

## DEFENCE INSTRUCTIONS AND NOTICES

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

<b>Title:</b>	Contact with the Media and Communicating in Public
<b>Audience:</b>	All
<b>Applies:</b>	Immediately
<b>Expires:</b>	When rescinded or replaced
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<b>Channel:</b>	03 Defence Policy
<b>Content:</b>	Rules governing contacts between all MoD personnel – military and civilian – and the media, and for writing or speaking in public.
<b>Sponsor:</b>	Directorate of Communication Planning (DCP)
<b>Contact:</b>	DCP Coord Main Building. Mil: (9621) 82125. Civ: 020 7218 2125.

We want our people – military and civilian – to communicate the roles and achievements of the Armed Forces and MoD. This document sets out procedures for seeking authorisation and the considerations to be taken into account before doing so: is it in the defence interest? Does the benefit justify the time, cost and effort? Is there a risk to operational security or of disclosure of classified information? Would this compromise service ethos? Are there any patent, copyright, collaboration security or international relations implications?

### Purpose

1. This Instruction sets out the rules governing contacts between all MoD personnel – military and civilian - and the media, and for writing or speaking in public. These rules must be followed to ensure that operational security is upheld and standards of political impartiality and public accountability are met at all times. They are consistent with the Civil Service Code and Civil Service Management Code. The relevant Queen's Regulations for the Armed Forces and departmental civilian regulations (the Statement of Civilian Personnel Policy) are being adjusted as necessary to reflect them.

### Applicability

2. This Instruction applies to all members of the regular Armed Forces, the Volunteer Reserve Forces and members of the Regular Reserves undertaking Service duties, cadets and civilian volunteers when on duty, and to MoD Civil Servants regardless of where they work, and Crown Servants within the Regional Forces and Cadets Associations and their Council: its provisions must be followed by those in international organizations, agencies and trading funds. It covers all public speaking, writing or other communication, including via the internet and other sharing technologies, on issues arising from an individual's official business or experience, whether on-duty, off-duty or in spare time. It does not cover public communication by the Ministry of Defence Police relating to criminal investigations, which are dealt with independently by the MDP press office, who are accountable to the Chief Constable, MDP.

3. This instruction remains in force until explicitly superseded.

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## SECTION 1: Introduction

4. It is the policy of the MoD and the Armed Forces to be as open as possible about defence activities and to explain the reasons for government policies and decisions, provided that essential security is not compromised. The MoD must also comply with relevant legislation, such as the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the related public access rights that came into effect on 1 January 2005.

5. As in any organization, it is important that all MoD personnel (both civilian and military) communicate in a manner that maintains and, where possible, enhances the reputation of the organization. All contacts with the media or public disclosure of information by members of the Armed Forces and MoD civil servants must be authorised in advance, where this relates to material or experiences gained in the course of official duties. Engaging in such activities without obtaining authorisation at the appropriate level may be a serious disciplinary or administrative matter which could ultimately lead to dismissal, as would the acceptance of payments in contravention of Section 7 below.

## SECTION 2: Maximising communications effect

6. Presentational aspects must be an integral part of all MoD activity and decision-making. It is a core task of all personnel to consider how to portray their activities in an interesting and accessible way, for both the internal and external audiences, and how to support the MoD's strategic communications aim - to enhance the reputation of the department and Armed Forces both internally and externally. Everyone should look for opportunities to explain what defence is about to the public and other stakeholders – whether face to face, through briefings, in response to enquiries or in writing.

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

8. DGMC consists of 3 directorates:

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

Contact details can be found at Section 9.

### **SECTION 3: Contact with the News Media**

9. DGMC (specifically, D News Press Office and Regional Press Officers) are the department's professional advisers on communicating with the news media and are the officially sanctioned channel for dealing with them. The guiding principle for all contact with the news media contact is that it must be referred to the appropriate D News staff indicated in para 18. This includes proposals for communicating with the news media such as writing letters to newspapers, contributing to online debates, or participating in radio or television programmes (including phone-ins) on any topic related to official defence matters. It also includes contact with the media when attending outside events, e.g. at conferences and seminars, and invitations to media representatives to speak to briefings, courses or other departmental events.

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

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

12. Exceptionally, some Service and civilian personnel will have a general authorisation from D News personally to speak to the news media, which must be recorded in their agreed formal job descriptions or terms of reference. These individuals must ensure they keep records and inform D News Press Office or the Regional Press Officer of all media contacts and the information communicated.

13. Personnel who are in any doubt about the nature of a request should speak to their line manager or chain of command, Service Media Operations branch, relevant Regional Press Officer, or to D News Press Office directly, using the contacts listed in Section 9 at the end of this Instruction.

### **SECTION 4: Communicating in Public**

14. DGMC are the department's professional advisers on communicating with the public. They will consult MoD policy branches as appropriate. MoD civil servants and members of the Armed Forces must seek prior permission if they wish to write or speak or otherwise communicate in the public domain on Defence or related matters, before entering into any commitment. All such communication must help to maintain and, where possible, enhance the reputation of Defence.

15. Examples of communicating in public are:

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

16. In all cases, the impact of the material must be considered carefully, both in terms of the effect on its intended audience but also on any unintended audience through any wider coverage by the media. All personnel must make every effort to minimise the scope for misreporting and misrepresentation and avoid straying beyond the issues that they have been approved to speak on. Responsibility for seeking authority in sufficient time to allow proper consideration rests with the individual.

## **SECTION 5: Authorization for Contact with the News Media and Communicating in Public**

### **Senior Personnel (1-star and above and civilian equivalent)**

17. All personnel of 1-star rank and civilian equivalent must seek approval from DGMC before accepting any invitation to speak or write publicly – whether through the media or some other channel. Requests should be submitted at least 7 days in advance to D News Press Office for media, and DCP Coord for other contact. For personnel of 2-star rank and above and civilian equivalent Ministerial approval is required. This should be sought through DCP Coord.

### **Below 1-star**

18. **News Media.** In all cases, personnel must first go through their line manager or chain of command (Commanding Officer (CO) or Head of Establishment, Department or Division) to ensure that they are content that the proposed contact with the news media is in furtherance of Defence interests. Subsequent clearance is then required as follows:

- a. For contact with Regional or Local News Media. DGMC Regional Press Officers have delegated powers of authorisation from D News. Service Media Operations branches must ensure that the Regional Press Officer is informed of proposed contact at the regional or local level. The DGMC Regional Press officer will refer contentious issues to the D News Press Office. Where there is a risk of a regional or local issue becoming a national issue, D News Press Office will take over the lead handling responsibility. This reflects DGMC's primacy in all matters relating to news media and communicating in public.
- b. National News Media. D News' Chief Press Officers will be required to authorise all contact with the national news media, whether it be proactive or reactive. D News will seek advice as necessary from the single Service ADs in D Def PR and will judge whether Ministers need to be consulted.
- c. International Media or contact with media abroad. Permission for any contact with international media in operational theatres is determined by DGMC in conjunction with PJHQ. Outside operational theatres, there are a significant number of visits which include interaction with foreign media. Where this occurs at local or regional level, it is normally sufficient for permission to be granted by the relevant Front-Line Command media staff or defence attaché. Where there is the potential for foreign national media to be involved, D News Press Office is to be informed. Rules for contact with international media in UK are the same as per national media.

19. **Communicating in Public other than through the News Media.** In all cases, personnel must first go through their line manager or chain of command to ensure that the proposal furthers Defence interests, check the material is unclassified, that there are no operational security concerns and that the cost and effort is justified. If so, COS or Heads of Establishment may authorise the contact. But they must first take advice from the relevant Media Operations and/or Secretariat branch if there is any potential for controversy, media or national interest. If this is the case, subsequent clearance by DGMC is required, using the following channels (who will ensure D News are informed where media contact is involved).

- Navy personnel through their chain of command to the AD DefPR (Navy).
- Army Personnel through their chain of command to the AD DefPR (Army).
- RAF Personnel through their chain of command<sup>1</sup> to the AD DefPR (RAF).
- Civil Servants through their management chain to DCP.

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

20. In addition:

- Scientific and technical material should be sent first to D Def Sy (S&T/Ind) who will forward it with their recommendations to DCP;
- Material on medical issues should be sent first to Service Medical Directors who will consult with DMSD (specifically with D Med F&S) if the topic is or could be controversial and will forward it with their recommendations to DCP.

<sup>1</sup> RAF manuscripts are to go through PCB(AIR) in the first instance

21. The responsibility to observe and comply with the Official Secrets Act and with any other applicable laws, such as copyright or patent, lies solely with the individual. Classified or commercially sensitive material must not be disclosed, and individuals should avoid conflicting with MoD or government policy. The security or other national interest of collaborating countries must be fully protected, even where UK interests are not directly affected. Personnel should be aware that their comments might be reported and publicised.

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

23. Articles or notices for in-house MoD or Service publications on non-controversial topics can be submitted direct to in-house editors through COs or line management. However, the same guiding principles apply that the material must maintain and enhance the reputation of Defence and every effort must be made to ensure that the material does not create an adverse impact. Internal publications that also have an external profile (e.g. if they are available on subscription or on the internet) must follow the procedures for external clearance at paras 19-20 above.

### **SECTION 6: Operational Security**

24. Experience shows that adversaries take a close interest in information put into the public domain by our people and look for opportunities to use it to their advantage. All personnel are reminded of the paramount requirement to protect operational security. They must also avoid actions that might damage relations with other nations. Personnel must not pass on any classified or other information that has not been authorised for release, including to friends and family.

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

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

26. Payment to an individual for information or speaking may be authorised only if the subject matter falls entirely outside official work, or use of official information or experience, and has been prepared in an individual's own time, without using any MoD resources. Examples could be historical works, fiction or regimental histories. COs or Head of Establishment, Department or Division should be consulted in the first instance to ensure this is the case. If in doubt they should take advice from their Media Operations and/or Secretariat branch who should in turn consult DGMC staff in accordance with para 19 if uncertain. If authority to proceed is given, individuals must make clear that they are not acting in an official capacity.

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

### **SECTION 8: Summary**

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

29. DGMC contacts are listed below for contact with the media and communicating in public.

## **SECTION 9: Contact points**

### **For proposed contacts with the national News Media:**

#### ***Defence Press Office (London):***

##### ***D News Chief Press Officers:***

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

DII e-mail:         DGMC-DNews ChiefPressOff1  
or                    DGMC-DNews ChiefPressOff2

### **For contact with local or regional media**

#### ***Regional Press Offices:***

Scotland:         Mil:    94740 2004    Civ:    0131 310 2004/5  
North East:       Mil:    94777 2020    Civ:    01904 66 2020 or 2066  
North West:       Mil:    94554 2219    Civ:    01772 260219  
Midlands:         Mil:    94461 2338    Civ:    01743 262338  
Wales:            Mil:    93762 2218    Civ:    01446 744044  
Eastern:          Mil:    95331 7149    Civ:    01480 425346  
South East:       Mil:    9621 83259    Civ:    020 7218 3259  
South West:       Mil:    9375 54344    Civ:    01752 554344

### **For Single-Service issues, contact the relevant Service AD -**

#### ***D Def PR (Navy) AD:***

Tel:                   Mil:    9621 87903    Civ:    020 7218 7903

DII e-mail:         DGMC-DDefPR NavyAD

#### ***D Def PR (Army) AD:***

Tel:                   Mil:    9621 84385    Civ:    020 7218 4385

DII e-mail:         DGMC-DDefPR ArmyAD

#### ***D Def PR (RAF) AD:***

Tel:                   Mil:    9621 87905    Civ:    020 7218 7905

DII e-mail:         DGMC-DDefPR RAFAD

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

Tel:                   Mil:    95271 7144    Civ:    020 8838 7144

DII e-mail:         AHB(RAF)&PCB(AIR)-(RAF)-PCB(AIR)

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

#### ***DCP Coord***

Tel:                   Mil:    9621 82125    Civ:    020 7218 2125

DII e-mail:         DGMC-DCP Coord