

MINUTES OF A MEETING HELD ONLINE

AT 4.30PM ON THURSDAY 6 MAY 2021

THE DEFENCE & SECURITY MEDIA ADVISORY COMMITTEE

D/DSMA/3/2/1

The following were present:

Mr Dominic Wilson (Chair)	Mr John Battle (Vice-Chair)
Mr Chris Rampling (FCDO)	Mr Peter Clifton
Mr Paul Wyatt (MOD)	Mr Joe Fay
Mr Rod Latham (Home Office)	Mr Michael Jermey
Ms Beth Sizeland (Cabinet Office)	Mr David Jordan
	Mr David Higerson
	Mr Charles Garside
	Mr James Green
	Mr John McLellan
	Mr Owen Meredith
	Mr Charlie Redmayne
	Ms Sarah Whitehead
Brigadier Geoffrey Dodds	Secretary
Captain Jon Perkins RN	First Deputy Secretary
Lieutenant Commander Stephen Dudley	Second Deputy Secretary
Ms Geetha Kanagarajah	PA to the Secretary

1. There were apologies from Craig Tregurtha and Rob Winnett. Opening the second meeting to be held remotely as a result of COVID19, the Chairman expressed the hope that progress in combating the virus would continue to be such that the next meeting could be held in person. He then welcomed the new ex officio members, Beth Sizeland and Chris Rampling, on taking up the responsibilities of their new official side appointments.

Agenda Item 1 – Minutes of the Meeting held on 5 Nov 2020

2. The minutes of the 5 Nov 20 meeting were approved by the Committee as an accurate record.

Agenda Item 2 - Actions arising from the minutes of the last meeting dated 5 Nov 2020

3. Three substantive matters remained in progress. Each was to be addressed in its own agenda item (4, 5 and 6) below.

Agenda Item 3 – Secretary’s Report 26 Oct 2020 - 25 Apr 2021

4. The Secretary briefed the committee that during the last 6-month period (noting varying COVID restrictions), the DSMA secretariat received 54 (25 Apr) inquiries and requests for DSMA Notice advice, an 18% decrease over the previous period (66). However, the request rate remains well below the 10-year historical average (103). 23 requests were initiated by members of the UK media, 16 by Government officials and 15 by members of the public. No supplementary DSMA notices were issued during this period and no unusual trend was detected.

5. The Secretary continued with details of three particular inquiries; one from a member of the UK media, one from a Government official, and one from a member of the public. He highlighted that these three incidents provided good examples of the DSMA notice system working in practice.

Agenda Item 4 – Incorporating Cyber into the standing notices

6. Dep Sec 1 introduced this agenda item. The Integrated Review in 2020 had highlighted how UK (and NATO) Doctrine had changed to incorporate Cyber (and Space) as Military Domains. The UK's aim was to be a responsible and democratic cyber power, shaping the international order of the future and promoting a free, open, peaceful, and secure cyberspace.

7. Media-side members had held a pre-meeting where they had been able to pose detailed questions about Cyber and specifically the National Cyber Force (NCF) to the MoD's Director of National Security. It was in this context that the subsequent discussion of this topic took place in the full committee meeting.

8. Members acknowledged that activities in cyberspace had a significant and increasing impact on everyday life, including defence and national security. To remain relevant, the committee agreed in principle to incorporate this new threat into the standing notices but with the following caveats:

- a. the Committee should stay within its traditional remit of preventing the inadvertent publication or broadcast of material that could damage defence, national security or endanger lives. In particular, any proposed amendments should not stray into the field of routine policing;
- b. there is no intent to prevent the reporting of observable events;
- c. major changes to the standing notices were not envisaged: the necessary amendments would be discrete and minor but also explicit to ensure editors were clear on the advice, given the novelty and significance of the cyber threat.

9. Above all, the emphasis should be on the protection of methods, tactics, technologies, and sensitive personal information (SPI). This was similar to the way in which the DSMA Notice System approached the National Crime Agency's (NCA) operations.

10. It was agreed that a small sub-group of media side members selected by the Vice Chairman and supported by MoD cyber colleagues, would prepare a joint draft of appropriate minor revisions for the committee to review ahead of the next meeting. Dep Sec 1 would act as the co-ordinator to facilitate this work.

Action: First Deputy Secretary

11. The Vice Chairman added that he would take wide soundings amongst colleagues not directly represented on the committee to ensure that this pragmatic approach met with wider approval throughout the media.

Action: Vice Chairman

Agenda Item 5 – Protection of Official Data

12. Dep Sec 2 updated the meeting about the progress toward updating the Official Secrets Act(s) following the publication in September of the Law Commission's report on protecting official data. The Secretariat had had the opportunity to contribute to some of the development work which was being led by the Home Office as part of a wider package of planned new legislation to counter state threats. Dir Nat Sy for the Home Office explained that he could not go into detail at the present time, but promised to engage with the committee soonest.

Post Meeting Note: The Home Secretary wrote to the DSMA Secretary in the week following the meeting, inviting the Committee's involvement with the public consultation launched on 13 May.

Action: Secretary

Agenda Item 6 – Incorporating Counter-Terrorism Policing (CTP) into the DSMA Notice System

13. At the previous meeting the Secretary had outlined how the study commissioned from RUSI last year by the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) highlighted that there might be advantages for the reporting of Counter- Terrorism operations to be drawn from the already well-established DSMA model. The committee had asked the Secretary to engage with CTP to establish the nature and scope of this possible engagement. Following a briefing to, and discussions with senior CTP staff, the Assistant Commissioner Special Operations requested the Secretary facilitate CTP's application to join the DSMA Notice System.

14. Such a measure of involvement would fall short of full committee membership *pro tem*. However, it would acknowledge the joint nature of counter-terrorist operations in the UK where invariably, CTP leads an appropriate mix of capabilities made up from elements drawn from the IAs, SF, and other military and national capabilities. The incorporation of CTP into the DSMA Notice System would address the anomaly that all these

capabilities are already included within the notice system; except CTP.

15. The Secretary informed the committee that a draft paper had been prepared and was waiting for final approval before he could circulate it among committee members for their views and discussion at the next meeting. Should the committee agree to incorporate CTP into the DSMA Notice System, it may then wish to request the Secretary, relevant media representation and CTP develop draft text to incorporate the capability into the DSMA standing notices for the committee's approval.

16. In discussing this issue the Secretary highlighted that although work had been undertaken in a similar time-frame, the incorporation of CTP was not linked to the inclusion of cyber within the notice system, the genesis of which had been a media-side initiative going back several years.

Action: Secretary

Agenda Item 7 – Any other business

17. The Secretary once again provided a one-page digest of his six-monthly report. This protected the confidentiality of the advice given over the period but assisted transparency by providing a public record of the types and numbers of formal enquiries. The committee approved this for publication on the website.

18. The Chairman noted that members were aware that Ian Murray had resigned from the committee. He wished the minutes record the committee's thanks for his staunch work on its behalf. The Secretary had already written to express the committee's thanks and good wishes.

19. The Chairman also expressed his warm and appreciative thanks to Charles Garside and Owen Meredith for whom this was to be their last meeting as they move on to other challenges. He wished them well and hoped that circumstances would allow them to return in the autumn to be bid farewell in person if COVID guidelines were such that the annual dinner could be held.

20. The committee expressed a strong wish that it could seize the opportunity to move towards greater diversity in its membership.

The posts that had recently become vacant presented an excellent prospect. Those responsible for seeking nominations for their successors agreed to bear this in mind. One possible avenue to explore might be a “mentoring” model whereby each media side member could nominate a deputy from their own organisation so that she or he might be introduced to the work of the committee at a potentially earlier stage of their career.

Post meeting note: the Secretary undertook to prepare a short paper outlining options for increasing D&I ahead of the next meeting

21. The Chairman concluded by noting that it was his sad duty to record the death since the last meeting of Bob Satchwell, founder of the Society of Editors. He had expressed deep condolences on behalf the committee in the online book of remembrance established for Bob’s family. Not only was Bob a hugely important figure in the profession but he had been a tireless champion of the work of the committee in his nine years as a member. There could be no better measure of his qualities both as a man and a journalist than the respect and affection in which he was held. He will be greatly missed but members cherish their memories of him.

Agenda Item 8 - next meeting

22. The next DSMA Committee meeting is planned to take place at 6pm on Tuesday 2 Nov 2021 in person at MOD Main Building (COVID movement restrictions permitting), and that members, (and recently retired members) would dine together at the RAF Club afterwards.

Geoffrey Dodds

Brigadier

Secretary

Defence and Security Media Advisory Committee 20 May 2021

Attachment:

Summary of Secretary’s Report for the period 26 Oct 20-25 Apr 21

Distribution

All DSMA Committee Members

The DSMA Website

**SUMMARY OF SECRETARY’S REPORT TO THE DSMA
COMMITTEE COVERING ACTIVITIES DURING PERIOD
26 OCT 20 – 25 APR 21**

- No formal, supplementary DSMA notices were issued during this period.
- Defence and security media advice was sought on 54 occasions during this reporting period, an 18% decrease over the previous period but still well below the historical average of 110 over 6 months. 23 requests were initiated by the media, 16 by Government officials and 15 from members of the public.
- The number of requests for advice on particular topics included:

UK Special Forces	19	Military Equipment	1
Intelligence Agencies	0	DSMA System	8
Nuclear Weapons	2	Historical	4
Counter-Terrorism	0	Members of the Public	5
Cyber	6	Miscellaneous	2
Current & Recent Military Ops	2	Physical Property & Assets	5

In addition, the DSMA Committee’s secretariat briefed on its continued work on:

- The incorporation of cyber into the DSMA standing notices.
- The Home Office’s lead on a Counter Hostile States Bill (implementation of the Law Commission’s Final Report on the Protection of Official Data).
- The incorporation of Counter-Terrorism Policing into the DSMA notice system.

The Committee’s Secretary promoted the DSMA notice system by conducting formal presentations online to Goldsmith’s College and Worcester University.