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PERMANENT SECRETARY

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22 February 2021

Meg Hillier MP
Chair of the Public Accounts Committee
Sent electronically

Dear Chair,

FOLLOW UP QUESTIONS TO PAC HEARING 4 FEBRUARY

In response to a question from Sir Bernard Jenkin, we agreed to write to the Committee on the Scotland Quotient of QRFs and the deployment split between England and Scotland:

Defence has generated 42 Vaccine Quick Response Force (VQRF) vaccination teams across NHS England to support the national vaccination rollout. These teams comprise 252 personnel who can be employed at short notice at a COVID-19 Vaccination Centre, Hospital Hub or Regional Primary Care Network. As of the 16 February, 29 of these teams are employed and 13 are being held at readiness pending NHS requests for support.

Separately, in Scotland, 90 Service Personnel, constituting eight vaccination teams, are deployed to a number of NHS Scotland Health Boards. As of 16 February, all eight teams are employed. 32 other Service personnel are providing planning support to Vaccination Centres in addition to other tasks.

In response to a question from Nick Smith MP, asking for an update about position, navigation and timing (PNT) activity and whether One Web is receiving any funding through that arrangement:

The HMG lead for Positioning, Navigation and Timing (PNT) sits within the Cabinet Office and with the DNSA whilst they complete the PNT strategy and seek a long-term SRO for PNT. MOD is one of many departments that has provided expertise and input into the drafting of that strategy, acknowledging that the importance of PNT goes beyond Defence and into every area of Critical National Infrastructure (CNI). Demonstrating HMG's commitment to tackling our PNT vulnerabilities for all CNI sectors is the Space-Based PNT Programme, which is run with BEIS and Cabinet Office Sponsorship through the UK Space Agency, with the support of MOD, FCDO and DfT among others.

Within Defence, the PNT programmes are sponsored and managed within UK Strategic Command, supported by DE&S and Dstl. Programmes include Robust Global Navigation Systems (RGNS), Alternative Navigation and Timing options and research into developing anti-jam capabilities. These are not restricted to Space technologies but take advantage of all alternative technologies for the most resilient approach.

OneWeb is a commercial company that aims to deliver ubiquitous broadband from a proliferated LEO constellation of satellites. Its first-generation capability is, therefore, communications. Responsibility for HMG's approach to OneWeb sits with BEIS colleagues; their team has confirmed that OneWeb is not in receipt of any funding for PNT.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Stephen Lovegrove', with a stylized, cursive script.

STEPHEN LOVEGROVE