

Governance of explosive ordnance

Bombs, warheads, missiles, mines, mortars, rockets, torpedoes, depth charges, bullets, grenades and more – these are all part of the Australian Defence Force's (ADF) arsenal of explosive ordnance (EO). They are integral to military capability and essential to the operations of the ADF. Terry Foster explains why meticulous governance arrangements are essential for EO management.

Governance arrangements ensure that the right amount of EO is in the right hands, in the right place, in the right condition, at the right time for the ADF to conduct its operations and activities. EO governance starts before capability is acquired and continues until the explosive components are either expended in operations or training, disposed of, destroyed, or, in some cases, made safe for a museum display.

It is imperative that Defence's EO is secured safely at all stages of its life to avoid it falling into the wrong hands.

Following the theft of a number of rocket launchers, Defence conducted an exhaustive security audit of its weapons, munitions and explosive ordnance (WME). This audit, and the subsequent review of Defence policy and procedures for the management of EO, identified areas where Defence's management of WME could be reformed.

Speaking to the Lowy Institute in June, the Secretary, Nick Warner, said, "Our key reform has been to streamline and strengthen accountability by making the Vice Chief of the Defence Force responsible for the oversight, coordination and assurance of the efficiency and effectiveness of the overall weapons and explosive ordnance system of management." This responsibility is delivered through Commander Joint Logistics.



ABOVE Gunner Scott Clarke (rear left) maintains watch at an RBS-70 Ground Based Air Defence missile battery manned by Gunner Murray Keogh (obscured) and Bombardier Nicholas Selzer (right) during Exercise Pitch Black.

Along with revised accountability, the review recommended that an Explosive Ordnance Management and Policy Branch be established. This new branch in Joint Logistics Command drew together the existing Directorates of Ordnance Safety and Explosive Ordnance Services, and the Joint Proof and Experimental Unit and complemented their extensive technical expertise with a new Directorate of Explosive Ordnance and Weapons Assurance.

Policies informing the management of, and accounting for, EO abound. There are Defence Policies, Service Instructions, many pieces of legislation – Federal, State and Territory – and several international agreements and conventions. These numerous arrangements have different impacts on various elements of Defence. The three Services, Defence Security Authority, Defence Science and Technology Organisation and Defence

Materiel Organisation all interface with EO – for reasons including training, sustainment, research, testing, fighting, supporting cadets and managing ranges and magazines.

Bringing all these governance regimes into a single cohesive framework is a major and complex task for the new branch. Once adopted, the framework will support the realignment of policies to ensure clear lines of accountability and consistency of application for the whole life of EO in Defence.

Defence is serious about the security and effective management of EO. Joint Logistics Command, through the Explosive Ordnance Management and Policy Branch, is making good progress in aligning Defence's EO governance mechanisms to provide our people and the wider community with the highest possible level of assurance.