Dear James,

SERVICE COMPLAINTS COMMISSIONER'S FIFTH REPORT

Thank you for your letter of 26 June in which you expressed disappointment at the pace at which it appeared we were progressing efforts to resolve the problems of the Service Complaints system. I can assure you that I am giving a high priority to this work. The model which Dr Atkins has outlined involves a role much closer to that of a conventional public sector ombudsman, with a focus on maladministration. This would of course be a significant departure from current practice and needs to be very carefully examined. As you will already be aware, I laid a Written Ministerial Statement on 11 July telling the House that we expect to have further details available on the options after the summer recess. This is unlikely to be at the beginning of September, but it should be shortly afterwards.

yours ever,

Mark Francois MP

THE RT HON MARK FRANCOIS MP

The Rt Hon James Arbuthnot MP
Chairman
House of Commons Defence Committee
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA
From the Chair, Rt Hon James Arbuthnot MP

Rt Hon Mark Francois MP
Minister of State
Ministry of Defence
Floor 5, Zone B
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26 June 2013

Dear Mark

Service Complaints Commissioner for the Armed Forces

Thank you for your letter of 24 June regarding your consideration of how the role of the Service Complaints Commissioner might be revised as part of improving the effectiveness of the Service complaints system.

We appreciate that the options must be fully considered, but we are disappointed at the slow progress to date on resolving the concerns about the Service complaints system which have existed over a long period. You say you expect to be able to announce a decision later this year. However, we are concerned that there should be no loss of momentum or urgency in concluding these matters, and they should certainly be resolved before the current Commissioner leaves post. We would be grateful to receive a further update on progress in these discussions, preferably their conclusion, by 2 September.

Chair