



Ministry
of Defence

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3rd September 2015

Dear Dr Earland,

Thank you for your letter of 13 July in which you enclose a copy of the Regulation 28 Report following the Inquest into the death of Private Cameron Laing.

As you will be aware, my Department takes very seriously its relationship with Her Majesty's 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 soldiers in dealing with movement of trailers and DROPS vehicles, and the reinforcement of training regarding alternative methods of coupling and uncoupling.

After the accident the training package was reviewed by the Training Requirements Authority and it was determined that additional manoeuvres should not be taught to operators. The advanced techniques described by the Vehicle Examiner at the inquest are only to be conducted by the specialist mechanical engineers of the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers (REME). It is not feasible or necessary for every vehicle operator to be trained to such a specialist capability. The approach used within the Army for recovery, as laid down in the All Arms Equipment Recovery Manual (AAERM) and taught to all operators, is that recovery by driver/operators is restricted to the capabilities of the recovery equipment held by the unit and as part of the vehicle's Complete Equipment Schedule. In this case the correct approach would have been to call for REME recovery assistance, rather than attempting a self-recovery task for which the soldiers present were neither trained nor equipped.

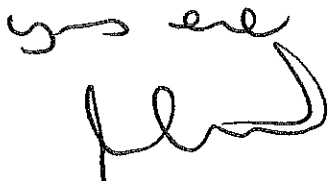
However, the training package for DROPS operators qualified to tow the KINGS trailer was improved in order to reinforce the extant training objectives and is now supported by a video which details acceptable procedures step-by-step, covering all aspects of coupling and uncoupling the trailer, including the airlines, chocks and shunt

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valve. The training package is delivered by competent instructors who are registered and authorised to deliver it by the Defence School of Transport. It is policy that refresher training must be provided to any equipment user who has not operated a given piece of equipment within a 12 month period to ensure operators maintain currency and competency.

The Army have reviewed the Army Equipment Support Publications (AESP) relating to the KINGS trailer and DROPS on Thursday 20 August 2015, and determined that it should include clearer guidance for the operation of the Shunt Valve. A warning will now be included in the AESP stating that the Shunt Valve must only be used for minor adjustment of the trailer position (e.g. all coupling/uncoupling or maintenance activities within a workshop). The AESP will also state that, where reasonably practicable, the Shunt Valve must only be used on firm level ground. The Trainer Instructor Specifications (ISpec) which lay down the specifics of what is to be taught to soldiers will also be amended accordingly.

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.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mark Lancaster'.

MARK LANCASTER TD MP