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## VT MERLIN COMMENCES HF COMMUNICATIONS CONTRACT

VT Merlin Communications has started a rationalisation and upgrade programme for long distance strategic communications between Army units, RAF aircraft, Royal Navy warships and UK headquarters.

The service will be delivered for the Strategic Terrestrial Radio Systems Integrated Project Team (STRS-IPT) under a 15 year, £220million, Public Private Partnership programme.

The VT Merlin solution improves operational effectiveness and efficiency by exploiting modern communication techniques and waveforms to provide increased capability and throughput capacity. Under the contract VT Merlin has taken over the operation, maintenance and support of the current MOD HF communications facilities in the UK and overseas.

VT Merlin will operate, maintain and support the HF Communications Services initially utilising the current military personnel and management. These personnel will over a 30-month period, be replaced by VT Merlin employees. In the UK, all the military staff will have returned to other military duties within the first 12 months.

At the start of the contract the following main sites located in the UK will be used to deliver the services:-

- Crimond, Milltown and Kinloss in Scotland
- Inskip and Forest Moor in the north of England
- Bampton Castle and Chelveston in the Midlands
- St Eval and Penhale Sands in the south of England

Overseas VT Merlin will use four sites at :-

- Cyprus, Gibraltar, Ascension Island and the Falkland Islands

In addition to the above, ancillary sites in the UK will provide specialist HF services as follows: Toward Taynuilt and Clach MacKenny in Scotland for local services to the Clyde; St Mawgan for STCICS /MATELO services; Fort Staddon and Plymouth for Flag Officer Sea Training (FOST) services in the local area.

Forest Moor in Yorkshire will be the primary Network Control Station (NCS) and will provide the central hub for the control and management of the entire HF network and the assets that provide the DHFCS system. Kinloss in Scotland will become the Alternate NCS, providing system redundancy and, if necessary, will be able to take over control of operations from Forest Moor.

Following a site rationalisation programme, HF operations currently provided by existing MOD sites will cease at Milltown, Toward Taynuilt and Clach McKenny in Scotland and at Bampton Castle, Chelveston, St Mawgan and Fort Staddon in England. Operations at these sites will cease progressively from late 2003 to early 2006. Many of these sites are used for other purposes by the MOD and the only sites that are currently expected to close are those at Milltown, Chelveston and Bampton Castle.