



Ministry  
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**JEREMY QUIN MP**  
MINISTER OF STATE FOR DEFENCE PROCUREMENT

MSU/4/8/1/2/is

22 July 2020

Dear Tobias,

Thank you for your letter of 7 July 2020 again requesting a copy of the report into lessons learned from the procurement of the four Military Afloat Reach and Sustainability (MARS) Tide Class tankers.

I appreciate that the planned Fleet Solid Support ship procurement continues to attract considerable Parliamentary interest. However, as I explained in my earlier letter, in order to provide the Secretary of State with the clearest and most comprehensive picture, the report makes an open and frank assessment of the procurement process and UK shipbuilding industry. It also contains detailed and commercially sensitive information about the MARS tanker procurement.

Careful consideration has been given as to whether the report can be made public. It has been concluded that it cannot. Most importantly, the report touches upon matters of policy that remain under close consideration. In addition, the disclosure of commercially sensitive information could prejudice not only the commercial interests of the bidders in the MARS tanker competition, but also the future ability of the Ministry of Defence to conduct a fair and value for money competition for future ships, regardless of the chosen procurement strategy. For these reasons I regret that I am still unable to provide a copy of the report at this time.

I continue to welcome the interest of the Defence Committee in the procurement of support shipping and fully expect our decisions and the considerations that shape them to come under scrutiny at the appropriate time.

I am copying this letter to Meg Hillier, Chair of the Public Accounts Committee.

Yours sincerely,

**JEREMY QUIN MP**

The Rt Hon Tobias Ellwood MP  
Chair, House of Commons Defence Committee  
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## Defence Committee

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7 July 2020

Thank you for your response of 22 June to my letter on the MARS Tanker report into lessons learned.

The Committee are surprised and disappointed with your decision to withhold the report. We note your concerns that the report contains commercially sensitive information and that it touches upon matters of policy that remain under close consideration. However, the role of this Committee is to hold the MoD to account, as such it is essential that we are informed of the lessons learned from previous procurements to ensure that any future decisions are properly scrutinised.

As acknowledged in your letter, the report takes "an open and frank assessment of the procurement process and UK shipbuilding industry": this information is crucial to the Committee's work by informing our assessment of effective and efficient procurement processes. I must therefore ask you to reconsider your decision.

I am copying this letter to Meg Hillier MP, Chair of the Public Accounts Committee.

Yours,

**Rt Hon. Tobias Ellwood MP**  
**Chair of the Defence Committee**