

THE HOUSE

Parliament's Magazine

No.7

Guide to The Ministry of Defence

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UK defence policy has dominated the news in recent weeks. After a first round of spending reductions, is the budget protected or are

further cuts expected? Depending on whether you listen to the Prime Minister or the Defence Secretary, you might come away with a different answer. But with the UK determined to play in military conflicts across the globe, it is certain that our armed forces will continue needing to adapt to restricted spending priorities. Who is making the decisions? Are they working? What could the Ministry of Defence be doing better? How can you engage with what it does? We hope this guide helps with the answers to all of those questions – and more. **SAM MACRORY** POLITICAL EDITOR

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Fighting fit



Simon Ball looks at the politics and personalities that helped to shaped the modern Ministry of Defence

‘War makes rattling good history,’ said Thomas Hardy, ‘but peace is poor reading.’ Behind the misleading name and dull façade of the Ministry of Defence there lurks a ministry for war. Of course, the main business of the ministry is spending money on manpower, buildings, land, and equipment, but its central purpose remains intact. Britain is a bellicose nation.

Although the modern Ministry of Defence dates from 1964, it bears the clear imprint of its architects. The first was Winston Churchill. There was a Minister of Defence long before there was a Ministry. Churchill created the actual office of Minister of Defence for himself in 1940 in order to ensure that he had supreme direction of Britain’s war making in the Second World War. Churchill’s high conception of the role was summed up when he told an American in 1943 that the constitutional control of Allied armed forces was vested in the President, as US C-in-C, and by the prime minister-minister of defence acting on behalf of the War Cabinet. In 1946 a separate cabinet



Winston Churchill (top right), Clement Attlee (right) and Harold Macmillan (above): three politicians who did the most to shape the modern Ministry of Defence



minister was named as minister of defence. Ever since, there has remained an ambiguity: the Minister of Defence is probably not Her Majesty's senior war minister; that is the prime minister. In 1961 Lord Hankey identified the key to 'supreme command' in the UK as a central committee of which the prime minister was to be the 'invariable president'. In 2010 David Cameron established the National Security Council, of which he is chairman. Another committee, COBRA, entered public consciousness during the Blair premiership.

The second prime ministerial architect of the Ministry was Clement Attlee. There already existed historic departments devoted to war: the Admiralty, the War Office and the Air Ministry. Attlee's 1946 reforms created a small Ministry of Defence to co-ordinate the existing service ministries, removing their ministers from the Cabinet. Attlee formalised the wartime position ➤



Michael Heseltine "reduced the authority of the heads of the individual services by requiring them to submit their views through the Chief of the Defence Staff"

of the Chiefs of Staff committee as the government's chief advisers on strategy. The Chiefs of Staff were, by this stage, the most established part of the state machinery: they had started acting as a group in 1923. Success in the campaigns of 1942-1945 had made some military leaders too arrogant to be effective 'political soldiers'. As Chief of the Imperial General Staff in the immediate post-war years, Montgomery of Alamein was more famous than Attlee. The political

capital of the Chiefs of Staff was frittered away by their internecine bickering and consequent inability to give the government coherent strategic advice.

The third architect of the Ministry of Defence, Harold Macmillan, set out to sideline the Chiefs. In 1957 he said that he wanted policy control in a 'single integrated Defence Department'. He had two bites of the cherry: first appointing Duncan Sandys, Churchill's son-in-law, to carry out defence



“ British defence policy in 2013 is guided by the same principles that existed at the time of the Ministry’s formation in 1946 ”

reform by force of personality, and Lord Mountbatten to the newly-created office of Chief of the Defence Staff, and subsequently commissioning the Ismay-Jacob Report in 1963 that identified ‘discord, uncertainty and malaise’ and argued that a single department was the cure.

By the end of the Conservative government in 1964 a unified Ministry of Defence had been created and the other war ministries had been abolished. ➤

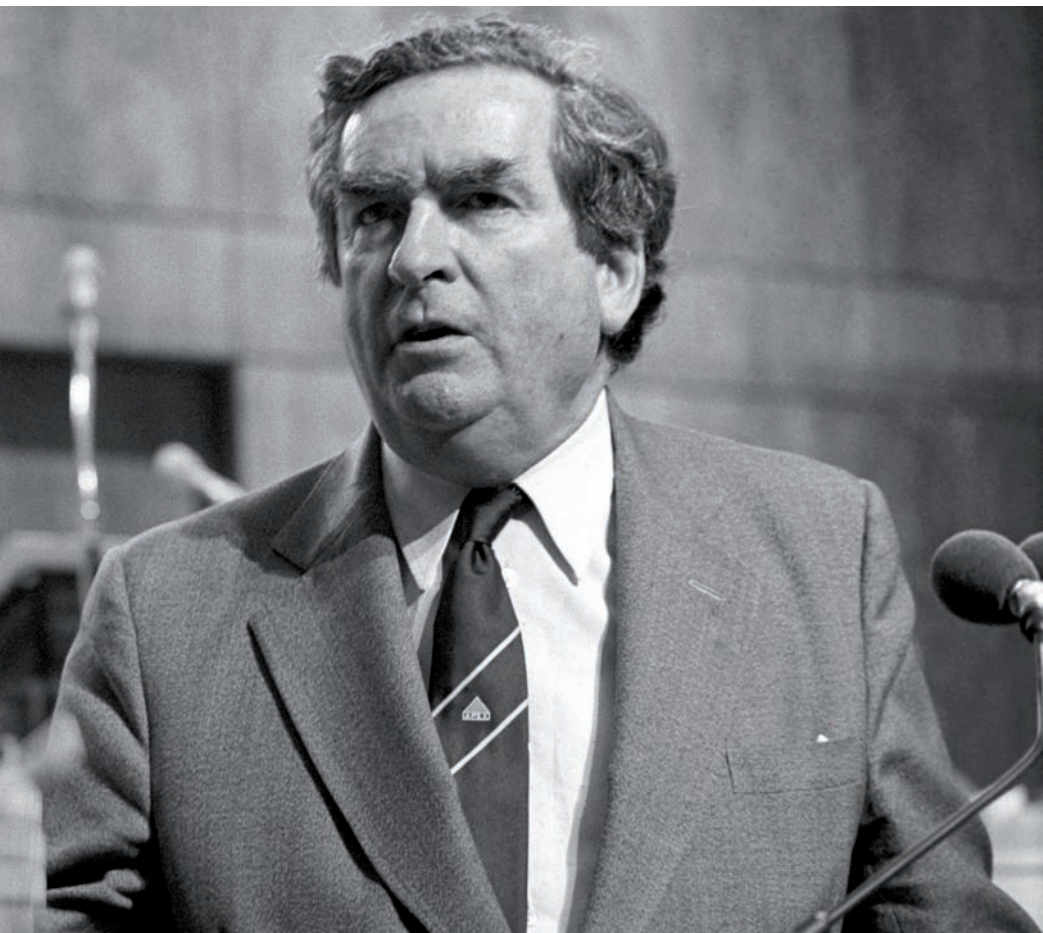
The long-tenure, as Secretary of State for Defence, of Denis Healey ensured that the new ministry fully established itself. Healey presided over a trend towards civilian 'managerialism'. In 1984 Michael Heseltine reduced the authority of the heads of the individual services by requiring them to submit their views through the Chief of the Defence Staff.

Overcoming the mutual suspicions of the three services was a long and painful process. It took over three decades to move from the first regional joint commands, established by Lord Mountbatten in the early 1960s, to the creation of the Permanent Joint HQ at Northwood in 1996. Yet the civilian insistence on 'jointery' actually helped the military to rebuild its authority. Latterly, the military itself has done a successful job in moulding public opinion. In the late 1980s the service chiefs became concerned that the mores of the armed services were becoming too divergent from those of British society: the services need to recruit almost exclusively in the 16-25 age-group. The response was a concerted, and successful, attempt to celebrate the armed forces.

The fall and rise of the senior professional military in Britain lies at the heart of the Ministry of Defence's long-term challenge. British defence policy in 2013 is guided by the same principles that existed at the time of Ministry's formation in 1946: commitment to an alliance with the United States, possession of a nuclear arsenal, the belief that security is global, the moral intuition that war is not evil if fought with defensive intent, and the empirical observation that adequate national defences deter aggression and can, if necessary, defeat an aggressor. Britain spends a modest and, in the long run, falling proportion of its national income on



“ Overcoming the mutual suspicions of the three services was a long and painful process ”



Denis Healey's long tenure as Defence Secretary allowed the MoD to establish itself as a Whitehall big-hitter

war. If, in these conditions, the military are more popular than the politicians and civil servants who should control them then it may be possible to embrace the central tenet of militarism: that war, for whatever purpose, is good, since it enables the full development of human nobility. 🏰

Simon Ball is Professor of International History & Politics at the University of Leeds

MoD Briefing



Battling on all fronts



Is the Ministry of Defence capable of reforming itself? **Andrew Dorman** says it is, at best, a work in progress

In announcing the third tranche of cuts to armed forces personnel Philip Hammond, the Secretary of State for Defence, continued to emphasise the financial mess that the coalition government found the Ministry of Defence (MoD) in when they entered office in May 2010. Since then they have announced a series of initiatives and reforms to the MoD in particular, and the

wider security apparatus more generally. With the third anniversary of the coalition being formed and entering office in May 2013 it is perhaps pertinent to reflect on the relative success of the government so far.

There is no doubt that defence was in general was in a mess. The previous Labour government was criticised on a number of fronts. First, and perhaps most serious, it had been accused of strategic failure and an absence of policy. Secondly, it was accused of financial irresponsibility in approving a series of projects that it was clear it could not afford. Thirdly, the management and running of the MoD was criticised.

So has the coalition tackled these

accusations? The publication of a new National Security Strategy and a Strategic Defence and Security Review (SDSR) certainly provided an authentic narrative for British defence and security policy. The adoption of a risk based approach, coupled with the creation of a National Security Council and the regularising the review cycle received the appropriate plaudits. However, critics have also pointed to the disparity between the aims of the government and the resources provided to defence. This has been made worse by the government's failure to apply its' own logic and avoid unnecessary military adventures such as Libya with possibly Mali and Syria to come.

The government has undertaken a number of steps to resolve the financial problems that beset the MoD. In May 2012 Philip Hammond bravely announced that the defence budget was now in balance. However, many of the financial assumptions particularly those relating to efficiency savings and the sale of assets, have yet to be realised. Further cuts to the defence budget announced by the Chancellor in his 2012 autumn statement has meant that the MoD has now informally entered into a second 'Three Month Review' (TMR) to try and bring its budget back into balance. The previous TMR forced the army to cut a further 8,000 personnel from its regular force (90,000 to 82,000) and led to a number of programme delays, reductions and cancellations most notably to the size of the planned buy of Joint Strike Fighters and loss of much of the army's new fleet of armoured vehicles.

Finally, the two main reform programmes (the MoD current has over 45 ongoing transformational programmes which in itself is problematic) relate to the acquisition process (under Bernhard Gray) and the organisation of the MoD itself (the Levene Report). In both cases progress can, at best,

be described as slow. Changes to Defence Equipment & Support (DE&S) have not yet led to major change and the fudged part privatisation of DE&S is only now beginning to go ahead. More progress has been made with implementing the changes proposed by the Levene Report. Yet the logic behind many of them remains questionable. What, for example, does the new Joint Force Command do? Has the government not merely created a further layer of bureaucracy for the military? Given that the latest edition of the MoD's Defence Statistics appear

“ Critics have pointed to the disparity between the aims of the Government and the resources provided to defence ”

to confirm the trend towards preserving the senior leadership of the armed forces whilst significantly reducing the numbers of junior officers and other ranks the question of whether the MoD is actually capable of reforming itself appears to remain pertinent.

Thus defence reform in the MoD can at best be described as a work in progress. Harsher critics would suggest that the MoD remains locked in what has been dubbed the 'Groundhog Day cycle' in which the MoD continues to remain trapped by its own repeated failure to reform itself. It might therefore be apposite to bring forward the 2015 SDSR as an acknowledgement of the overall failure of defence. 🏰

Andrew Dorman is a Professor in International Security at King's College London and an Associate Fellow at the Royal Institute of International Affairs, Chatham House. ➤

Survival of the fittest



It is feeling the pain of the cuts, but the MoD is leaner and sharper than it once was, writes **Paul Beaver**

Today's Ministry of Defence (MoD) Main Building has a different feel from the one Labour bequeathed to the Coalition in May 2010 – it is leaner, sharper and more focused.

Afghanistan remains the 'main effort' but there is an increasing urgency to find a shape for the armed forces moving into contingent operations after 2015. The whole department, and the armed forces which it leads and serves, is in transition; transforming to meet new financial stringencies and a smaller workforce.

“ The MoD, first under Dr Liam Fox and now under Philip Hammond, is reeling from cuts in funding and in personnel ”

Dr Liam Fox's vision of a smaller, more efficient department springing from the October 2010 Strategic Defence & Security Review (SDSR) is a once-in-a-generation opportunity. He brought in Lord Levene with a team of the 'wise' from across public life and commerce. To change the cosy culture of defence procurement, he enticed into the Defence Equipment & Support (department), the former journalist and press baron Bernard Gray. His critical report on defence acquisition for John Hutton resulted in an, as yet, unpublished Materiel Strategy but it

heralded huge cuts in the civil service working in Bristol and London.

Acquisition reform is vital – but now recognised as part of, rather than all of the problem. The procurement budget is now reportedly balanced, although the National Audit Office seems to think it will take some time before it is clear the future 10-year equipment programme is balanced. Philip Hammond has told the Defence Select Committee that the MoD will no longer place orders hoping that the Treasury will fund the programme and that the management of large programmes which run a wry, like Nimrod and FRES, will be tightened and never happen again.

So the MoD, first under Dr Liam Fox and now under Philip Hammond, is reeling from



cuts in funding and in personnel. Front Line Commands – the Royal Navy, British Army and Royal Air Force, joined last year by the Joint Forces Command – will have power over their own destiny for the first time since the 1960s. Requirements and budgets have been ‘rusticated’ to the Command HQs in Portsmouth, Andover, High Wycombe and Northwood respectively.

The reduction of the Regular Forces by around 30% and the recruitment of Reservists to fill the gaps has been a culture shock. The British Army will have 82,300 Regulars by 2018, the smallest number for more than a Century, and force requirements will be made up with 30,000 Reservists. The logic is sound – the forces don’t need all the skills of war all the time. Some skills, including additional

formations for big scale operations, can be held at lower readiness in the Reserves – but this is a culture shock for those in an Army brought up in a world of ‘heavy metal’ – tanks and armoured infantry. By contrast, the Royal Navy and the Royal Air Force will require fewer Reserves and are less ‘shocked’.

The future should see the potential of transparency and accountability but also delivering on promises to publish information. The jury is out on that. An SDSR every five years is the opportunity to refresh regularly the MoD and the armed forces. And an increase in the budget after 2015 is all very nice but it’s in the hands of the next Parliament. 🏰

Paul Beaver is a defence expert. He runs Beaver Westminster Ltd



Who are the key figures at the Ministry of Defence? Who are the men and women who lead an army of support for Defence Secretary Philip Hammond? And what is the mood in the camp? **Sam Macrory** and **Paul Waugh** investigate

More money or more cuts? A handful of troops to Mali or a deployment in the hundreds? January has been a month of 'bomb-nishambles' for the Ministry of Defence, as mis-matched briefings backfired and the mood at the department plummeted. And with the Prime Minister warning of a "generational struggle" against North African jihadists, the military top brass is said to be furious that there may yet be more spending cuts inflicted on the armed forces.

So who was first out of the blocks to contradict David Cameron after the PM briefed journalists that defence spending would be ring-fenced? His own Defence Secretary. Instead Philip Hammond insisted that the savings would be reserved for equipment only and that he expected further cuts to follow.

He sounded, some MoD insiders felt, like a Treasury minister rather than a military man. And they would be right. Nick Harvey, a former minister, talks of a real shift in "style and *modus operandi*" at the MoD since Hammond replaced Liam Fox as Defence Secretary in late 2011, with defence insiders also noticing a change. "Liam spent five years in Opposition on defence and he learned to appreciate, understand and respect the armed forces. He had a real empathy for service families and developed an

Behind the lines



attachment to the forces that was very real. Philip Hammond was brought in as a safe pair of hands and you know he's going to do it in an unsentimental fashion" said one insider. "Liam invested a lot of personal and political capital in the 2010 spending review to keep the cuts down."

In the end, the cuts were set 7.51%. The extra digit was decided under pressure from the Liberal Democrats, who wanted to be able to round up the figure to 8% to make it look even more drastic to appeal to their base, some Conservatives say.

At the MoD, Hammond is seen as a Secretary of State who is reluctant to delegate, unafraid of taking on the military top brass, and focused on financial management rather than the geopolitical dimensions of defence policy. This isn't to everyone's suiting. "The

“ It's a bit of a caricature to say Philip Hammond is only interested in the numbers ”

strategic direction of the department needs to come from the vision of the Secretary of State. Hammond is really focused on the money and that's fine, but I don't think he's big on strategy", says one defence expert.

And while Fox was criticised for spending so much time abroad, the former Defence Secretary signed 27 different defence cooperation agreements with other countries, many of which have since paid off. In Opposition, he visited the Elysee Palace to tell the Sarkozy administration that the UK under the Tories would want more bilateral defence links with the French. That relationship came in useful in Libya and has again over Mali. Fox visited the Norwegians early on and when

they wanted to withdraw early from Libya used his personal links to change their mind. Similarly, his trips to Qatar, Bahrain and UAE helped drum up support before they were needed in Libya.

Hammond has not globe-trotted to the same effect, and his approach has hardly helped him in the popularity stakes at the MoD, but Fox's successor is seen as the right man to restore the department's reputation within the Treasury.

"He's got this nickname 'The Accountant' but he's never been an accountant in his life!", says one MoD insider. "He was a businessman and brings that experience to the role. It's a bit of a caricature to say he's only interested in the numbers. Yes, he has drilled down on the costs, particularly on equipment. But operations remain a huge part of the job, as does the strategic reforms to procurement and materiel. And Mali is offering a new challenge to that of Afghanistan."

Underlining Hammond's book-balancing focus is the change at the top of the MoD's mandarins, with the Permanent Under Secretary role recently passing from Ursula Brennan to Jon Thompson. The new PUS made the step up from his previous position as the MoD's finance director, and is very much Hammond's pick. Also a part of the inner circle is Thompson's successor David Williams, a popular figure who has experience of a number of former finance-focused roles within the MoD. Hammond also has a recently appointed Private Secretary, MoD veteran Emma Davies. A civil servant since 1992, Davies is a lawyer by training and previously worked at the Home Office. She impressed her bosses as part of the Defence Support Group (DSG) at the MoD.

The Secretary of State has two special advisers. Hayden Allan is a Tory Party veteran,



Ed Llewellyn (standing) is David Cameron's Chief of Staff, and is described as the most important link between the MoD and Downing Street.

having worked at Central Office in Opposition where he was Deputy Head of Press. Though despatched from Downing Street to keep an eye on Liam Fox, Allan was close to the former Defence Secretary and was a guest at Fox's wedding. He is described as personal, friendly, and very much on the Cameroon wing of the party. Tellingly he remained at the MoD after Fox's departure. The second SpAd is Graham Hook. Formerly an assistant director of research and head of briefing at Conservative Central Office, Hook joined lobbying firm Interel after the 2010 General Election before returning to the Tory fold with his appointment as a special adviser to the then Transport Secretary Justine Greening. Hook is described as "High Tory" in his politics, and less comfortable with the constraints of coalition than Allan. It has been reported that special advisers still find it a battle to get access to the civil service briefings of ministers.

The two work closely with the Director of Communications, a position vacated by Simon Wren who moved across to the Home Office. That post is currently being filled on an interim basis by Head of News James Shelley. Despite being seen by many in the MoD as an impressive performer, Shelley has been twice overlooked for a permanent position. The role will instead go to Stephen Jolly, who takes up the Director of Comms post in April. Jolly has been Director of External Affairs and Communications for Cambridge University since 2005, but is also a Visiting Fellow in Psychological Warfare at Kings College London and, fittingly for a communications expert, has researched extensively into the art of black propaganda.

For a while the two Tory SpAds were also joined on a regular basis by Monica Allen, a special adviser for the Deputy Prime Minister who was asked to report



back on goings-on at the MoD, the Foreign Office, and the Department for International Development. American-born Allen was formerly a researcher to Nick Harvey, before the Lib Dem MP was appointed as a Defence Minister in 2010, and is said to have struggled to gain access to top level decisions at the MoD, even during Harvey's time as a minister. While still attending the "occasional meeting", Allen no longer has a desk at the department, a major blow for Liberal Democrat hopes of keeping in the loop on major defence policy decisions.

As Chief of Defence Materiel, Bernard Gray is the most controversial civil servant at the MoD. The former banker and journalist worked as a special adviser to two Labour Defence Secretaries, George Robertson and Geoff Hoon, and was later commissioned

by a third, John Hutton, to lead a review into defence procurement. Gray's damning conclusions made him an unpopular figure at the MoD, where his approach is said to be of the "bull in a china shop" variety. It doesn't help that the man charged with sorting out the MoD's procurement spending is also amongst the highest paid civil servants at the MoD.

Another key figure is Andrew Manley, the head of the Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO). The DIO was set up in 2001 and Manley, a former senior manager at Shell, is responsible for the many acres and buildings in the MoD's possession. He succeeded Sir Timothy Laurence, the husband of Princess Anne. The Defence Business Services, meanwhile, looks after the considerable human resources side of the MoD and is currently run by Serco. In charge



Prime Minister David Cameron (top, second left) chairs the first meeting of the National Security Council in the Cabinet Room at 10 Downing Street.

is HR specialist Mandy Clarke, who began her career in the RAF nearly 30 years ago.

Some worry that the early confusion as Hammond replaced Fox allowed the civil service to extend their influence. The Werritty affair – Fox resigned following questions asked over the role of his friend and self-styled adviser Adam Werritty – allowed civil servants to question the role of special advisers, even though Adam Werritty didn't formally hold the title. Fox had two military assistants, Graham Livesey and Andrew McInerney, but his resignation allowed the civil service to cut that number back to one – and replace the other with a civil servant in his private office.

And civil servants are still blamed for the 'cat and trap' decision, when Fox ordered that aircraft carriers be fitted with catapults and arrestor gear to launch planes at a cost of £350m, only for officials to later revise the cost up to £2bn. Some are surprised that Jon Thompson was promoted to the PUS role given that he was the Director of Finance at the time.

Over at Number 10, meanwhile, the Prime Minister keeps himself closely informed.

The National Security Council was created in 2010, to be attended by senior Cabinet Ministers, military figures and key advisers. Sir Peter Ricketts, the former Permanent Secretary at the Foreign Office, was appointed as the first National Security Adviser, a decision which caused some bafflement in the MoD. It was hoped that his was a stop gap appointment, but Sir Peter – now our man in Paris – has been replaced by Sir Kim Darroch, another FCO veteran and Brussels diplomat. However, while the National Security Council started with great fanfare, some insiders believe that much of its business is now for show. After the formal meeting, the PM, Foreign Secretary William

Hague and Hammond hold another meeting where defence insiders say the real decisions are taken. There is also wider worry about the lack of strategic planning, with the NSC used more as a mini COBRA – the Government's crisis response committee – for crisis management.

Ed Llewellyn, the PM's Chief of Staff, is described as the most important link between the MoD and Downing Street. The Conservative Research Department alumnus has also worked for Paddy Ashdown during the former Lib Dem leader's time as High Representative in Bosnia, and is a long-time

“ As Chief of Defence Materiel, Bernard Gray is the most controversial civil servant at the MoD ”

friend of the PM's. Llewellyn acts as a *de facto* adviser on foreign policy, attends meetings of the National Security Council alongside the PM, and is said to have been at heart of policy decisions during 2011's campaign in Libya. Also based in Downing Street is Tim Colbourne, a special adviser to Nick Clegg who focuses on defence-based issues.

David Cameron is also the first Prime Minister since Winston Churchill to have his own Military Assistant, a decision taken in 2010 which was seen as a major snub to Liam Fox. However, Downing Street described the appointment of Colonel Jim Morris, a decorated Marine who had fought in Helmand, as evidence of the PM's commitment to the campaign in Afghanistan. He has since been succeeded by Colonel Gwyn Jenkins. The PM is also kept well briefed by Richard Freer, the defence 'man-marker' who works as part of the Policy Unit. The



Clockwise from
above: Former
Defence Secretary
Liam Fox, Lib Dem
SpAd Monica Allen;
senior civil servant
Bernard Gray; MoD
SpAd Graham Hook;
MoD Permanent
Under Secretary Jon
Thompson; incoming
Director of Comms
Stephen Jolly



MoD fast streamer is a veteran of the Cabinet Office, where he worked as Head of the Defence and Security Policy team, and also worked in 10 Downing Street under Gordon Brown as the Private Secretary for Defence issues. Former colleagues at the MoD complain that Freer has “gone native” since his move down Whitehall.

The cost-saving priorities at the MoD have also seen a shift in the key relations at the top of the department. Where previously the pivot was between the Secretary of State and the Chief of Defence Staff, it’s now very much between Hammond and his Parliamentary Under Secretary.

The current Chief of Defence Staff is General Sir David Richards who sits on the defence board and comes into play when UK forces are involved in a conflict situation. He comes with his aide Tom Tugendhardt, a Cambridge-graduate and TA man who acts as a key spinner for the CDS.

A figure to watch is Air Chief Marshal Sir Stuart Peach, who has been appointed Vice Chief of the Defence Staff and will take over from General Sir Nicholas Houghton in May 2013. Peach is said to be a well trusted and respected figure. Houghton, meanwhile, has been installed as favourite to replace Richards as CDS later this year, though General Sir Peter Wall, the Chief of the General Staff, is said to be in the running. Should Wall move on, his replacement will face the daunting challenge of restoring morale in an armed forces which has been heavily reduced since spending cuts were introduced.

The post of military assistant in the Secretary of State’s Office carries considerable influence. Usually held by a colonel or lieutenant colonel recently returned from a command post, the Military Assistant has

considerable interaction with the Secretary of State and offers interim military advice. The appointment, which usually lasts between 18 months and two years, has recently been held by a member of the Royal Marines – prompting jealous grumblings.

But the green-eyed monster is the least of MoD’s problems as the spending cuts continue, only now with a Defence Secretary whose head for figures makes him far less of a figurehead for the troops than his predecessor. And with a new front opened in Mali, British forces still in Afghanistan, and troops recently returned from Libya, the demands on the UK’s armed forces show no signing of easing up. The Ministry of Defence will be hoping that the next ‘bombnishambles’ is diffused before any more damage is done. 🏰

Sam Macrory is Political Editor of The House Magazine and **Paul Waugh** is Dods Editor in Chief

Jon Thompson, the Ministry of Defence's Permanent Secretary, tells **Matt Ross** how he intends to turn this most complex of Whitehall departments into a more professional and financially sound operation

The Ministry of Defence is a very complex organisation in which to operate, says Jon Thompson, its permanent secretary. "You've got to be able to live in a world of mixed cultures and inherent tensions; in a very, very large organisation which is quite complicated," he explains. "And it's not civil servants; we work with military colleagues. It's a fusion of different cultures, because all three services have different cultures, too; so you've got to be able to work in quite a complicated cultural landscape."

The management structure is equally nuanced. Thompson, who was appointed to his role last September, gestures to one wall of the meeting room where we're talking, deep inside the ministry's labyrinthian Whitehall HQ: "Next door is the office of the chief of defence staff," he says. "Technically, the organisation has nine people of permanent secretary rank. I'm the permanent secretary, but there's another civilian and seven military officers at this level. It's a hybrid organisation where the chief of the defence staff has some military responsibilities; I have some military responsibilities as accounting officer; and we have some joint responsibilities that overlap. I think that's unique."

Within this multifaceted, multicultural structure, the MoD manages a large number of extremely difficult projects: a third of the schemes in the government's major projects portfolio fall within its remit. "Building a nuclear reactor and putting it inside a

submarine is not a straightforward thing to do, and you don't do it very often," says Thompson, noting that a nuclear sub contains two million moving parts. The scientific, engineering and technological work involved is often "incredibly difficult. It's fantastically complicated – and I don't think people necessarily appreciate that."

That's not the end of it, Thompson points out. Buying decisions have to take into account the importance of supporting the UK's industrial base, and of retaining the military's operational autonomy: "There are times when we need to protect our own sovereignty; to ensure that we fully understand how everything works, that we're an independent nation. Sometimes it might be cheaper in cash terms to go overseas to buy something, but you need to think about the consequences for the UK long-term."

What's more, many projects are developed in partnership with other countries – presenting the MoD with yet another set of calculations and uncertainties. "The Typhoon [jet fighter], for example, is something we're doing with three other countries in a consortium. That brings in additional complexity about how you meet everyone's requirements," he says. "The reality is that you can't develop military air power on your own. The development costs alone are billions of pounds, so you have to spread them with some partners."

Tripped up by complex landscape

Given these challenges, it's not surprising that the MoD has struggled to manage its budgets and equipment purchases – but as Thompson acknowledges, many of its travails have been rooted in systemic problems. In 2009 a report commissioned from the former businessman, special adviser and journalist Bernard Gray found – as Thompson puts it – that project ➤

A man with a mustache, wearing a dark pinstripe suit, a light blue shirt, and a blue patterned tie, stands in front of a large, classical-style building with prominent columns and windows. He has his hands clasped in front of him and is looking directly at the camera with a slight smile. The building behind him has a series of windows on the upper floor and a dark entrance with columns. A security camera is visible on the left side of the building. The text 'Honest Jon' is overlaid in large, bold, lime green letters.

Honest Jon

managers were habitually “over-optimistic about what things would cost and how quickly they could be delivered, in order to get them into the programme, and then we’d get new evidence and the cost would go up and the timescale would grow.” Projects were repeatedly deferred to push back spending, adding to their cost; and for 30 years the MoD failed to balance its budget – something that Thompson, speaking in July at Civil Service Live, attributed to a “lack of bravery to tackle the problem.” Ultimately, the gap between the MoD’s commitments and its predicted income over ten years grew to £38bn by mid-2010 – “then the spending review made it £63bn,” points out Thompson.

In recent years, the MoD has tackled the dynamics that got it into this hole. It’s working to drive down the cost of basic commodities

through the Cabinet Office’s bulk-buying frameworks – “We’re an enormous user of energy, and we’ve led some of the way on that,” says Thompson – and recruiting more commercial specialists. Crucially, it’s also teamed up with consultancy KPMG to create a Cost Assurance Function able to assess and predict defence project costs and timescales. This is designed to give ministers and officials “an independent source of evidence as to whether what we’re being told [by suppliers and project leads] is broadly right,” says Thompson. It sounds remarkably like the Pricing Forecast Group that was, says the Prospect Union, wound down some time ago; at any rate, the MoD recognises the need for greater expertise in assessing and monitoring defence projects: “We’re deliberately saying that this is a fundamental issue for us: it needs more



resource, and we're putting more people into that area and bringing the best of the private sector into a strategic partnership," he says.

Having improved its information on schemes' likely prices and delivery dates, the ministry also needed to stiffen its readiness to decline or axe those which now look too expensive. This, says Thompson, was achieved in 2009 by taking the chairmanship of the Investment Approval Committee – the “primary decision-making body” on procurement matters – from the chief scientific adviser and passing it to the finance director (FD); who was then Thompson himself. “In 2010, for the first time, we turned projects down,” he says.

These developments have addressed the MoD's main weaknesses, argues Thompson. “There were two significant issues that were

missing in the past,” he says. “There wasn't enough of a finance voice in the decision-making process; and there wasn't enough of a voice about whether something could be delivered on time.” The strengthening of the FD, the recruitment of Gray as the chief of defence materiel, and the new Cost Assurance Function should prevent the MoD from digging more budgetary holes, Thompson believes.

The legacy problem

The MoD must still, however, get out of the hole created by its past errors. “The challenge for us is that there is a vast legacy of projects previously approved which are in manufacture, and we've been reviewing them and seeing whether they're realistic or not,” says Thompson. ➤



“ We're looking at ways to get private sector expertise and capacity into the organisation whilst keeping the essence of the civil service and the MoD at the heart of it ”

Some of these projects are far too advanced to be substantially changed. Later in the conversation I ask whether, tasked with building a new fast jet, Thompson would create something like the Typhoon project: an international scheme constantly compromised to distribute work between the partners and meet their different operational requirements. He laughs – and not quite in his usual comfortable way: “That’s a slightly unfair question,” he replies. “It’s one of those great legacy projects that other people decided on.”

Other schemes have been dramatically altered since the general election; and some of them subsequently altered again. The coalition performed an awkward U-turn, for example, on the type of jets planned for its new aircraft carrier. Here, though, Thompson expresses no doubts: “Ministers made the right decision on the basis of what we knew in 2010, and they changed it in 2012 when we had a more mature understanding [of the costs of the two options] – and that was also the right decision,” he says, pointing out that the original decision was always flagged as contingent on further analytical work.

He sounds less confident about some of the other elements of the 2010 Strategic Defence and Security Review (SDSR). Although Thompson praises the government for running a first-principles rethink of the UK’s security operations – and for promising to run them every five years in future – he doesn’t claim that the process was perfect. “It was done with a new government, in the middle of a financial crisis, in a new structure [incorporating a national security adviser and council], in a six month period,” he says. “I think it made broadly all the right choices, but as we learn more as time goes on, we’ll refine [the decision-making process] for the next SDSR.”

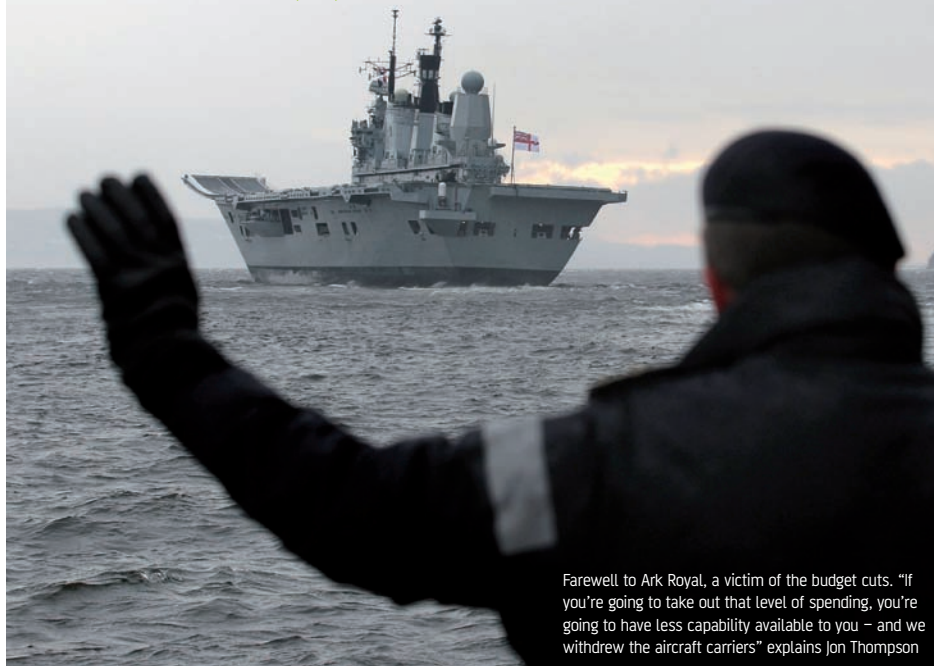
In particular, Thompson suggests that he wants to improve the evidence base on which ministers must make key decisions. The 2010 SDSR taught the MoD “some lessons about what kind of preparation you need to have and what does that require, and what’s the right kind of evidence that ministers need to consider in making judgements,” he says. “So in late 2012 we’ve already begun some of the preparation work for a post-election SDSR.” Strategy and finance staff are, he adds, already “thinking about what’s the right kind of evidence, what are the big choices, and there’s a programme of work that builds up to 2015.”

Defending services, attacking waste

The SDSR was made far tougher by the spending cuts, which have exacerbated the challenge of squeezing the MoD’s spending commitments into its budget: while the ministry has been filling in its financial hole, the spending review has been piling up more ramparts around the pit mouth. So the ministry is not only facing a 38 per cent cut in civilian staff over 10 years – more than 15 per cent have already gone – but also making difficult decisions on its equipment and infrastructure. “If you’re going to take out that level of spending, you’re going to have less capability available to you – and we withdrew the aircraft carriers and Harriers from service, and we closed some bases and we have less people,” says Thompson. “That’s the economic reality that we face.”

Nearly 20 per cent of forces jobs will also disappear – a fact that worries the public much more than the loss of civil service roles. Yet as Thompson points out, the vast majority of civilian staff are not “pen-pushing bureaucrats” but “doing incredible work in science or project management or research or maintaining equipment or working with suppliers or

“ You’ve got to be able to work in quite a complicated cultural landscape, and you either survive that or you don’t ”



Farewell to Ark Royal, a victim of the budget cuts. “If you’re going to take out that level of spending, you’re going to have less capability available to you – and we withdrew the aircraft carriers” explains Jon Thompson

whatever. The number of classic civil servants working in HQ on policy is one to two per cent of the civilian population, and the vast majority are doing very practical work – but that gets lost in the debate, and that’s a pity.”

The public’s skewed sensibilities also create a presentational problem for the MoD: it might be more efficient to replace a back office military staffer with a civilian, but that cuts forces numbers while increasing the number of civil servants. “There is an inherent tension” in these decisions, Thompson acknowledges. “We have to navigate that as an additional dimension and layer to the question

of: what’s the right kind of value for money solution for the taxpayer?”

At this time of difficult, complex financial decisions, it’s probably a good thing to have a finance professional at the helm – and Thompson is a talented and very experienced finance director. Blessed with a form of synaesthesia in which numbers are linked to colours – enabling him to see from glancing at a spreadsheet whether the figures add up – he joined Norfolk County Council’s finance team aged 18, and studied part-time to get his accountancy qualifications. After working for Eagle Star Insurance and Ernst & Young, ➤



The Typhoon jet fighter is a project involving three other countries in a consortium. "That brings in additional complexity about how you meet everyone's requirements" admits Jon Thompson

he returned to council jobs and then moved via Ofsted into the education department. Appointed the MoD's FD in 2009, he's always been a cheerleader for the professionalisation of the civil service – and while he plainly thinks there's room to further improve some of the Whitehall professions, he talks proudly of the progress that's been made in the finance function.

When Thompson joined the MoD, he replaced the last unqualified finance director of a department of state – and since then, he says, "the capacity and capability of the finance function across Whitehall has improved because you've changed the leadership, and the leadership changes the way the system works." Next April, he adds, control over the MoD's budgets will pass from HQ to the frontline services: "The best person to run the Army is the chief of the general staff, not people in this building trying to decide what is and is not best for the Army," he explains.

Professing support for professions

The MoD's project management is also being professionalised, says Thompson – partly by improving in-house skills and capabilities, and partly by bringing in external partners. "The question for us is getting the right balance between our own people and support from the outside," he says, noting that the ministry is developing a materiel strategy to set out "how we improve the acquisition of military capability and big, complicated programmes, many of which are technological leaders."

Indeed, the MoD is pushing Whitehall boundaries by outsourcing substantial parts of its work, in an effort to cut head count and improve its efficiency and abilities. The ministry has already farmed out the leadership of its corporate services, says

Thompson, while it's looking for a partner for its information systems and considering whether to bring in a logistics partner. Defence Equipment & Support may well end up as a government-owned contractor – “A final decision is to be made late this year or early in 2013,” he says – and the Defence Infrastructure Organisation has shortlisted a set of firms keen to take over much of its management and frontline work. “We’re looking at ways to get private sector expertise and capacity into the organisation whilst keeping the essence of the civil service and the MoD at the heart of it,” he says, arguing that the ministry needs business partners “to bring in capacity, capability, skills, ways of working, information systems which take us forward as an organisation”.

Having worked in the private sector and local government for much of his career, Thompson has no qualms about reaching beyond Whitehall to bring in investment cash, technologies and skills – but his main message has been consistent ever since he joined Ofsted in 2005: the civil service, he argues, must become more professional if it's to square the demands of ever-growing public expectations with its ever-shrinking public budgets. “This is a fantastic department of state and it does the most amazing things, but it needs to transform and reform itself into a professional organisation,” he says. “We need to significantly improve all the parts of the organisation that support the frontline: acquisition, project management, commercial skills, information systems; there needs to be a step change in all of those kinds of areas, and that's the big thing for us in terms of changing this organisation on a functional level.”

That is, of course, a very big job; and it sounds as if Thompson would like to stick around long enough to make some serious

“Building a nuclear reactor and putting it inside a submarine is not a straightforward thing to do, and you don't do it very often”

progress. “People come into the MoD from outside, and to start with there's a tremendous buzz about working in the defence landscape, but eventually you see people get to the point where either they've really got it and it bites them, or it doesn't,” he explains.

Some people, worn down by the complexity of the organisation – by its cultural fault lines; by its multitudinous power structures and painstaking decision-making processes; by the three-way pull between military, civil service and political authorities – conclude “after six or nine months: ‘I don't think I can work within this machine’,” says Thompson. But he feels thoroughly at home: “I completely get it, and absolutely love working here,” he says. “You've got to be able to work in quite a complicated cultural landscape, and you either survive that or you don't. But for me it's a tremendous experience; a great thing to try to work through. It bites me!” 🏠

Matt Ross is Editor of *Civil Service World*, which published this article on 3 October 2012

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Former Armed Forces Minister **Nick Harvey**, surprisingly removed from his job last summer, talks to Sam Macrory

If anyone thought the Armed Forces would survive the age of austerity, they have been proven badly wrong.

By the time the Coalition

Government completes its five year term, there will be 42,000 fewer men and women in uniform than when it came to power. There won't be as many ships either. Or planes. Or tanks.

The harsh facts were revealed back in October 2010, when the Government's Strategic Defence and Security Review set out how savings to the defence budget to the tune of £4.7bn – an eight per cent cut – would be made over the next four years.

Stepping into the political firing line was Nick Harvey, the Liberal Democrat representative in the Ministry of Defence as the Minister for the Armed Forces. Harvey took the hits at the Despatch Box, toured the barracks, went to the front line in Afghanistan, and argued why each one of those 42,000 job losses was unavoidable if Britain was to balance its books.

Then, last September, that number rose to 42,001 as Harvey himself was asked to stand down from duty in a Government reshuffle. He was surprised to lose his job. So were the civil servants he had worked with. But as Nick Clegg rearranged his limited handed of ministerial cards, the Deputy Prime Minister decided to trade in a Lib Dem presence at the MoD and the Foreign Office.

Harvey has agreed to an interview in a week where defence issues have dominated the news, with a key Prime

Ministerial statement on British military operations in Africa on Monday, the publication of the latest job losses to the armed forces on Tuesday, and then speculation of further cuts stirring up the row over whether Britain should renew its nuclear deterrent.

A recent knighthood may have softened the loss of the baubles of office, but the now Liberal Democrat backbencher admits that he has spent the last few days with "a strong sense of sort of missing out on some of the action". He then adds, with a mischievous smile: "On the other hand, I am a lot freer to say whatever I think."

But the smile drops when he discusses his party leader's decision to allow the Lib Dems to vacate the MoD and the FCO.

"It's a mistake – I make no bones about it," says Harvey when asked about the reshuffle. "The Liberal Democrats are an international party, we always have been. To come out of both of these departments, I think is very unfortunate and does leave a gap. Defence isn't entirely an international issue either: it's a domestic issue, there are armed forces in communities up and down the country. It's not that we're shut out of the debate, we're not, but to be inside Government but excluded from both those departments I think is a mistake and it certainly leaves the Deputy Prime Minister's team having to work quite hard. They'll see the papers but they won't have had somebody in there helping shape them."

But the Liberal Democrats' loss is a gain for anybody wanting to know what may have been said behind closed doors as those defence papers were crafted. On the effect of the on-going cuts in



particular, Harvey is candid.

“Morale is suffering. That’s just inevitable. You freeze pay. You cut allowances, you slash numbers. You work those who are left all the harder to make up for those who have gone. You throw in, for good measure, doubt about where people are going to be based, doubt about what their future pensions are going to look like. By the time you have compounded all those things together it’s just inevitable that morale is going to be suffering.” And, he says, beyond working through the issues and giving people “as much clarification and certainty as they can”, there is little that can be done to help. “In the general military family there are morale issues. The sooner these redundancies are done the better because, you know, the Sword of Damocles is hanging over you and you don’t know whether you’re going to get axed. When it’s all done, those who are left know they are going to be there for the long term.”

Back in Whitehall, and at the MoD’s many out-postings across the UK, life in the office is not much fun either as “the civil service numbers have already been reduced very seriously and by 2020 they will have been ravaged”. Out in the field, at least, the situation is



Soldiering on

different. “Those who are involved in deployments... morale is very, very high. That’s what they joined to do. If you go to Afghanistan you won’t, in my experience, find any problem whatever with morale nor will you in the groups working up to or just back from [Afghanistan].”

The latest round of cuts were announced on Tuesday, with confirmation that 5300 more jobs would be lost. Only 24 hours earlier, the Prime Minister had told the Commons that the UK should be braced for a ‘generational’ struggle against international terrorism.

Harvey was encouraged with the Prime Minister’s insistence that there would be “no quick or magic solutions” to the Al Qaeda threat, as well as the clear message that the UK – in contrast to the rapid mobilising of Afghanistan-bound troops following the 9/11 attacks – would not “dash in and do anything impulsive”. However, he wonders if the announcement on cuts could not have been better timed.

“It’s a pretty cruel bloody irony that the very next day his Ministers are back in the Commons justifying the third tranche of the military redundancies. There was nothing new there, but in presentational terms... a bit sub-optimal in terms of Downing Street grid management.”

Then on the Wednesday, Jack Straw, a former Labour Foreign Secretary, suggested French military engagement in Mali, and before that the RAF’s mission in Libya, presented a case for the SDSR to be reopened. Harvey is deeply unimpressed.

“One of the silliest and most fatuous criticisms Labour makes of the SDSR is [that] it didn’t mention Mali or it didn’t mention Libya or whatever. I mean, it wasn’t meant to be a fucking global travel guide, it was a description of the sort of things we ought to be equipped to do. What we did in Libya and



what we could putatively do in Mali were entirely covered by the SDSR but capacity is finite. There is a limit to how many of these engagements we can take on at once. The fact the SDSR didn't mention Mali by name is of no consequence whatsoever."

Despite the strident defence, Harvey's answer reveals his recognition that there is a "limit" to how many military engagements the UK can sign up to.

"You can cut and cut and cut and cut until there's nothing left, but you will cease to have coherence and you will cease to have the ability to deploy a worthwhile number in a conflict situation if you take it much further," Harvey warns, adding that "we're pretty close to the bone anyway."

"I don't think we can take it any further. You get to a certain point... if all we wanted to do was to defend our shores you could move to a sort of Home Guard, but if we want to continue our international efforts to defend our global interests, and the UK does have global economic reach, there is a critical mass below which you cannot dip and still make a worthwhile contribution – and we're not far from it."

And the Minister who helped draw up the cuts is now the ex-Minister who recognises that key elements of the armed forces have been lost. "We lost things we could not afford to lose already. The Royal Navy has got too few vessels in service, too little manpower, to execute the tasks already being asked of it," he says, also voicing concerns about "the manpower reductions on the army front".

The reductions will be balanced by a building up and integrating of the Territorial Army, a restructuring which Harvey says is crucial: "Let's hope to God the build up of the TA works. I think it will, but My God we need it to."

“ The SDSR wasn't meant to be a fucking global travel guide, it was a description of the sort of things we ought to be equipped to do ”

There is, at least, a political positive as the cuts bite: Harvey believes the MoD's willingness to face economic reality has improved its standing in Government – and in particular its relations with the Treasury.

"It's a bloody sight better than it was two years ago," he says. "The MoD was very squarely on the naughty step when we arrived in 2010. I wouldn't say it's completely out of the woods yet but the progress made to get the finances in order has undoubtedly put them in better odour with the Treasury. Certainly, I think Number 10 under Labour got exasperated with the MoD – it was costing all this money and was the source of bad news stories. Political patience had run thin."

If the two Coalition partners recognised the need to save money on defence spending, they agreed only to disagree on the subject of whether to renew Britain's nuclear deterrent. A final decision on Trident was postponed until 2016, with the Liberal Democrats

A large submarine is on the water. A person in a dark uniform and helmet stands on the deck near a blue structure. A Union Jack flag is flying from a pole. The background shows a hilly landscape with trees under a cloudy sky.

“ There is no alternative way of producing an equivalent deterrent with equivalent capability and do it much cheaper...”

On Trident, Nick Harvey worries that the likes of former Defence Secretary Liam Fox “just believe in magic money, they think the Treasury will cough up for Trident”







permitted to lead a review into alternative replacements which Harvey says “will conclude in the next couple of months and come into the public domain their after that”.

For those Conservatives, such as former Defence Secretary Liam Fox, who insists that Trident is the “ultimate guarantee of national security”, Harvey warns that the review will make for painful reading. “There is no alternative way of producing an equivalent deterrent with equivalent capability and do it much cheaper. That isn’t the exam question. The exam question is recognising is there anything we can do that would have a credible deterrent effect, with diminished capability, and cost us less money?” To spend the same, Harvey warns, will mean that other “big ticket items – far more relevant to what Cameron was talking about on Monday” will “have to give... our ability will be more reduced if we’ve sacrificed a disproportionate part of the

budget to the nuclear deterrent”.

Surely Fox, and his fellow Trident advocates, understand that? Harvey says his former boss recognises the budgetary pressures on the MoD, but adds: “If you talk to them in the corridor they just believe in magic money, they think the Treasury will cough up for Trident because they have to. We spent the summer of 2010 believing that Cameron would save us from cuts and then it became clear we were going to have to make some pretty savage cuts. My reading of it is that that will happen again.”

Given that, it might be tempting to think that Nick Harvey is happier to be out of the MoD, no longer responsible for reading through the balance sheets and drawing red lines through troop numbers and fleet sizes. Not a bit of it. It’s clear that he not only wants to be there, but that he worries what the consequences are for his party to have vacated the international stage.



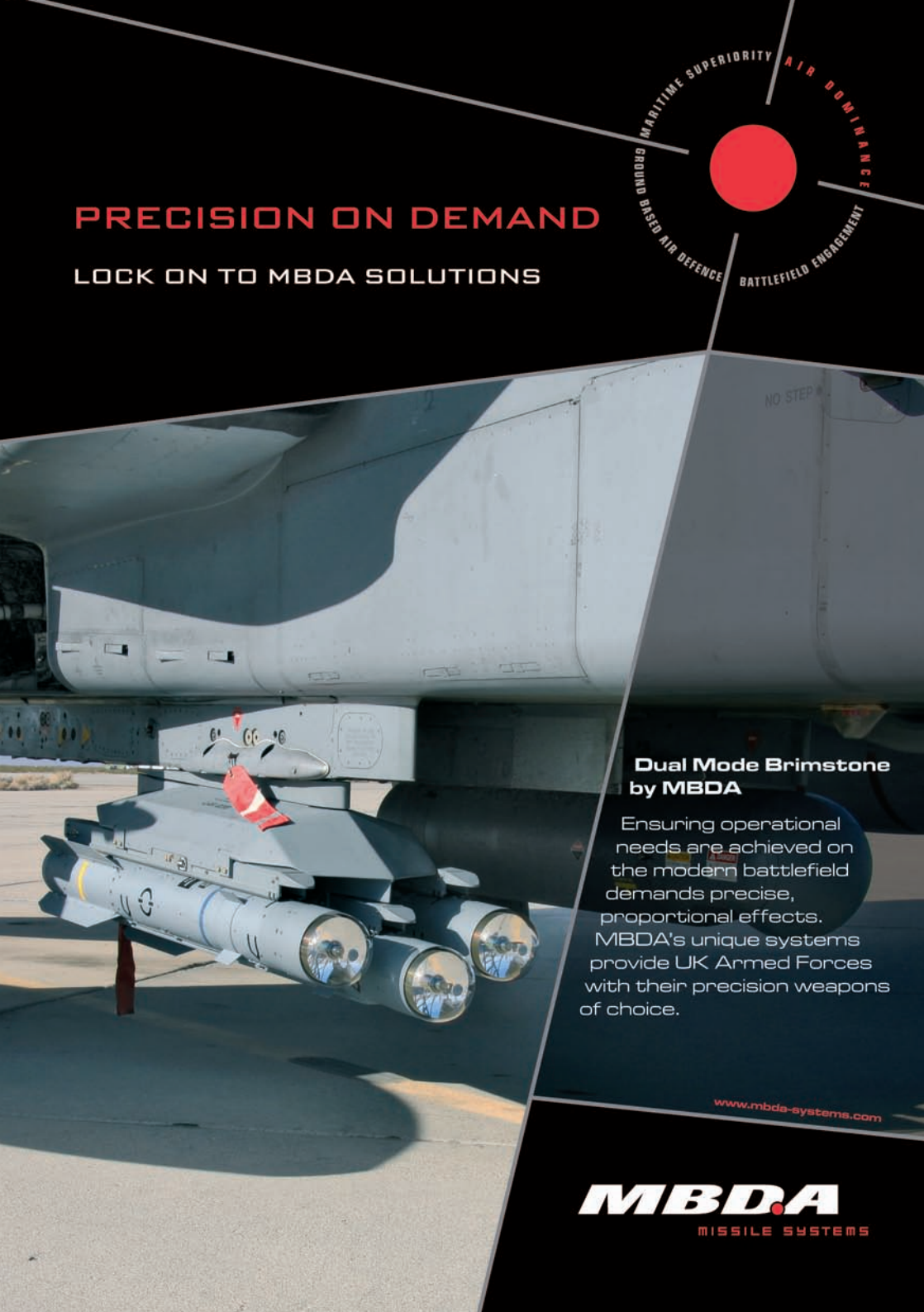


When in office... As Minister of State for the Armed Forces, Nick Harvey arrives at Downing Street with the Head of the British Armed Forces General Sir David Richards

“ The civil service numbers have already been reduced very seriously and by 2020 they will have been ravaged ”

“We must never again go into a Coalition and settle for an arrangement where we do not have a Minister in every department. I just don’t understand why the largest party in the Coalition imagines that the smaller party in the Coalition should support anything emerging from the department in which we don’t have any representation. It’s just completely crackers. You need someone inside there, helping shape the agenda.”

But they don’t, leaving the former Minister doing his best to influence defence policy despite returning to civilian duty. He might be a surprise victim of the military cuts, but at least Nick Harvey is no longer duty bound to stand in line. 🏰



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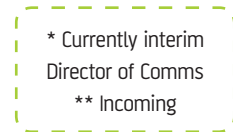
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Back in 2009, Philip Hammond day-dreamed of a future in which he had spent the 2010 Parliament bringing order to the Treasury's finances: "OK, he might have been a great figure to pin up on the dartboard and throw darts at but, yeah, it did work and, yes, we have protected our frontline public services and we've now got our fiscal accounts back into some kind of balance" said Hammond of how he would like to be seen – after proving himself as a successful Chief Secretary to the Treasury.

But the dream never became reality. The constraints of Coalition saw Hammond bumped from his Shadow Chief Secretary role to first the Department for Transport and then, after Liam Fox's resignation in 2011, the Ministry of Defence.

But to hear the Defence Secretary talk, some might think he is a Chief Secretary in camouflage. January's 'bombnishambles' row over defence budgets saw Hammond sound more like a Treasury book-balancer than the MoD's top man, underlining worries among military top brass that he is, to borrow Aneurin Bevan's description of Hugh Gaitskell, a 'desiccated calculating machine'. Where well-placed sources insisted that the Prime Minister would stand by a pledge to increase defence spending in real terms, his Defence Secretary stressed that only the equipment budget was protected, instead preferring to boast that "we are constantly driving efficiency through our budget" rather than issue a rallying cry for the men and women in uniform.

It is very much the Hammond way. His focus is the balance sheet rather than the geo-political demands of defence. The MoD's book-balancing mission hasn't changed with his arrival, but Hammond's way of working is said to be far removed from his predecessor Liam Fox. The present Secretary of State prefers every document to pass via his desk, with his reluctance to delegate frustrating the MoD's civil servants. And where Fox could keep plenty of military-shaped plates spinning at any one time, Hammond is a one-issue man. The style may not be popular, but as one MoD insider notes, it does the job, and does it well.

That should be no surprise to anyone who has watched Hammond's progress. He took the political class's favoured route of a PPE degree at Oxford, made millions as a successful entrepreneur in a range of fields, and spent time advising both the World Bank and the Government of Malawi. First elected to Parliament in 1997, Hammond held front bench roles under every Tory leader from William Hague onwards before ending up in his Shadow Chief Secretary role. At the DfT he was quietly effective: it is telling that the botched handling of the East Coast Mainline franchise took place once he had moved on.

Now at the MoD, Hammond admits that he spent his first few weeks "drowning" in acronyms, but his mission remains the same. "The capital programme that was sinking defence for many years... needs to be straightened out and getting on an even keel," he declared in his first weeks in the role. He did business, he means business. He may yet get his wish of getting his picture pinned up on the dartboard. 

Words: Sam Macrory

A photograph of Philip Hammond, a middle-aged man with grey hair, wearing a dark blue suit, white shirt, and red tie. He is holding a large stack of papers, including a blue document with the 'CISD' logo. He is standing in front of a black wrought-iron fence and a dark stone wall. The text 'Philip Hammond' is overlaid in large red letters.

Philip Hammond

Secretary of State for Defence

Andrew Robathan

Minister for the Armed Forces

Words: Sam Macrory

Andrew Robathan is a Parliamentarian designed for ministerial life at the Ministry of Defence. He's served in the Coldstream Guards, spent time in the SAS, and saw action as a volunteer the first Iraq War. He also spent time as a defence spokesman while in Opposition. Given that he was one of the first Tory MPs to back David Cameron for the Party leadership, Robathan must have thought that a job would at the MoD would be his after the 2010 General Election.

It was, but he wasn't happy. In moving from the Opposition Whips office – Robathan had earned the nickname 'Robocop' during his time there – to the post of Minister for Defence Personnel, Welfare and Veterans, Robathan became the first ex-forces MoD minister in 13 years, but he is said to have dismissed the move as a demotion. It didn't help that a Liberal Democrat MP, Nick Harvey, occupied the Minister for the Armed Forces post which Robathan desired.

But not everyone shared Robathan's high opinion of himself, with *The Sun* attacking David Cameron for the "promotion of buffoons like Andrew Robathan."

That newspaper took particular delight when, during a Commons debate, the Minister is said to have taken exception when servicemen in the public gallery started to applaud MPs who stood up to oppose cuts to the Armed Forces. Robathan was reported to have demanded that the Deputy Speaker order the watching ex-soldiers to leave the building, but he later denied the charge, insisting that "anybody should be allowed to watch our proceedings from the gallery.... what you allege is entirely untrue".

It wasn't the first time the Minister, who has a reputation at the MoD for a brusque



style, has made unfortunate headlines. The previous year he had waded into the debate over whether to award medals to Arctic convoy veterans, with the rather unfortunate declaration that “the intention post-war was not to cover everybody in medals. Medals in the UK mean something. Authoritarian regimes and dictators often throw around a lot of medals”. No offence intended, the Minister later protested.

However with nearly two decades as an

MP under his belt, his blips are few and far between. A veteran of the John Major Government and a Shadow Minister throughout the long Opposition years, Robathan will feel that he has done his time and deserves his promotion. He is also the only Commons minister from the 2010 MoD appointments left in the department.

With British troops now dispatched to Mali, we will be hearing a lot more from the Minister for the Armed Forces. 🏰

Mark Francois

Minister for Defence Personnel,
Welfare and Veterans

Words: Sam Macrory

Mark Francois has wanted a job at the Ministry of Defence for some time. A shadow Europe minister before the election, Francois was unceremoniously bumped to the whips office when the Coalition was formed in 2010. However, his responsibilities included defence, and it was clear that Francois was a likely candidate for an MoD posting should the opportunity arrive.

London-born, Basildon-bred, and Bristol-educated, Mark Gino Francois – his late mother was Italian – had worked out his political views from a young age. He chaired the Bristol University Conservative Association, before going on to spend much of the 1990s toiling tirelessly as a Tory councillor Essex. He tried for Parliament twice, but on both occasions found a big political beast barring his path. One was Ken Livingstone, who swept Francois aside in North London. The other was Michael Portillo, chosen ahead of Francois to stand in the late Alan Clark's Kensington seat. But Francois battled on and secured himself the safe seat of Rayleigh in 2001 despite coming up against a certain Boris Johnson in the hustings.

Michael Howard his potential, and added the strongly Eurosceptic – Francois warned against being “subsumed by a foreign superstate that ignores our traditions” in his maiden speech – newcomer to his shadow Treasury team. Whilst there he met George Osborne, who retained his



fellow 2001 intake member after being made Shadow Chancellor. The pair see eye to eye, with Francois fully onside the programme of eye-watering MoD spending cuts.

But the Minister for Defence Personnel, Welfare and Veterans is not just a numbers man: Francois has a masters degree in War Studies, is a member of the International Institute for Strategic Studies, and has spent postings in Berlin and Cyprus during his time in the TA as part of the Royal Anglian Regiment. And the link to the Armed Forces goes back further: Francois' father Reginald spent the Second World War serving in the Royal Navy.

“I had always hoped one day that I might become a minister in the MoD, it's something I have always wanted,” Mark Francois said on his appointment, and he has certainly made himself heard since his arrival.

One insider describes the new minister as “sharp-elbowed”, his lack of height compensated for with an impressively powerful set of vocal chords: Francois is said to be a minister unafraid to raise his voice when he wants something done. We can expect to hear a lot more from him in the months to come. 🍷

Dr Andrew Murrison

Minister of State for International Security Strategy

Words: Joseph Briggs

Another of the MoD team with military experience, Dr Andrew Murrison served in the Royal Navy for three decades – somewhat surprisingly, given that he was raised in the historic Army town of Colchester.

It was with the help of the Navy, via a scholarship, that Murrison trained for what would be his principal role in the service: he became a doctor in 1984, after graduating from the medical school at Bristol University.

Murrison served with the Navy for 20 years, and, when he resigned in 2001 to become Tory candidate for Westbury, he'd reached the rank of Surgeon Commander. He maintained his links with the Navy by enlisting as a reservist.

After entering Parliament, Murrison made

a name for himself as a backbencher with a penchant for asking troublesome questions of the Labour Government. His tenacity was sufficiently eye-catching to convince his Party's leadership that he was worthy of a shadow ministerial brief, and he was duly made Shadow Health Minister in 2003, before transferring to Shadow Defence Minister in 2007.

After voting against the Iraq War in 2003, Murrison went on to gain first-hand experience of it, being called up by his reserve regiment as a surgeon. Moved by what he saw while there, he returned to Parliament and decried the lack of a clear exit strategy, as well as joining the Iraq and the Defence and Diplomacy in the Middle East and North Africa APPGs.

Like many of his middle-ranking Opposition colleagues, though, Murrison did not carry his brief into Government after the 2010 election. Making way for the influx of Liberal Democrats, Murrison was instead installed as PPS to former Health Secretary, Andrew Lansley, though his defence interest was kept up after the Prime Minister asked him to act as his representative in plans to mark the centenary of the First World War. A tumultuous two years followed, with Murrison working admirably to defend Government changes to the NHS.

Having earned his stripes for a second time, Dr Murrison was eventually invited into Government in September 2012. Able to call upon his vast experience and expert knowledge, Murrison is a rare example in modern-day politics of a Minister given a brief with which they are already familiar. 🏰



Philip Dunne

Minister for Defence Equipment,
Support and Technology

Words: Joseph Briggs

A farming, merchant banking, Ottakars-founding old Etonian with a PPE degree from Keble College, Philip Dunne has a litany of personal and business successes to his name.

And, while they may not have been matched by political triumphs, the new Minister at the MoD is very much a man on the up.

Born in 1958, Dunne is the son of Sir Thomas, Lord Lieutenant of Herefordshire. Growing up on a farm – over which he would assume control in 1987 – Dunne spent his early life in Ludlow, Shropshire before heading to Oxford. He later returned to represent the people of his home town – first as a South Shropshire councillor, then as a Member of Parliament. Retrieving the seat from the Liberal Democrats after their four-year occupation, Dunne was elected in 2005 with a majority of just over 2,000. He fared much better in 2010, more than quadrupling his margin and returning the seat to its safe Tory status.

Like many of the young 2005 Conservative intake, Dunne backed David Cameron in the leadership election. While he was not instantly rewarded for his allegiance, there was a small prize for him when, in 2008, he was installed as an Opposition Whip. Carrying on in this role after his Party entered Government, Dunne forged a niche as a popular yet authoritative disciplinarian. Suitably impressed, David Cameron moved Dunne to his current role as

Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State at the Ministry of Defence. There were suggestions that the move would be short-lived, however, as Dunne was touted as a genuine contender to replace Andrew Mitchell as Chief Whip following the ‘plebgate’ affair.

That promotion never came, though the decision may work in his favour: Dunne now has the opportunity and time to make his mark in the MoD.

With responsibilities for defence procurement, Dunne’s diary will no doubt be crammed in the coming months: the Defence Committee is set to publish its Defence Acquisition report in the near future, while Dunne will also be concerned with implementing the proposals from the Strategic Defence and Security Review.

Political observers will watch Dunne closely in the run-up to the next reshuffle. Whether he can do enough to convince Cameron that he is worth a punt in a Cabinet position will become clearer over time – but, in light of his previous form, you wouldn’t bet against him. 



Lord Astor

Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State in the Ministry of Defence

Words: Joseph Briggs

Of all the names that need little introduction in the UK, Astor surely ranks among the best of them. A fixture of Britain's high society, and always running in the most elite of social circles, even David Cameron counts an Astor as a relation: his wife Samantha's stepfather is Viscount Astor.

Despite the family ties, there were no suggestions of nepotism when Baron Astor of Hever was brought into Government in May 2010. The long-time Lord survived the cull of hereditary peers in 1999, and served as an opposition spokesman for defence, foreign affairs and international development during the a decade of Tory opposition.

It was this shadow ministerial experience, in addition to Astor's service as a young officer in the Life Guards – one segment of the Household Cavalry – that made him such an apposite choice for his current job as Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State in the Ministry of Defence.

Clearly a steady pair of hands to guide Government defence business in the Lords, Astor's robust but measured style has won him many fans in his new staging area.

He was a source of embarrassment in 2011, however, when his links to Liam Fox's 'advisor' Adam Werritty were exposed, as was his involvement in Werritty's Atlantic Bridge charity. Still, Astor managed to avoid much of the limelight in that saga, with Fox receiving the majority of the media glare.

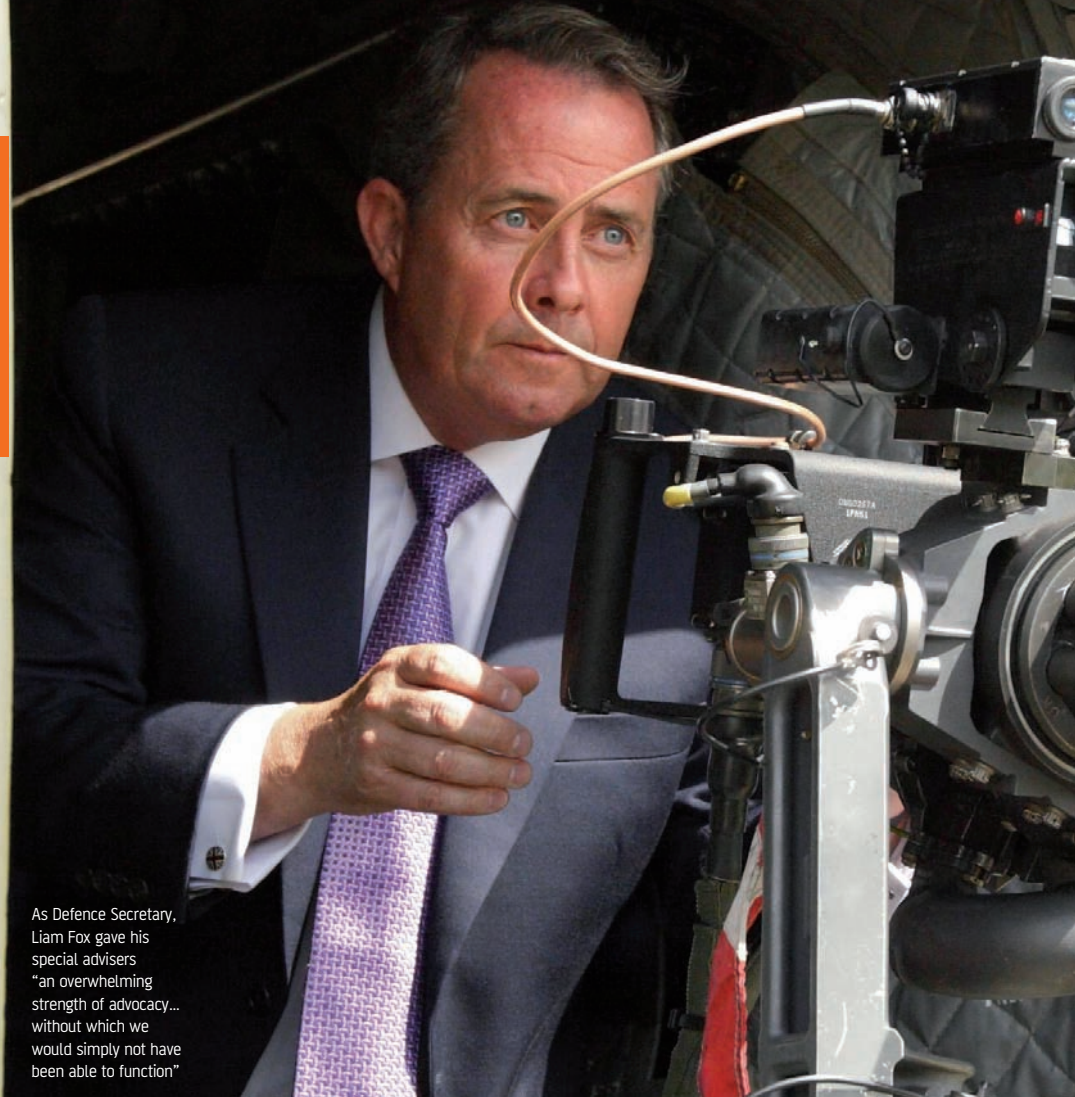
That hiccup aside, Astor has, by and large,



been an effective Government operative, inconspicuously and assiduously influencing legislation and confidently relaying it to his colleagues in the Upper House.

He brings with him a wealth of knowledge concerning lands both close and far. Having spent 11 years working and living in Paris, Astor retains his Gallic connections by acting as a patron for the Conservatives in Paris. Furthermore, he was a Western observer during South Africa's Parliamentary elections of 1994 and was also an honorary Vice-Chairman of the Conservative Middle East Council.

It is also clear, when considering Astor's Parliamentary career, that he has not been brought into Government just to make up the numbers. Having piloted both the Road Traffic (New Drivers) Act and the Trading Schemes Act through the House of Lords, Baron Astor of Hever is clearly a proactive member of the Lords. The extent to which he will be able to assert his authority over his fellow peers remains to be seen, but thus far he has proven a more than capable officer. 



As Defence Secretary, Liam Fox gave his special advisers "an overwhelming strength of advocacy... without which we would simply not have been able to function"



Oliver Waghorn reports on his time as a special adviser at the Ministry of Defence

Special Advisers can be many things. Some will be 'spin doctors', able to help craft a message or story. A few are 'bag carriers' with an exclusive focus on party politics. The remainder are 'policy wonks' helping



Scars of battle

shape and deliver the Government's policy agenda. Though their respective roles may differ, all SpAds share a common sense of unabashed loyalty to the Government and their Minister. Although it may seem somewhat trite and old-fashioned, they also share a common determination to make a difference in public life. This is true of SpAds in Governments old and new, and those of all political persuasions.

So whilst SpAds can be many things, there are also things they are not. ➤

“ As poacher turned game keeper I knew where some of the bodies were buried ”



Philip Hammond, who replaced Liam Fox as Defence Secretary, has retained the services of Hayden Allan as a special adviser

The last thing a Minister needs is yet another civil servant. It was our job to go beyond the department, to test views and ideas, and to add a necessary realpolitick to what the Ministers considered, and in turn, how Government policy is then expressed. We would take on the role of devil's advocate and general wise counsel. We had to be both the creative gristle as well as the soothing balm.

As a team of SpAds we were in many ways uniquely fortunate in that we were lifelong defence policy specialists, not simply party hacks. For us, the 'rabbit in the headlights' caricature that is commonly applied to SpAds, and to some not unreasonably so, simply did not apply.

My colleague Luke Coffey had spent years in Opposition working on defence policy, and had previously served with distinction in the US Army, including a deployment to Afghanistan. He came with a fistful of degrees and an invaluable sense of the world outside the UK/EU bubble.

Though by no means as illustrious a background, following my own time working in the defence team in Opposition, I had worked as a Civil Servant – in the MoD, no less. As poacher turned game keeper I knew where some of the bodies were buried.

Our team was made complete by Hayden Allan, who continues to this day in his diligent efforts to shape the defence message as SpAd under Philip Hammond.

We were also fortunate in enjoying an overwhelming strength of advocacy from Liam Fox, without which we would simply not have been able to function.

Dr Fox also brought with him a clear vision of how to shape defence, as well as the courage to see it through. He took full advantage of his five years shadowing the Labour Government defence team to craft his understanding,

“ The last thing a Minister needs is yet another civil servant ”

earning the critical trust of the armed forces and industry alike.

Though he has already made an invaluable contribution, I am confident that we will see him back in the front line of this and many future Governments.

No article about Special Advisors would be complete without making mention of the working relationship between SpAds and Civil Servants.

Recent comments by Steve Hilton bear more than a passing resemblance to fact. The truth is, as uncomfortable as it may be for senior civil servants and politicians to confront, the relationship between both groups is far from ideal.

The fault rests at the top, and within those groups who routinely engage at Ministerial level. Some will simply ignore you. Others will actively work against you.

But even at the top there are those that embrace the rich interchange between civil servant and politician. They will share your vision of a different, better future, match you anti-social hour for anti-social hour, and join you on relationship destroying weekend after exhausting trip.

While Steve is not wrong, he is also not right.

Putting office politics aside, the role was hugely exciting and immensely fulfilling. ➤

“ We had to be both the creative gristle as well as the soothing balm ”

The unusual places you visit, things you read and hear, and people you talk to combine to make the MoD truly unique as a department.

Of course, there were also the times of great distress.

No greater sacrifice can be made than by those who give their lives for their country, and no greater sadness felt than by those they leave behind. At these most difficult of times, you feel helpless and distinctly mortal.

With the unfortunate resignation of Dr Fox, things drew to a sudden end, because



as Special Advisers, we too were out of a job. Politics is fickle.

The change in pace was akin to driving a lorry straight into a gravel trap. Though not nearly as fun, it has given me time to reflect upon a difficult job well done, and very much enjoyed. 🏰

Oliver Waghorn was a former Special Adviser to Dr Liam Fox at the MoD. He now leads the UK Defence and Security practice of Interel in the UK



Liam Fox leaves the MoD to make a statement in the Commons. Oliver Waghorn is "confident that we will see him back in the front line of this and many future Governments."

Learning the lingo



Chris Newton explains how you can best engage with one of Whitehall's more challenging departments

Engaging with the Ministry of Defence can appear to be a daunting process. The MoD is primarily a department of long-standing, and to a large extent institutionalised, relationships. The vast forces community made up of service personnel; service families; veterans along with their representative charities and campaign organisations; and the huge supplier



Savings were made to the MoD budget after Nimrod was axed

community (providing materiel and services) are closely linked into the department at multiple levels.

Stakeholder groups are listened to, although even within the wider defence community the process can on occasion be slow such as in the recognition of Gulf Veterans' Illnesses. Those organisations which are most influential are those that best understand the existing thinking within the MoD and understand the pressures placed on the department.

Campaigns which do not account for this thinking are unlikely to have the desired impact, no matter how large or small the 'ask' might be. The UK National Defence



“ After two and a half years of stewardship by the Coalition, the MoD remains one of the most challenging departments within Whitehall ”

Association is an example of a great campaign, which has attracted much public sympathy, however, its calls for an increase in the defence budget to 3% of GDP, are unrealistic in the current environment. Where the NDA has been more successful is on individual issues.

By pressures I of course mean, the budget. Over the past half a century, the Ministry of Defence has come under the increased pressure of ever more constrained budgets. Most significantly, in recent years, the increased tempo of operations following the operations in Iraq and Afghanistan has put added pressure on the MoD.

After two and a half years of stewardship by the Coalition, the MoD remains one of

the most challenging departments within Whitehall. Ministers have had to contend with implementing savings, while dealing with the budgetary 'black hole' that has dogged the defence budget for years. Upon taking office the new team of Ministers acted quickly to tackle the 'black hole' as well as conducting the long overdue Strategic Defence & Security Review (SDSR).

The results of this review were controversial. Ministers cancelled contracts that were deemed to be underperforming or no longer appropriate, such as the Nimrod MRA4 programme. The Government recruited Former Special Adviser to George Robertson, Bernard Gray, as the

Prime Minister David Cameron and the then Defence Secretary Liam Fox are briefed by the heads of the three armed forces about current UK military activity in Afghanistan and elsewhere around the world before setting out the conclusions of the Strategic Defence and Security Review (SDSR) to Parliament.



Chief of Defence Materiel, charged with professionalising the procurement process and making the MoD a more intelligent customer. In addition, Lord Levene was brought in to streamline and reform MoD organisation and decision-making.

When Philip Hammond was appointed Defence Secretary in 2011, this emphasis on budgetary control and value for money was reaffirmed. Philip Hammond made his name in opposition as Shadow Chief Secretary to the Treasury, where he established a reputation for keeping spending plans under control. The recently appointed Permanent Secretary, Jon Thompson, was previously MoD Director General of Finance.

In 2012, the MoD produced a White Paper, outlining its approach to defence procurement. It stressed its preference for open competition for the delivery of most capabilities, with the exception of a few areas that are deemed vital to be procured in the UK or through non-competitive means. The White Paper also established a preference for more open and adaptable defence platforms.

The MoD is also placing an increasing emphasis on the exportability of domestic defence products. It is seeking a greater balance between generating capabilities that will fulfil its defence needs and will also be able to compete in the global market. Lastly, the MoD has indicated that it wants to engage more ➤





Campaigns will be listened to, but often it takes time – as in the case of the Gulf Veterans' illnesses – to be heard

with Small and Medium-sized Enterprises.

Where equipment is concerned the MoD places a particular emphasis on capability. Suppliers must illustrate how its products are fulfilling the specific capabilities and key requirements that the MoD is seeking to fulfil.

For welfare focused campaigns, such as the Military Covenant, compensation for health issues, or the awarding of campaign medals; the process can be extremely lengthy, but through effective engagement, evidence gathering and public support mobilisation, the MoD has demonstrated that it can change its position on these matters.

The next few years remain uncertain for the MoD. Therefore, the key thing for anyone engaging the Ministry of Defence must remember is how it can assist it in delivering value for money, making the lives and jobs of the armed forces community better, and

“ The MoD has indicated that it wants to engage more with Small and Medium-sized Enterprises ”

helping the MoD and the armed forces maintain flexibility and adaptability in an extremely uncertain world. But perhaps the most important thing to remember is that defence does not exist in a vacuum. To unlock budgetary issues it may be necessary to begin upstream with the Treasury or increasingly where equipment is concerned, with the Cabinet Office. 🇬🇧

Chris Newton was the Special Adviser on defence policy at Conservative Campaign Headquarters from 2005 to 2010. He is currently an associate with AUGMENTIQ, an independent consultancy specialising security, border management and defence

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Development Plans for the Lyneham Site consultation – closing date April 30th

The Defence Technical Training Change Programme (DTTCP) represents the MOD's plan for delivering cost effective technical training for military personnel. As part of this, the existing technical training given at Bordon and Arborfield will be transferred to the Lyneham site by the end of 2015, following its planned closure as an RAF unit at the end of 2012. The site will be developed to meet the requirements of the training college before technical training commences.

The proposals

The proposed new development is designed to create a new Defence College of Technical Training at the Lyneham site, comprising of the following principal training schools:

- Electronic and Mechanical Engineering (EME) – This will provide trade training for mechanics, engineers, technicians and technical support specialists for land and maritime specialisations.
- Aeronautical Engineering (AE) – This will involve providing training for avionics and aircraft technicians.
- Communications and Information Systems (CIS) - This will involve field-based tactical training and classroom/workshop based technical training in communications and information systems.

In general terms, Service personnel under training at the DCTT learn to maintain machinery and keep military equipment running. This involves utilisation of training workshops, classrooms and laboratories, with students working on simulated and real machines and vehicles. There will also be outdoor training covering skills such as recovering overturned vehicles. New and refurbished accommodation will be provided along with physical education, sports and welfare facilities.

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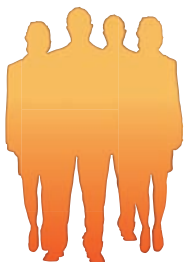
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