

MoD Land Ranges and Operational Training

◆SIM 7/2002/23

Target Audience:

FOD Inspectors
HID Inspectors LD2 (Exp)

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SUMMARY

This SIM, which revises and replaces NIGM 7/B/1998/06, advises inspectors of the procedures in place for managing land ranges and military training thereon, and for ensuring the safety of service personnel and the public.

BACKGROUND

1 The Army regard realistic operational training as a key part of their work. They believe that it serves as a powerful reminder of the realities of soldiering, and develops the true potential of individuals, units and formations. Because of this, there is a desire that operational training be as realistic as possible, but not however, at the expense of safety. Notwithstanding that, they take the view that safety restraints should not impose unnecessary restrictions on the training.

2 This is the environment in which inspectors are increasingly becoming involved, both proactively and reactively, and this SIM describes the procedures under which training on land ranges operate. It should be noted that the term 'range' in this context covers both traditional rifle ranges as well as dedicated training areas consisting of many square miles of open country, eg on Salisbury Plain or Dartmoor.

POLICY ON TRAINING AND RANGE SAFETY

3 The MoD policy on training and range safety comes via a hierarchy of committees. It originates within the General Health and Safety Policy Committee (GHSPC) which is responsible to the Second Permanent Under Secretary (2PUS) for policy on health and safety at work in MoD. The Defence Land Ranges Safety Committee (DLRSC) is a standing committee and reports through the GHSPC to 2PUS on all aspects of land range safety. The Land Range Safety Working Party (LRSWP) and Land Ranges Working Party (LRWP) are subcommittees of the DLRSC. The former undertakes specific tasks for the DLRSC and the latter has specific responsibilities for the physical aspects of the safety, design and construction of small arms and infantry weapons ranges.

4 These committees are supported by further bodies, such as the Ordnance Board, the Standing Committee on Training Safety (SCOTS), Land Command, the Range Safety Inspection Team (RSIT), various arms of service and subject matter experts (SMEs).

5 The point of this for Inspectors is to note that every aspect of training and range policy is subject to detailed scrutiny and approval by a number of these bodies.

RANGE DESIGN, CONSTRUCTION, INSPECTION AND MAINTENANCE

6 Policy on range authorisation, maintenance and inspection can be found within the MoD's publication JSP 403 Handbook of Defence Land Ranges Safety Vol I - April 1997. The DFP Unit holds a copy of this publication. →

←¹ Volume I also sets out the specific responsibilities allocated to different levels of the chain of command for discharging these functions.

7 There are specific procedures within JSP 403 Vol I for the setting up of new ranges. These principles also apply to the authorisation and use of land on a temporary basis for live firing, and to major alterations to existing ranges. MoD Form 904/904A 'Land Range Authorisation Certificate' authorising the taking into use of a Service Land Range is issued if this process is successfully completed.

8 A further form, the 905/905A 'Land Range Safety Certificate' is then issued subject to verification that the range is (a) suitable for use as prescribed Form 904/904A and attached documentation, and (b) that the range orders adequately cover the management and use of the range. Form 905/905A can be found with the range standing orders and is reissued periodically (3 or 5 yearly intervals, depending on the type of range). The authority for opening and operating all such ranges ultimately rests at 2 star level (Major General - Divisional Commander) who will personally sign many of the forms/documents needed.

9 In addition, Form 906 is to be found at each range. This is the Land Range Log and is the official record of usage and management of a range. Its use is described later.

10 There are set procedures for range inspections. Daily checks are carried out by the range's own staff (the Range Administration Unit - RAU), civilian employees of the MoD (range wardens) usually under the control of a retired officer (range officer) before firing takes place. On completion of firing, the Range Log (Form 906) is to be checked to ensure its correct completion by the range conducting officer (RCO - the officer/non-commissioned officer (NCO in charge of the shoot or training)).

11 The range officer/range wardens will also carry out formal inspections of the range on a monthly basis, so as to ensure that the range is being properly maintained and kept clean and in good order. These inspections are also recorded in the Range Log (Form 906).

12 Annual inspections are carried out on behalf of the 2 star commander who authorised the range in Form 904. This inspection covers the use of the range and any restrictions/limitations imposed, along with a range of safety issues; range standing orders, bye-laws, danger signals, flags and warning lights, physical barriers, fencing, etc. This inspection is recorded on Form 907A and is again noted in the Range Log (Form 906).

13 An independent inspection of ranges is also carried out periodically, by the Range Safety Inspection Team (RSIT) or equivalent body. These occur 3 yearly for all open/outdoor ranges and 5 yearly for all indoor and enclosed ranges. They replace the annual inspection for that year. The inspections are recorded in the MoD Form 907B (or 907C for MoD civilian ranges at organisations such as DSTL). These reports are used by the DLRSC to maintain continuous oversight of land range safety (see Appendix 1 for summary of forms).

14 Planned maintenance programs exist for ranges, and works would be dealt with within the normal MoD systems. Further inspections are carried out by Defence Estates Land (DE(L)) and Defence Estates Works (DE(W)) who deal with the land/signing and built estate/plant. These again are recorded in the Range Log.

RANGE USE

15 Range Administration Units are required to produce range standing orders. There are no strict rules for the format of these orders and so they will all be slightly different in their makeup. They represent the standing orders applicable to general access and use of the range and specific facilities therein. They are, in effect, miniature safety policies for the use of each site, detailing its organisation, arrangements and procedures. They will refer to a large number of other documents, which units using the range are required to operate in compliance with. →

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16 Before any unit uses a range they will normally pay a reconnaissance visit to the site to be briefed on the training facilities and procedures, and to obtain the background information they need to comply with the range standing orders. The RAU will require some form of detail or bid setting out the training to be carried out, objectives, weapons/facilities to be used, supervisory staff, etc. The unit will usually have to produce an Exercise Instruction which will vary in its complexity depending on the training and facilities. RAU staff review these bids and instructions and only when they accept them will the unit be allowed to train. The bids are often made a long time in advance, due to the very high demand for training facilities in the UK since much of the British Army returned from mainland Europe.

17 Before starting training, the range conducting officer will have to sign for and take control of the range in a formal hand over. This involves his/her signing and in some cases taking possession of the Range Log (Form 906). In the case of large ranges or training areas, where it is not possible to take Form 906 away, then some other system will exist, eg the issue of a daily range summary or unit range detail authorising the use of a particular part of the range and detailing other activities underway that day. This system should be formally described in the range standing orders.

18 Once a unit has taken over a range for its use, they assume responsibility for the safe running of that training. The responsibility for ensuring that sufficient competent supervisory staff are present rests with the unit carrying out the training, not the RAU. This is clearly stated within the MoD's policy documents. RAU staff will not normally actively monitor the safe running of training exercises, nor vet the competency of staff (though the supervisory staff and their qualifications are normally referred to in the exercise instruction which is checked by the RAU). Certain training areas do however provide RAU staff to accompany units, where there is a particular reason, ie to avoid damage to a sensitive environment or where public access is common, both of which are issues on the Dartmoor Training Area, part of which is a National Park.



TRAINING

20 Policy on training in the army is again set down in a number of documents, such as The Army Doctrine Publication: Training and The Army Field Manual Vol 6: Training for Operations. Training time and facilities for the Army are very limited. Training is therefore supposed to achieve specific objectives, identified as part of a training needs analysis. For example, firearms training is intended to ensure service personnel reach an established standard of competency in handling their weapons and in marksmanship. Field firing exercises by units and formations with live ammunition are the pinnacle of this training, aimed at ensuring that those units and formations can practise their role under battlefield conditions.

21 Between the 2 extremes are a range of different exercises and training activities, designed to practise the whole range of military skills. However, throughout these policies, the need for realism in training is given the proviso that safety must not be compromised (although the reverse is stated too). Generally, for all training exercises, the training site should have received a reconnaissance visit and there should be some form of exercise plan or exercise instructions produced, though the detail of this will vary with the size and type of exercise. Personnel taking part should however be identified, particularly the directing/control staff, umpires and safety officers, who should also be identifiable. →



22 All of these elements contribute towards what the Army describe as a safe system of training (SST). This is made up of 4 elements; safe persons, safe equipment, safe practice and a safe place. Where some element of risk is not adequately dealt with by the elements of the SST, then there is a specific requirement for a risk assessment to be included within the exercise instructions. Detailed guidance on this process, the format to be used and how this should be conducted can be found within Army publication MMP 201: A Commander's Guide to Health, Safety and Environmental Risk Management, produced by CESO(A) in Headquarters Land Command.

23 Training will often be referred to as 'wet' or 'dry'; wet training is with live ammunition, dry is with blanks or practice rounds. There are obviously much more stringent restrictions placed on units carrying out wet training, where there is a risk of military personnel or the public being struck by live rounds. →

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27 Whilst live ammunition can only be fired under these strict conditions, dry training can be carried out almost anywhere on military and public land. In the latter case, the main proviso is maintaining a reasonable distance from the public, so that they are not frightened by the noise or the sight of soldiers pointing weapons at them (the current standard issue rifle, the SA 80, is fitted with a 4x optical sight which the soldiers can use to observe members of the public, but this necessitates pointing the rifle at them). Range standing orders will usually restate MoD policy on such training where it is appropriate.

PUBLIC SAFETY

28 A recent introduction to MoD ranges has been the requirement to carry out a risk assessment of public safety. If the term 'risk assessment' is encountered in relation to ranges, it is normally in this sense, though some ranges will produce separate risk assessments for military personnel on their ranges too. The risk assessment deals with the risk to the public from the normal operation of the range and foreseeable contact by the public with military training underway. For some ranges in remote areas the public risk is minimal (though livestock may be endangered). However, for others such as the Dartmoor training area, public access is a legal right and a constant source of concern.

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31 The standing orders for a range should also cover the use of these various precautions. In certain areas the public may have a legal right of access to ranges. In these cases there are usually bye-laws in place that allow the MoD to restrict access at certain times when firing is underway. The bye-laws will usually require MoD to notify the public that shooting is taking place, listing the time, location, duration, etc. These notifications then have to be passed to various bodies and duly publicised, such as by posting in prominent locations, printed within local newspapers, etc.

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NON-MoD USE OF RANGES

33 Many different parts of MoD will make use of land ranges and they can be found within naval and RAF establishments as well as Army and Royal Marine bases.

Organisations other than the MoD may also make use of them. Probably the most common example will be members of local police forces. Firearms units can practise techniques using both live and blank ammunition, in a controlled environment and away from public scrutiny. Ranges which have buildings available for training purposes are also ideal for public order training by police support units (PSUs). In these cases, the RAU will normally expect the visiting organisation to comply with MoD procedures and the range's own standing orders, so the normal booking, reconnaissance and exercise instruction procedures will usually be found. However, as the visitors are non-MoD, the systems for co-operation and communication become even more important.

ADVICE TO INSPECTORS

34 The following advice is offered to Inspectors when visiting a range or training area, in addition to the steps set out in the DFP Unit supplement to the FOD Health and Safety Policy. It is suggested that inspectors visit the site prior to the formal inspection to meet the RAU and to obtain copies of relevant papers. Inspectors should request a briefing as to the activities and facilities at the range and request copies of the range standing orders, the public risk assessment, a map of the range and where possible exercise instructions/plans or briefs for particular facilities or exercises as necessary. Inspectors should also ask for sight of the various forms referred to in this SIM and listed in Appendix 1.

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37 The Land Accident Investigation Team (LAIT) are based at HQ Land Command and form part of the Army's Chief Environment and Safety Officer's department (CESO(A)). This group is tasked with investigating any Army training accident world-wide, and they will hear about such accidents very promptly via internal MoD systems. The group is staffed by retired and serving officers, with access to SMEs such as the Small Arms School Corps (SASC). Whilst accidents to service personnel are not reportable under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1995, inspectors are able to investigate them by virtue of the 2000 MoD-HSE General Agreement (see SIM 7/2001/46). LAIT have offered their assistance to HSE staff investigating such accidents, whether they themselves are looking into them or not. As an example, inspectors in Wales and West have investigated serious and fatal shootings of soldiers during training exercises. LAIT have also conducted their own inquiries, but were able to assist HSE inspectors by directing them to policies and procedures relevant to the incidents. A separate SIM will be produced dealing with the lessons to be learnt from these and other military accidents, following investigations by LAIT and HSE. The DFP Unit can contact LAIT for inspectors in such circumstances.

38 With regard to inspectors' own safety, the relevant supplements of the FOD Health and Safety Policy should be read before conducting any such inspections. Ranges are often located in exposed areas, and inspectors should take account of this, along with the prevailing weather conditions and possibility of wind-chill, and dress accordingly.

Inspectors should be accompanied during their visits and should comply with any procedures set down in the range's standing orders. They should not accept offers to take part in any training activity unless they can assure themselves that it is safe for them to do so. In particular, Inspectors should not wear any personal protective equipment unless specifically trained in its use, eg military style respirators.

CANCELLATION OF INSTRUCTIONS

39 NIGM 7/B/1998/06 - cancel and destroy.

Date first issued: 8 April 2002

1-7	Exemption 1 – Defence, Security and International relations
8	Exemption 4 – Law enforcement and legal proceedings

APPENDIX 1
(paras 13 and 34)

LAND RANGE SAFETY FORMS

Form 904/904A

Form used for the initial authorising of a Service land range, TAVRA range and ranges owned or used by cadet forces. The taking into use of MoD civilian ranges within DSTL establishments is to be authorised on Form 904A.

Form 905/905A

This is the Land Range Safety Certificate. It is required for all MoD land ranges, with the Form 905A being used in the case of MoD civilian ranges.

Form 906

Land Range Log, used to record the use and management of a range, Typically signed by the Range Conducting Officer before and after a shoot, and by the Range Administering Unit to record any maintenance, repairs, etc.

Form 907A/907B/907C

Record of annual inspection on behalf of the 2 star officer who authorised the range (the same officer that signed the Form 904). Form 907B covers the more detailed 3 and 5 yearly independent inspections of the ranges by the MoD independent range inspectors. This form comes in 3 parts; 907B-1 Indoor Ranges, 907B-2 Barrack Ranges, 907B-3 Open Range. MoD Form 907C is the form used by E&RSS(Civ) inspectors when inspecting MoD civilian trials and proof facilities on behalf of DSTL every 3 years.

APPENDIX 2
(para 24)

EXAMPLE OF LAND RANGE MAP/RDA

1 The map illustrates a number of the features described in this SIM. The thick line indicates the range boundary and extent of land controlled by the MoD. Around this outer boundary a number of flag symbols can be seen. These indicate the location of perimeter warning flags. Entry and access points (eg public footpaths) are marked with arrows. There will be signs posted all around this outer perimeter indicating that it is an MoD range. Warning posters/signs will also be displayed with the flags and entry and access points.

2 Within the range can be seen a number of specific facilities; there is a drop zone (DZ) for airborne troops to land on, a grenade range (marked with a circle) and six Gallery style ranges. →

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