operational deployment.
- HMS DIAMOND was declared in-Service on 12 July 2011 and completed her Basic Operational Sea Training in late 2011. She is due to undertake her first operational deployment later in 2012.
- HMS DRAGON was formally commissioned into the fleet on 20 April and will undertake Operational Sea Training in 2012.
- HMS DEFENDER has now completed her second set of sea trials and is expected to be was Accepted off Contract from BAE Systems Surface Ships in summer 2012.
- HMS DUNCAN was launched on 11 October 2010 and will begin Sea Trials in spring 2012.

Submarines

- The first in class of the new Astute Submarines, HMS ASTUTE, was commissioned into the Royal Navy in August 2010 and is currently undergoing further sea trials before she is declared operational. In November 2011, Astute successfully demonstrated the submarine's capability to prepare for and launch Tomahawk Land Attack Missiles. This is a critical milestone to ensure that ASTUTE is ready for Operational Handover.
- Following the launch of Boat 2 (AMBUSH) in January 2011, the submarine is now being put through a rigorous period of trials and testing prior to exiting the shipyard. In September 2011 AMBUSH completed her first successful dive in BAE Systems Submarine Solutions shipyard's basin at Barrow-in-Furness.
- Production of Boats 3 (ARTFUL), 4 (AUDACIOUS) and 5 (ANSON) continues at the shipyard, and long lead items for Boat 6 are being purchased. The keel-laying ceremony for Boat 5, ANSON, took place on 13 October 2011.
- A £350m contract to upgrade HMS VENGEANCE has been awarded to Babcock, safeguarding up to 2,000 jobs over the next three years. The contract ensures that the nuclear deterrent submarine fleet can continue to operate safely and effectively to maintain a continuous at sea deterrent.
- On 27 March HMS VIGILANT left Plymouth for sea trails, after nearly three-and-a-half years undergoing work to replace her nuclear fuel and to upgrade key areas.

Ice Patrol Ship

- On 21 March 2011, HMS Protector was named as the temporary replacement for HMS Endurance, the Antarctic and South Atlantic ice patrol and survey vessel. She was commissioned in June 2011 and deployed on 28 November to the Antarctic.

Maritime Support

- On 22 February 2012 it was announced that four new Military Afloat Reach and Sustainability (MARS) tankers have been ordered to replace existing Royal Fleet Auxiliary (RFA) single hulled tankers. The MARS tankers are planned to enter service from 2016 and will support deployed amphibious, land and air forces close to the shore and maintain the ability to refuel at sea. UK companies will benefit from up to £150m of support and maintenance contracts.

Missile Defence System

- On 30 January 2012 the MOD confirmed a £483m contract to develop a new Royal Navy missile defence system, known as Sea Ceptor, was awarded to MBDA (UK). Sea Ceptor has been designed to replace the Sea Wolf air defence system when it goes out of service in 2016 and is planned to be used on the Type 26 Global Combat Ship.

Air Defence

- RAF air defence assets including Typhoon aircraft, radars and command and control systems, are held at continuous readiness 24/7, 365 days of the year to guarantee the security of UK sovereign airspace and NATO-monitored airspace.

Defence and Security White Paper

- On 1 February 2012 the MOD published a White Paper on [“National Security Through Technology: Technology, Equipment and Support for UK Defence and Security”](#), setting out the Government’s approach to acquiring equipment, support and technology in the defence and security domain over the next five years.

Independent review of single source pricing regulations: The “Yellow Book”

- In October 2011, Lord David Currie’s independent review of single source procurement was published. It is now out for public consultation, due to complete later in 2012.