



# Ministry of Defence



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THE RT HON MARK FRANCOIS  
MINISTER OF STATE FOR THE ARMED FORCES

D/MSU/4/7/1

27 April 2015

Dear Mr Ridley,

Thank you for your letter of 16 March in which you enclose a copy of the Regulation 28 Report following the Inquest into the deaths of Captain Tom Sawyer and Corporal Danny Winter.

As you will be aware, my Department takes its relationship with HM Coroners very seriously and we fully recognise how important it is that we learn all possible lessons to ensure that deaths under similar circumstances in the future can be prevented.

In your report you have raised concerns about the possibility of voice recording radio communications in order that it may assist inquiries and investigations in the future, particularly with a view to identifying where future deaths may be prevented.

In terms of the current situation, written logs of communicating and military command radio nets should be maintained and kept. Additionally, in 2009 some of our voice communication functions migrated to 'Chat Net' systems, which are computer-based, user-typed text exchanges, similar to a civilian internet chat room. These too are recorded and archived. However, currently none of our voice-based systems can be recorded.

In terms of our future capabilities, the next generation of tactical command, control and communications system for Defence includes a requirement that "*The [User] shall be able to access an automated secure voice log of their primary net.*" The full scope of this requirement and its implications will be investigated during the Assessment phase of the programme in the period up to 2018, but it is unlikely that this will include the ability to record all communication networks all the time due to practical limitations. Policy will therefore be developed by the newly appointed Army Chief Information Officer to determine when and how such a capability will be used in the future. I have ensured that your concerns have been passed to him.

I hope that this response helps to address your concerns and I am content for you to copy this response to the Chief Coroner and other Interested Persons.

Yours ever,

RT HON MARK FRANCOIS

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