News story: Defence Secretary hails modern partnership with Australia

In his first trip to Australia as Secretary of State for Defence, Mr Williamson met his counterpart, Minister for Defence, Marise Payne, in Sydney. They examined how both allies can continue to adapt in the face of cyber-attacks and nuclear threats from North Korea and how best to counter global terrorism.

Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

> Britain and Australia both face intensifying, complex and evolving threats to our way of life. That is why it is so important our two countries stand side-by-side to stay ahead of those who want to harm us.
>
> Two Royal Navy warships, HMS Sutherland and HMS Argyll, are heading to the region to continue the pressure campaign on North Korea, demonstrating Britain's role on the international stage.
>
> We have a long and historic relationship with Australia but today we are modern, equal, and global powers with shared values and a commitment to make the world a safer place.

As part of this modern partnership the UK and Australia:

- Have more than one hundred people from all three services on exchange programmes between our nations, working together and learning from each other;

- Are part of the Five Eyes intelligence-sharing organisation and work together on tackling shared threats;

- Hold annual meetings of foreign and defence ministers (AUKMIN) to coordinate responses to shared threats, such as Daesh;

- Work together on the mission to establish stability in Syria and Afghanistan, to which Australia is the largest non-NATO contributor;

- Combine on humanitarian missions, such as: the two Malaysian airline incidents, Ebola in Sierra Leone and disaster relief in Vanuatu;

- Police the seas as part of the Combined Maritime Forces, to provide

security and stability on the seas, including tackling drug and weapon smugglers;

- Work together on science and technology, and defence equipment;

- Additionally, Royal Navy ship HMS Sutherland will visit Australia in February and March, allowing further opportunities for the two naval forces to collaborate.

The UK Defence Secretary also met Minister for Defence Industry, Christopher Pyne, in Canberra today (Monday 12 Feb) to discuss exciting new defence export opportunities as Britain prepares to leave the European Union.

The Type 26 Global Combat Ship is a key example of this and has been shortlisted for Australia's Future Frigate Programme. The cutting-edge warship would not only boost the partnership between the two countries, but would bolster Australia ballistic missile defences and give them an unrivalled anti-submarine warfare capability to face growing underwater threats.

Mr Williamson went on to meet Minister for Veterans' Affairs and Defence Personnel, Michael McCormack, to talk about issues impacting and sharing research on Veterans and the successes of the British Armed Forces Covenant.

Australian forces recently solved a 103-year-old mystery when they discovered His Majesty's Australian Submarine AE1, the first Allied submarine lost in World War One, off the coast of Papua New Guinea.

[News story: New plans for military flexible working become law](#)

The measures, which achieved Royal Assent on Thursday, will allow some military personnel to serve part-time for defined periods.

Consultation within the Armed Forces has found that personnel want more choice over the way they serve when their personal circumstances change, such as having young children, needing to care for elderly relatives, or taking on further training and education.

Personnel will also be able to restrict the amount of time they spend away from their home base and their families.

The plans, which will come into effect in 2019, are part of a range of measures the Armed Forces are implementing to become more modern and diverse.

Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

> This change will make it significantly easier for our dedicated
> Armed Forces to raise their children, care for elderly relatives,
> or look after an ill family member.

> This will ensure we are able to retain and recruit the brightest
> and the best from all backgrounds to keep Britain safe.

Minister for Defence People and Veterans Tobias Ellwood said:

> Flexible work is key to retaining our expert personnel who we've
> invested in during their military career.

> Personnel have told us they want more flexibility and we have
> listened — that's what this Act delivers.

The flexible working measures are designed so that they won't impact the
military's ability to deliver its core tasks of defending the country.
Applications for part-time service and restricted separation will be assessed
against the need of the Armed Forces and personnel would be required to
deploy on operations should the need arise, such as in cases of national
emergency.

Internal MOD surveys have consistently reported the impact of service on
family and personal life is the most important factor that might influence
them to leave.

Flexible working will help retain personnel, and a recent survey found that
70% of respondents were supportive of more opportunities for flexible
working, with 71% interested in taking up such opportunities in the future.

The measures are part of military modernisation, aiming to retain personnel
who have been trained and have gained important experience, particularly on
operations, rather than having them leave for civilian life.

96% of UK employers already offer flexible working for some of their
employees and research has found that offering flexible working encourages
people to stay with their current employer.

News story: Improvements to Mare Harbour jetty in Falklands complete

Work to upgrade the jetty in Mare Harbour was officially opened recently by Geoff Robson, Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO) Chief Operating Officer.

The improvements to the roll on roll off jetty are part of a £19 million contract with VolkerStevin for design and construction.

The new facility will enable larger 20,000 tonne Point Class vessels to berth in the harbour, delivering up to 85% of the military supplies such as hardware, food, building materials and commercial freight needed on the Islands. The new berthing facilities on the jetty will allow goods to safely roll on and roll off from the Falkland Islands Resupply Ships (FIRS). The deliveries made by these ships are vital to military capability, maintaining life on the Islands and to ensuring the complex schedule of building and development works continue as planned.

In addition to the jetty, VolkerStevin has also replaced walkways along the berth, lighting improvements, capstans and a PA system. Firefighting capabilities have been upgraded as well.

This £19m contract is part of a £180 million overall investment by DIO to improve facilities on the Islands over the next 10 years. Additional works include improvements to the power station at Mount Pleasant Complex as well as new services accommodation at the 3 Remote Radar Heads on the Islands. There are currently around 1,200 military and civilian personnel based in the Falklands supporting defensive air, naval and land assets, including RAF Typhoon aircraft, helicopters, Royal Navy patrol vessels and an Army infantry company.

Minister for Defence, People and Veterans, Tobias Ellwood said:

> The opening of this new jetty is an important milestone in our 10 year programme to modernise defence infrastructure on the Falklands. We're investing £180 million on the Islands that will benefit its residents, as well as service personnel and their families who live, work and train there.

David Graham, Deputy Head of International Projects at the Defence Infrastructure Organisation, said:

> This new jetty will improve military capability in the Falklands as the previous harbour berth was unsuitable for the new Point Class ships. This significant investment by DIO will modernise defence infrastructure in the Falklands for years to come as well as

enhancing life on the Island for our personnel and their families.

Commander Bill Dawson, Queen's Harbour Master, East Cove Port said:

> Improving our RoRo facility here has been vitally important, and
> allows us to safely berth the much larger vessels needed to sustain
> our military capability here in the Falkland Islands. We were
> delighted that DIO appointed the experienced maritime company,
> VolkerStevin, as their prime contractors, a clear investment in
> proven quality. In particular their safety and environmental
> awareness has been excellent, and the opportunity to work with
> Falkland sub contractors has been a really important initiative.
> Delivery of the new facilities here at East Cove Port, to time and
> very high quality, is the outcome of good project management by the
> prime contractor, and an excellent relationship with myself and the
> port as clients. We now have a really robust facility that will
> last for many years to come.

Terry O'Connor, operations director and DIO account director for VolkerStevin
said:

> We are delighted to have handed over the Ro-Ro berth a month early,
> this latest berth upgrade continues our successful relationship
> with the DIO and the Royal Navy.

News story: UK Chief of Defence Staff reaffirms commitment to Australia

Updated: Amend to copyright.

During a visit to the country, Sir Stuart Peach met his Australian
counterpart, Air Chief Marshal Mark Binskin AC, to discuss how both
countries' Armed Forces can work together on a number of fronts.

Sir Stuart also met with the Australian Minister of Defence, Senator the Hon
Marise Payne, to discuss an aligned approach to both global and regional
issues, such as North Korea, Iraq, Syria and countering terrorism.

Both nations are already part of the Five Eyes defence relationship and work
together on tackling shared threats, but are seeking to build upon this
further.

Whilst in Canberra, Sir Stuart laid a wreath at the tomb of the unknown Australian soldier in the Australian War Memorial and met the Director, Dr Brendan Nelson.

The Chief of Defence Staff Sir Stuart Peach said:

> From the First World War right up to the fight against Daesh, the UK and Australia have stood shoulder to shoulder as the strongest of allies. We work together on a range of regional and global challenges, advocating and defending the rules-based international system and promoting rule of law as the basis of peace and security.
>
> Our strong defence and security relationship reflects a modern and dynamic partnership. We learn from each other as our soldiers train together, we collaborate in defence science and technology and I have no doubt our partnership will continue to go from strength to strength as we face upcoming global challenges together.

News story: The evolution of incident reporting, from pure statistics to nuanced insight

> Rarely did anyone attempt to grasp the wider implications of a particular incident for the future, or spot trends or patterns or read across issues to other aircraft. There was a corresponding lack of corporate memory as to related incidents which had occurred in the past…

The Nimrod Review: An independent review into the broader issues surrounding the loss of the RAF Nimrod MR2 Aircraft XV230 in Afghanistan in 2006, Charles Haddon-Cave QC, October 2009, P149

> I make recommendations for a new safety culture…

Ibid, P569

A reporting culture is one of the cornerstones of an engaged safety culture. As such, the Military Aviation Authority (MAA) requires that all air safety occurrences are reported and managed, with appropriate action taken, see RA

[1410: Occurrence reporting](). As such, the MAA provides the Air Safety Information Management System (ASIMS) as both a 'bottom-up' and 'top-down' system: ASIMS is designed to help the defence aviation community report air safety occurrences in order that Aviation Duty Holders (ADH), see [RA 1020: roles and responsibilities: ADH and ADH facing organisations](), may actively manage air safety, monitoring and mitigating associated Risks to Life (RtL) within their defined areas of responsibility (AOR) to As Low As Reasonably Practicable (ALARP) and Tolerable. In addition, ASIMS is used by the MAA in the monitoring and oversight of the Defence Aviation Environment (DAE) as a whole and is one of the main tools used to establish the 'risk picture' across the DAE, enabling the MAA to practice risk based assurance.

As with any system of this kind, there are 2 components that make it a success, or failure. The design of the system itself, and the willingness and ability of personnel to fully engage with it, with the former often influencing the latter. Following the analysis of ASIMS report data-quality in 2013, it was recognised that, whilst there was a healthy reporting culture (with reporting increasing year-on-year), codification of why incidents occurred was inconsistent, hindering the MAA's ability to gain a true picture of aviation safety risk held by Defence.

Whilst personnel understood the need for and were willing to report incidents, they either could not, or would not, complete the process. One major issue was the outcome-focussed taxonomy, which led reports to focus in on the outcome of an occurrence, not what led to that outcome. Another issue was allowing reports to be closed-down without mandating that investigation findings were declared.

Consequently, in April 2016 the MAA introduced a major ASIMS upgrade. From improved codification and taxonomy, to the introduction of hashtags, the upgrade has provided a step change in the ability to positively influence aviation safety through improved recording, trending and analysis of safety occurrences. The most significant changes are discussed below. However, the system remains reliant on the willingness of personnel to fully engage.

The stats

Currently, every location in which military aviation is conducted, and every unit which conducts military aviation, has access to ASIMS through DII. There are over 19,400 user accounts* belonging to 1,063 units registered at 212 stations** (including every aviation-capable ship). An average of 13,000 individual reports are raised each year, and there are over 225,000 unique reports stored on ASIMS (the vast majority of which pre-date the system).

*It should be noted that a user account is not required to raise an occurrence report within ASIMS.

**[ASIMS statistics page]() dated 15 January 2018.

Investigations

The ASIMS v3 upgrade added the requirement to record the level of

investigation being undertaken: Local Investigation (LI), Occurrence Safety Investigation (OSI) or Service Inquiry (SI). Investigators could devote as much or as little time to the investigation as required to satisfy the Aviation Duty Holder/Accountable Manager (ADH/AM) Review Group that the details of the occurrence have been accurately identified and recorded. If appropriate for the occurrence, an LI could be as simple as performing a desk-level investigation.

Findings

The introduction of a mandatory requirement to complete the Findings section and the associated recommendation details for the Cause and each Causal Factor was the single biggest element of the upgrade. The understanding of why an incident occurred was further enhanced by allowing multiple findings, which improved our overall analysis of occurrences.

This mandatory requirement to report findings, and the ability to report multiple findings has caused some additional work for the report investigators, but has added far greater value to each report submitted and thus the insight possible from analysis of ASIMS.

From 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2016, only 27% of reports recorded why an occurrence had happened. Following the upgrade, from 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2017 that figure had risen to 93%, however, there is still some way to go. Recent analysis (December 2017) has shown that 25% of Causal Factors are recorded as 'Cause Undetermined'.

Further understanding of why this is the case is ongoing: defence aviation cannot claim to have good corporate memory, or an effective learning culture, if a quarter of occurrences are not codified in such a way as can be readily exploited.

Why record multiple findings?

A technical fault in flight may have resulted in a report-worthy safety incident. However, the subsequent investigation may establish that an associated maintenance activity had been both incorrectly completed and not properly supervised. The conclusion is that 3 elements led to the incident occurrence and each element requires investigation:

- why was the maintenance activity being carried out incorrectly?
- why was supervision inadequate?
- why did the technical fault in flight lead to an air safety incident?

Previously, only the top level would be recorded, i.e. the technical fault. However, by having the ability to add a separate finding for each phase of the occurrence, allowing each element to have their own outcome, cause and causal factors, it is possible to easily see which causal factor initiated which cause and subsequently led to the outcome.

In addition, this function enables improved analysis of the data; allowing deeper interrogation to establish not only multiple findings for a main outcome, but also multiple outcomes from a single finding.

Recommendations

Recommendations are formal and require ADH/AM approval. The upgrade introduced the requirement for the Investigator to make a recommendation against the cause and each causal factor for every finding. There are occasions when it is appropriate that no recommendations are made. These occasions must be positively acknowledged and recorded and as such, an associated free text field has been made available for this purpose.

Acceptable reasons for recording 'No Recommendations' are:

- the risk remains ALARP and tolerable, therefore no mitigation or action is required
- one recommendation mitigates multiple entries. Thus the mitigation is managed on one entry only and 'Mitigated by Recommendation xxxx/xxx/Rx' is entered in the 'No recommendation' field for the others
- the intention is to implement local mitigation/prevention action however, it does not change the current level of associated risk and so does not required ADH/AM approval. These actions can be implemented and manged outside of ASIMS

Hashtags

The hashtag functionality enables the tracking and management of local issues as well as analysis of global trends. Hashtags are created via the MAA ASIMS helpdesk. However, Occurrence Managers (OMs) are responsible for reviewing every report within their AOR for completeness and accuracy and it is their responsibility to add appropriate hashtags to a report once created. This action is vital for ensuring the reliability of hashtags when interrogating ASIMS at either a local, or a global level. An example of adding hashtags can be seen at Figure 1.
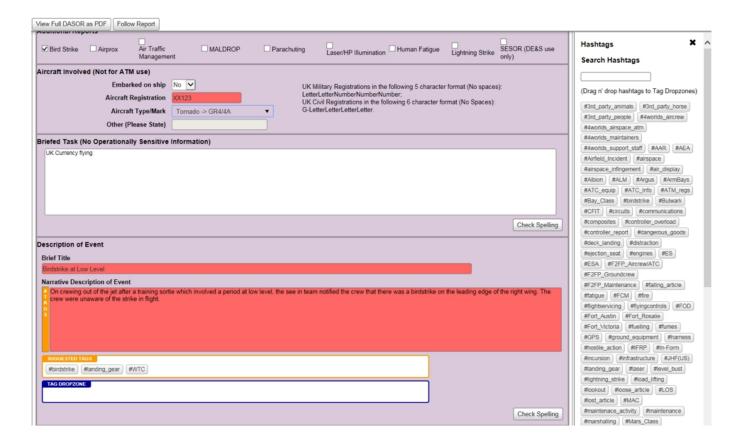
Figure 1: Adding Hashtags

ASIMS has proven that full, open, timely and accurate reporting of aviation occurrences is essential to the maintenance of aviation safety. The changes discussed here: the clarification of investigative levels, the mandatory reporting of findings and recommendations and the addition of hashtags to enable easier monitoring and analysis, all contribute to vastly improved data fidelity within the system.

Accurate reports, which include details of resulting investigations, allow important lessons to be identified and so play a major part in future accident prevention. ASIMS provides the mechanism for all reports to be passed to higher and other associated formations to form part of the wider situational awareness of the aviation safety risk picture, and for details of remedial or preventative actions to be recorded and promulgated through the appropriate specialist channels.

The success of all ASIMS activity is dependent upon User input and engagement, in a positive reporting culture. Continual upgrading of ASIMS to make it easier to use therefore directly influences the generation, maintenance and promotion of a positive reporting culture, which in turn influences aviation safety. For us to successfully interrogate ASIMS regarding both trends and culture, it is essential that the key fields are completed accurately. Fostering this behaviour is a key step on the path to a fully engaged Aviation safety culture, and we all need to play our part.

Further help and feedback

ASIMS continues to be developed and enhanced through the ASIMS Working Group and by suggestions from users. The Working Group is open to station flight safety teams and local occurrence managers and meets every 6 months, if you would like to get involved please contact the ASIMS helpdesk. If you have any suggestions or feedback on ASIMS please complete the online form, accessible from the ASIMS logon page, or contact the helpdesk via email dsa-maa-asims@mod.gov.uk or by phone 030 679 84188.