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of Defence

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Our ref: D/Min(AF)/AR MC01222/2013
Your ref: JP/URAN16001/16121207

8 April 2013

Thank you for your letter 11 March to Philip Dunne about the test firing of Depleted Uranium (DU) Munitions in Scotland.

I must stress that DU has not been shown to present the health or environmental risks suggested in some reports, on the internet and in other media. The UK policy is that DU can be used within weapons; it is not prohibited under current or likely future international agreements. It is capable of being used lawfully by UK Armed Forces in international armed conflict.

As Philip made clear, there are no plans for any test firing of DU rounds at the Kircudbright Range in Dundrennan.

As a result, a regular In-Service Surveillance (ISS) programme is in place to extend the life of the existing stockpile. Rigorous testing is required to ensure that the munitions remain safe and suitable for continued service. The MOD is currently halfway through the next block of LEP analysis and testing and a decision will be taken later this year about any further life extension of the propellant charge or whether to replenish the stocks (of charges). It is important to note that the propellant charge for the CHARM 3 Round can be tested by firing variants that do not contain DU, but which will still inform the overall LEP.

In summary, there are currently no plans for any test firing of DU rounds at the Kirkcudbright Range in Dundrennan. Should the MOD decide at some point in the future that there is a need to fire DU munitions, the Department would advise local councils and the relevant MPs/MSPs.

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