



Ministry  
of Defence

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29 January 2015

Dear [REDACTED]

Release of Information

Thank you for your correspondence dated 13 January 2015 requesting information on the current status of the Mine Countermeasures, Hydrography and Patrol programme. Your enquiry has been considered to be a request for information in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

I can confirm that the Department has the following information in relation to your question.

The Mine countermeasures, Hydrographic and Patrol Capability Programme (MHPC) has now been renamed the Mine countermeasures and Hydrographic Capability (MHC). The name was changed following the announcement of the Maritime Composite Option (MCO) deal between MoD and BAE on 6 November 2013, which included the purchase of 3 new Offshore Patrol Vessels and therefore delivered the 'Patrol' solution.

Work undertaken during the Concept Phase produced compelling evidence that unmanned, off-board systems (OBS), deployed from low-value steel ships, or from ashore, could deliver most elements of the capability. However, a solution based on like-for-like replacement of the current, low-signature Mine Countermeasures Vessels (MCMVs) and Survey Vessels (SVHOs) cannot yet be discounted.

The Programme passed 'Initial Gate' in July 2014 and was approved to proceed to the Assessment Phase with the associated funding. MHC has been designed as a transformational and incremental programme that will update and subsequently replace the full existing MCM and Hydrographic capabilities to provide assured maritime freedom of manoeuvre, delivering minehunting, minesweeping and hydrographic mission systems (including remote controlled OBS) to legacy and future platforms.

Marine OBS are widely used in the commercial sector, but are not yet fully proven for naval operations. The Assessment Phase will aim to reduce the risks associated with the naval use of OBS and determine the cost-effectiveness through:

- Three advanced technology demonstrators.
- A controlled trials programme.
- Technical studies and programme analysis.

The Assessment Phase is now underway, albeit in its early stages.

If you are not satisfied with this response or you wish to complain about any aspect of the handling of your request, then you should contact me in the first instance. If informal resolution is not possible and you are still dissatisfied then you may apply for an independent internal review by contacting the Information Rights Compliance team, 1<sup>st</sup> Floor, MOD Main Building, Whitehall, SW1A 2HB (e-mail [CIO-FOI-IR@mod.uk](mailto:CIO-FOI-IR@mod.uk)). Please note that any request for an internal review must be made within 40 working days of the date on which the attempt to reach informal resolution has come to an end.

If you remain dissatisfied following an internal review, you may take your complaint to the Information Commissioner under the provisions of Section 50 of the Freedom of Information Act. Please note that the Information Commissioner will not investigate your case until the MOD internal review process has been completed. Further details of the role and powers of the Information Commissioner can be found on the Commissioner's website, <http://www.ico.gov.uk>.

Yours sincerely

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