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of Defence

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MSU/4/7/1/is

22nd July 2015

Dear Lt Col Sharp,

Thank you for your letter of 1 June in which you enclose a copy of the Regulation 28 Report following the Inquest into the death of Sergeant Mark Foley

As you will be aware, my Department takes very seriously its relationship with HM Coroners and we fully recognise how important it is that we learn all possible lessons to ensure that deaths under similar circumstances in the future can be prevented.

In your report you have raised concerns about the training given to inexperienced drivers in dealing with the loss of control of vehicles, and reinforcement of the rules regarding the wearing of safety harnesses.

With regard to driver training, defensive driving is an integral element of all our vehicle instructor, commander and driver training. We have reviewed the feasibility of providing additional training for inexperienced drivers in case of the loss of control of vehicles, and concluded that it would be exceptionally difficult to replicate such circumstances without introducing a high degree of risk to those within the vehicle.

We are currently looking at a potential requirement to create an online defensive driver training package to improve safety through inclusion of road awareness, vehicle control, driving styles and vehicle technology.


As you have recognised, the policy for the wearing of seatbelts and safety harnesses is clearly set out in Armoured Vehicle Standing Orders, which are to be complied with by all crew members, regardless of rank. Commanders of wheeled armoured vehicle are now taught that they are responsible for ensuring that members of their crew wear safety harnesses at all times unless directed otherwise in relation to a specific tactical situation. Commanders are taught to reassess this as soon as the tactical situation

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changes. For Revised Weapons Mounted Installation Kit + vehicles, this policy has been reinforced during new individual driver and commander training since December 2013, and then annually through mandated currency training. I recognise that it has taken some time to address legacy users (such as those involved in this tragic incident), due to the number of drivers and availability of courses, however our current aim is for all crewman of all wheeled armoured vehicles to have received the revised training by April 2016.

As you are aware, on conclusion of the Land Accident Investigation Team investigation into Sgt Foley's death, a letter was sent to the Commanding Officers of all units equipped with wheeled armoured vehicles highlighting a range of safety concerns and directing the adoption of a number of measures to improve safe operation. Evidence from training suggests that this direction is being followed by both the chain of command and the user, with a negligible number of related incidents reported. Linked to changes in course content (including placing greater emphasis on the training of commanders) and training delivery, I am assured that the chain of command is meeting its responsibilities for the safe and effective operation of wheeled armoured vehicles. I would also like to reassure you that we are determined to ensure that the correct levels of knowledge and skill required to operate armoured vehicle is maintained through demanding and realistic training.

I hope that this response helps to address your concerns. I am content for you to copy this response to the Chief Coroner and other interested persons.

Yours ever


MARK LANCASTER TD MP