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PETER RYAN
DIRECTOR JUDICIAL ENGAGEMENT POLICY



Ministry
of Defence

Directorate of Judicial Engagement Policy
MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

Main Building
Whitehall
London
SW1A 2HB

Telephone:
Fax:
e-mail:

Margaret Aldred
Secretary to the Iraq Inquiry
35 Great Smith Street
London SW1P 3BQ (By email)

7 June 2013

Dear Margaret

DEPLOYMENT OF MILITARY RESERVISTS IN A CIVILIAN ROLE

Thank you for your letter of 30 April asking for information with regard to the development of the 1,000 strong civilian capability and progress made on the deployment of military reservists in a civilian capacity. You indicated that you would be content either with a narrative response or with copies of key documents: since we have not identified any documents (other than the 2009 Memorandum to the Commons Defence Committee which you already have) which set out the position succinctly, I have opted for the former approach. I apologise for not meeting your 23 May deadline.

2. In view of your previous involvement, you will be aware that the National Security Strategy (NSS) identified the need to strengthen the UK's and international ability to deploy civilian stabilisation experts. Announcing the Strategy, the Prime Minister said:

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We must have civilian experts and professionals ready to deploy quickly to assist failing states and help rebuild countries emerging from conflict... Britain will... make available a 1000-strong UK civilian standby capacity.

In response to this requirement the Civilian Support Group (CSG) was set up to meet current and future demand for stabilisation expertise. I understand that it currently consists of over 1,000 skilled people who are willing and able to deploy overseas, including 975 deployable civilian experts drawn from the private and voluntary sectors and a 200-strong civil service stabilisation cadre. The UK has a strong international reputation for the quality of its civilian contributions and the effectiveness of the cross-Whitehall coordination that makes it possible. The CSG has proved an effective instrument in a range of international settings.

3. Reservists are routinely employed by the Stabilisation Unit in a civilian capacity in the CSG. It mobilises them for deployment through the Military Stabilisation Support Group (MSSG).

Unfortunately, the databases of the Stabilisation Unit and the MSSG cannot be interrogated for accurate figures on the number of reservists (or of ex-military personnel) in the CSG.

4. Over the past year, the MSSG has deployed reservists to augment the work of the CSG in a number of fields. Examples include:

- An Agricultural and Economic livelihood team has assisted the Helmand Provincial Reconstruction Team (HPRT) to develop an agri-business development programme. The MSSG mobilised two Majors, one Captain and a Sergeant from the Territorial Army with agricultural and business development expertise, who deployed to augment the HPRT Growth and Livelihood Team. The deployed team was supported by a UK-based network of reserve personnel with agricultural skills, including a Royal Naval Reserve Able seaman who is Head of faculty at Harper Adams University.

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- A Territorial Army Major who is a Detective Sergeant in the Devon and Cornwall Police deployed to support the HPRT's Counter-Narcotics activity.
- A Territorial Army Major who is a Civil Servant deployed to become the Regional command (South West) lead on counter-corruption.
- A Royal Auxiliary Air Force Squadron Leader who is an Inspector in the Metropolitan Police's Diplomatic Protection Group is currently deployed in Kabul to train the Afghan National Police in close protection techniques.

5. The MSSG often employs Reservists to help with overseas engagement and capacity-building in line with the Building Stability Overseas Strategy. MSSG Reservists who specialise in emergency planning, flooding and disaster preparedness have conducted advisory visits and training the trainer schemes in Uganda and Botswana as well as briefings in Japan and Zambia. Such engagement often takes place within the context of integrated teams alongside colleagues from the Stabilisation Unit core staff and the CSG: examples include Exercise Civil Bridge in Uganda in 2010 as well as projects in Botswana in 2011 and Kenya in 2012.

6. The MSSG is also engaged with DSTL in developing a civilian skills database which will be used to identify appropriate specialist skills sets from across the Reserve Forces community. This is work in progress and the latest version of the experimental database is due to be trialled across specialist units, including the MSSG itself, from 1 July. The longer-term intention is to develop a version of this database that can be integrated into the Armed Forces' Joint Personnel Administration system, thus creating a single tool that can be used to identify service personnel with specific civilian skills.

7. I hope that this account gives you an adequate idea of the work that has been done to follow up the commitments made in 2009 to the Defence Select Committee. If you have any further questions we will be very happy to try and answer them.

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8. I am copying this letter, as you did yours, to in the Cabinet Office.

Peter

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