

THE title of this article is both a challenge and a warning. The challenge is to the CBRN IPT, DEC CBRN and the industrial members of "Team CBRN". The warning is to anyone who doesn't know what Team CBRN is and still hopes to do business with the UK MoD.

The recent Defence Industrial Strategy (DIS) workshop was replete with metaphors – the exact position of the train in relation to the station being a favourite – but two things are certain: the MoD is changing and industry has to change with it. This is a loaded proposition – why should I change? – but one that needs to be addressed by current and prospective clients of the MoD. DIS is a large topic in itself (further information can be found on www.mod.uk) and is difficult to summarise, officially it is trying to level of the boom or bust, to have 'more effective delivery of military capability through partnership with industry.' What it will definitely be is the largest procurement change in the UK for ten years – since the demise of the Procurement Executive and the Quarter Master General's Office (replaced by the DPA and DLO respectively). There are two important points that need to be remembered throughout. Firstly, the Minister for Defence Procurement, Lord Drayson, has imposed change on the MoD, which is critical to remember. The changes that are occurring in the CBRN IPT and DEC CBRN are not happening because they want them to, but because they have to. Secondly, of equal importance, the previous procurement system was far from ideal – just because it is familiar doesn't mean that it was right.

It is also worth noting that this is being done in conjunction with industry. It needn't be – previous changes such as Smart Procurement, Smart Acquisition *et al.* were done with the minimum of input and the maximum of effect. While many of the problems of Team CBRN occur because of the industrial participation, it has at least "empowered" (just to start the

WELCOME TO THE TEAM CBRN CLUB

Gwyn Winfield gives his opinion on the work being done by UK MoD on the CBRN Defence Industrial Strategy

management speak ball rolling – there may be some blue sky thinking later too, so keep up) industry to come up with a solution that they have had a hand in.

Perhaps the most important change within the IPT is the death of the future programme schedule. This was the seen as "The Gospel According to IPT" by industry and it told them that in 2011, for example, there would be an Initial Gate decision for Biological Detection Tier 3, with a Main Gate in 2013. These would be looked upon with anticipation by industry keen to fit it in with their own technology readiness and see it as a hook to hang their research on. Often, however, these names and concepts would be dreamed up years in advance, and could achieve a mass and momentum of their own without changes in technology and threat assessment being given full consideration.

To try and free up the CBRN schedule from this there has been a move towards capability or, to be accurate, "through life capability management" (TLCM – which, by a quirk of fate, is also Torpedo Launched Cruise Missile!). This was to free the system from the sort of debacle which followed the UK Apache programme – whereby the platform was bought, but not

defence lines of development: the training and simulation that would be needed to operate it. Now the system is to be governed by the trinity of water, slush and ice, with water being a pure capability – chemical surveillance on the battlefield, for example – slush having more detail – point chemical detection – and ice being the requirement – a point chemical detector than can recognise specific agents at specific amounts. – though it has to be noted that this could well be a capability too, with industry free to follow whatever path they see fit.

It will come as no surprise to those that work with the military that these are not the only new jargon and acronyms. The Director Equipment Capability (DEC) is now the sponsor organisation, and also the single point of accountability, who works with the Capability Management Group (CMG), while the Integrated Project Team (IPT) remains unchanged they will now belong to Defence Equipment and Support (DE&S) (rather than DPA or DLO) and they will be joined by a new role – the Key Strategic Partner, of which more later. Lost within the deluge of the DIS changes is one of the most fundamental – the scrapping of the previous Defence Procurement Agency and Defence Logistics Agency and the creation of a single team which was enshrined within the Enabling Acquisition Change (EAC) Report. In terms of brass tacks for UK CBRN procurement, this will see the merging of one DPA IPT and five DLO IPTs, meaning that Phil Strudley's (the IPT Leader) team may soar to about 50 people. Equally, however, it may well be that if the MoD goes down the Key Strategic Partner (KSP) route, then the IPT will shrink to about 20 MoD individuals. This is in line with DIS thinking that would like to see smaller IPTs. These 20 will, supplemented by the Key Strategic Partner (KSP), will be able to bring a greater degree of commercial understanding into the IPT.

Team CBRN is the organisation of the IPT, KSP and supplier base; this much is known, but after that it becomes a bit of

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work in progress. Exactly who, how many and exactly what the KSP does is currently under debate among the 20 members of Team CBRN – yet the current members of Team CBRN may change and multiply – or diminish – as circumstances develop. There will, eventually, be a downselect to somewhere between two and four KSPs (but again this might change over time to adapt to circumstances) from a field of, the MoD estimates, eight. “There has already been some discussion with the eight companies that could do it,” said Phil Strudley. “How will we choose? We will have a competition to bring it down to two-to-four.”

The KSPs may well be system manufacturers, or capability providers/system integrators – the official description would be intelligent systems integrators with key domain knowledge – and are likely to involve at least a few unusual suspects (Selex for example). Currently the joint MoD industry team is unsure whether to have one KSP, which many members regard as unlikely (but evidently not those members who feel they could fill those big shoes), or a range of KSPs which would then fit into categories. Exactly what those categories are is also being debated; should they be working at the sector level (Protect or Timely Warning, for example), the capability level (detection and decontamination) or the product (respirators)? Again the team is happy to admit that these will change as circumstances do – there is little point in having a Colpro KSP if the next contract is nine years away – but that those KSPs will be on a long term contract – perhaps as long as ten years. Tim Otter, Chairman of NBC UK, admitted as much: “The whole thing is a work in progress; the composition of Team CBRN will change to deal with problems that occur,” he said. KSPs are not lead systems integrators (LSI) though, such as Boeing/SAIC are on the US’ Future Combatant System, which could stop them bidding for contracts. The KSP can, if he felt his products were suitable, bid for the contract he was looking to fill (though, it has to be stressed, the KSP does not make the decision – that is still the role of the IPT), and could propose them as the best solution for the contract.

Now this is when the cynics among you are probably pressing the big red button – “How am I expected to win when my

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major competitor is a KSP?” If that is the case then I recommend you back to the first paragraph of the article – if you are not trying to engage with Team CBRN then you are not likely to do very well. It may be an unpleasant fact, but it remains a fact. The IPT leader does not need to choose the recommendation by Team CBRN, but if you have not been recommended, and passed over for some reason, or have elected not to engage with them, then you better have a bloody good story.

The major theme of any discussion about Team CBRN is the need for change; change has been enforced, and it is better to embrace it than have it imposed. “New thinking is required in the MoD and new thinking is required in industry, we have to work together,” said Scott Health and Safety’s Nigel Holmes. There is also the need for “openness and transparency”, and this is what the idealists would suggest will make the difference. If any KSP abuses his power, or is felt to by other members of Team CBRN, it may well be that he is stripped of his rank (and, one would have thought, be unlikely to attain such lofty heights again). This might be slight consolation to those companies whose business plan revolved around them winning the contract, but *c’est la guerre*. The KSPs role has yet to be finalised, but the team have put forward some suggestions – managing the strategic partnership contracts, delivering systems that meet the contracted terms of TLCM, providing advice to the IPT, selecting preferred suppliers, placing sub-contracts, demonstrating value for money or agreeing joint partnering arrangements.

Being a KSP is not open to everyone – there have been some suggested criteria such as being capable of prime contracting, domain knowledge, systems integration capability, experienced supply chain management, sympathetic to supply base, and long-term interests. It is the latter – long-term interests – which is perhaps the most important, as it refers again to the need for fair play. This is where it becomes difficult, as fair play means different things to different commercial interests. Phil Strudley suggested that there were frameworks from other projects that could help: “Processes like PPP have key performance indicators and other devices that can be measured to make sure that they are doing what they should. If not there would be a framework to stop it.”

Most of the concerns about KSPs don’t come from the larger companies – that will happen during the competition – but from the small-to-medium enterprises (SMEs), or “subject matter experts” (to quote Siemen’s Richard le Fleming). These are the ones who are worried about the repercussions – potentially being cut out from the supplier base at one end and being squeezed by the KSPs at the other. In many respects these various companies are the losers from the current change. They will inevitably lose the ability to punch above their weight, will find themselves losing a single point of contact and having to promote their technology to both KSPs and IPT. Some of them may already also have enabling contracts which might need to be “looked at” and there is the major fear that their IPR may well be snaffled by the KSPs – all in MoD’s best interests of course. Currently Team CBRN has a non-official SME champion (NBC UK) to try and promote their interests and concerns – which are many and varied – to the non-SMEs who make up the rest of Team CBRN.

In another change there is also a desire to get industry involved in S&T projects earlier. This has been described as trying to level out the “valley of death” – the graph that shows the development of technology as it is handed over from science to industry. This will see a joint development working towards a final requirement. This means that the work that DSTL does will find an application rather than needing to be modified past recognition or becoming an interesting

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aside. While there is an attraction to this there has to be the concern over competition. Just because it was invented here does not mean that it is the best – which is not in anyway a condemnation of DSTL. Innovation moves in strange ways, its wonders to perform, and there would have to be firm handling of the procurement process to make sure that the UK gets the best solution. This might mean more projects never reach the level of maturity that they currently do – industry will not continue to fund projects that will not find a commercial market, and without industry cash, and IPR, it may be that DSTL cannot do it on their own (leaving them with a legacy of half completed, but potentially valuable, products).

There is an idealism about Team CBRN that suggests that openness and transparency might work. But the team has been put together, by admission, by personality and capability, rather than company or stature. Quite whether this openness and fair play will last beyond “contact” or when individuals step down will be another thing – yet Team CBRN is all about challenges. The IPT will have to rely on industry to fulfil some of the roles, but what impact will this have on the budget and on fair competition? The KSPs will be awarded contracts for their time, but requirements and budgets change all the time in the MoD so when this inevitably happens what does it mean for the rest of the programme? Presumably, either industry then turns in a limited performance to the IPT, cutting the hours to match the budget, or extra funds have to be found for the KSP that can only come out of the procurement budget – neither of these are attractive solutions for the warfighter.

Arguably, most of the focus from the sub contractors (some of which will consider themselves snubbed prime contractors) comes over the idea of fair competition; will the KSP – who won't be a subject matter expert – understand my product? In the old system there were a number of ways into the procurement process – some through the science community who could fully appreciate what the technology could do. That has been streamlined now and access to DSTL and the IPT will be lessened. Equally, there are always personality clashes between companies; that might see valuable



*How will existing contracts be affected by DIS?
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technology decide that it is not worth the bother and cost of competing because they “know” they will lose.

Openness needs to be embedded at the very start and Team CBRN will have to work hard to ensure people's objections are listened to; otherwise it will become the Team CBRN Club alluded to as the title of this article. Equally, however, the Team is going to have to be prepared to say no, to ensure that the process doesn't suffer the death of a thousand committees. This is perhaps best summed up by Phil Strudley's non-rhetorical question of “Do we all have the appetite for change?” Some will not, and Team CBRN will be judged on how it deals with those dissenters.

To be fair, the work that both Phil Strudley and Colonel Harris are doing personally, seeing those companies who entered into Frazer Nash's survey, has been commendable for trying to keep the wider community involved. At the same time a rigorous schedule has been imposed, and this is further reinforced by the fact that Team CBRN might become a pilot programme for the DPA's (or whatever it is called this week) approach to other business areas, so there has to be measurable progress. That progress will also be assessed by the user, and it will be interesting to see how well projects such as Light Role Team and Maritime Biological Detection System maintain their momentum during this period of change.

“Moving forward, together” is the strapline, and challenge, of Team CBRN. There has to be movement at both poles, however; the Team needs to ensure that it remains fair and open and industry has to get involved rather than sit on the sidelines and gripe. There is a lot of griping too; many of these are real fears, but are not chaperoned by action – a number of companies seem to dismiss Team CBRN as unworkable and stick their



heads in the sand. Team CBRN will happen – too much has already occurred to stop it – but, most importantly, change means there can be no maintenance of the status quo.

The IWW organiser Joe Hill's last words, “Don't mourn, organise,” would seem to be apt; the old system has gone and there can be no better reaction to this than to try and prepare for the oncoming change. Will the new system be perfect? No, but you have a far better chance of making it amenable to your company/organisation if you are in the middle trying to guide it.

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