Reorganisation of Evaluation and Research to Support Future Defence Procurement

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SUMMARY

In response to the changing defence environment and political and economic pressures, UK non-nuclear defence science and technology capability has been drawn together as the Defence Evaluation and Research Agency (DERA). The agency remains a government organisation but operates as a trading agency supplying its services to customers (principally in the UK MoD) on a full cost basis, and required to demonstrate best commercial practices and financial viability. This paper traces the early days as the Defence Research Agency (DRA) through to its current structure, highlighting some of the challenges along the way, and sets out some future initiatives to maintain its position.

1 INTRODUCTION

As a result of the political drive in the UK to make government departments more efficient and more accountable, and in the light of the changing defence environment following the reduction in the threat from the Eastern Bloc, a strategic decision was made to create the Defence Research Agency (DRA). This agency was to comprise all non-nuclear defence research activity carried out by government establishments in the UK. The UK armed services would manage the government funding which had previously been voted direct to the research establishments, with the new agency acting as a supplier charging on a full cost basis. Subsequently the DRA was joined by other government organisations supplying science based services to the MOD to form an enlarged agency. This paper traces the history of what is now the Defence Evaluation and Research Agency (DERA), charting the key factors and decisions that shaped the agency along the way.

2 BACKGROUND

Like most large Western nations with substantial defence commitments, the UK had developed a large defence research organisation covering sea, land, air and command and control systems. The capabilities were distributed over a number of establishments, although over the years there had already been some rationalisation which had concentrated capability into a number of key establishments (Figure 1).

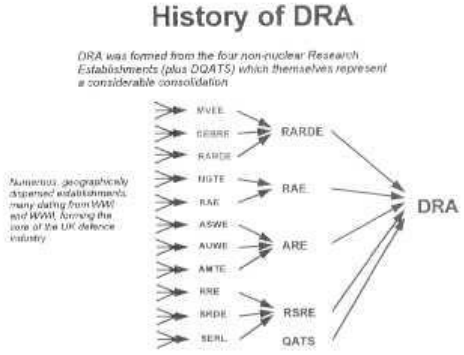

Figure 1 - History of DRA

These establishments were distributed across the country on a number of key sites (Figure 2).

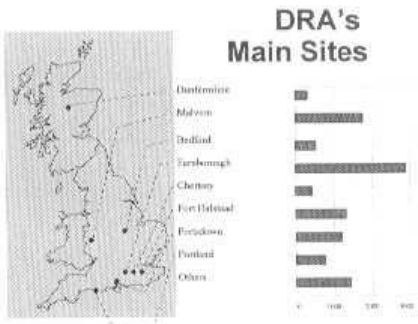

Figure 2 - DRA's Main Sites

Although a coherent policy on the aims of defence research did not exist, the main thrusts were generally acknowledged to be:

- To provide the UK Ministry of Defence with an intelligent customer status.
- To carry out critical long term research that would not be commercially attractive to industry.
- To ensure that future technology was available and suitably protected in sensitive or secure areas.

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