



SPEED VS RIGOUR – ENHANCING DECISION MAKING IN DEFENCE ACQUISITION

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Comparing Analysis Support for Urgent Operational Requirements to traditional Acquisition Investments - A report from the recent Defence Special Interest Group seminar at which analysis support to Ministry of Defence acquisition projects was discussed.

Thirty people attended and contributed to the seminar which took the form of presentations followed by discussions. Atkins Global hosted the event at their premises near Bristol.

Traditional UK Ministry of Defence (MOD) acquisition and investment can be seen as a long winded process, with examples of investment decisions taking many years. Operational Analysis (OA) may be viewed as contributing to some of these delays, when providing evidence to underpin decision making. In contrast, the procurement of new equipment for deployment into operational theatres, most recently Afghanistan, uses a process called an Urgent Operational Requirement (UOR). An UOR can normally be deployed and operational within 12 months. OA still provides evidence to support UOR decisions, but the generation of this evidence is shifted up a gear. Intuitively, there would appear to be lessons to be learnt for the traditional process; but to what extent has this speed compromised the rigour and certainty of evidence?

This meeting explored these issues by comparing recent MOD procurements using both methods. Three speakers with experience in the subject area provided their views on the differences between traditional and UOR acquisition, and ways in which the processes could be improved.

The first speaker was Tom Baldwin from Dstl's Land Battlespace Systems Department with his talk entitled 'Either UOR or You're Not!' He described the traditional approach of presenting the value for money of options solutions on a Combined Operational Effectiveness and Investment Appraisal (COEIA) plot, illustrating this with investments in the National Imagery Exploitation Centre, and the Defence Electronic Warfare Centre. His UOR example focussed upon the Boomerang system which is now deployed in Afghanistan.

Tom stated that there was potential scope for a 70% evidence solution in support of acquisition decisions. He suggested that there was scope for some analysis to be performed on the cost effectiveness of different levels of evidence to support acquisition decisions.

Gavin Jessup, a Principal Operational Analyst in MOD Head Office spoke next. His presentation focussed on the similarities between the evidence requirements for traditional (core) and UOR procurements. He argued that the process was much the same



Figure 1 - Boomerang Shot Detection System UOR

albeit with some differences in the personnel and organisations involved. He perceived that the difference in difficulty of producing robust evidence resulted from the generality of core acquisition compared to those for UORs where the problem to be solved was well understood, the operating environment clear and the potential solutions likely to be available almost off-the-shelf from a supplier. Furthermore, the assessment of whole life cost for UORs was simpler due to their shorter lifetime. All these factors mean that the UOR analysis problem is more bounded and, therefore simpler and speedier to undertake

The final presenter, Edwin Swidenbank, Chief Engineer at Atkins, chose a different approach to the topic and advocated the adoption of System Engineering methodologies to support the development of appropriate solutions to the traditional acquisition requirements. He contended that by adopting this approach there would be a



Figure 2 - Vallon UOR IED Detector

reduced need for UOR equipments as the development of the requirement space would have been more robust, leading to a flexible solution that would meet future Defence needs.

A discussion session, ably chaired by Stuart Nicholas from Atkins, followed the talks. A number of issues were noted including:

- The difficulty of identifying future operating environments, given that much of the core equipment has lifetimes in excess of 20 years
- The risks associated with a '70% evidence solution'
- How do you know how much evidence is enough, and avoid analysis paralysis?
- Is the UOR process the most efficient and affordable means of meeting operational requirements in the long term?

The discussions continued over tea & biscuits and it was noted that the topic raised many unanswered questions. Dstl intends to further explore these as a result of the seminar.

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Total Membership

2342

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The Society is pleased to announce that the Accreditation Panel has admitted the following members to the categories shown. These members are now entitled to use post-nominal letters as indicated: -

Admit to the category of Associate (CandORS)

Afzaal AHMED

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