Thank you for your letter dated 26 February 2018 concerning the rank composition of the Armed Forces and international comparators.

The Ministry of Defence (MOD) has not conducted a comprehensive review of the job descriptions of officers of "field rank" in the manner you have suggested. The force structure of the Armed Forces is subject to ongoing review between the MOD and the single Services to determine the best approach to generating the military capabilities needed to deliver Defence outputs.

The 'field rank' is a mark of attained experience, competency, skill and intrinsically linked to a level of responsibility for officers both in operational units and in HQ functions. There has been very little change in the proportion of NATO rank OF-3 (Major, Lieutenant-Commander, Squadron Leader) to OF-6 (Brigadier, Commodore, Air Commodore) officers across the Armed Forces over the last six years but we continue to review our rank structure to ensure it remains effective and appropriate.

International comparators between the UK Armed Forces rank structures and other nations would need to take into consideration like-for-like roles, responsibilities, private sector pay comparisons and more broadly operational and multinational commitments. This is a complex task and previous comparators have not always proved particularly instructive. The UK make a significant contribution to multi-national roles within the NATO, EU and UN missions which increases our requirement for OF-3 to OF-6 officers.

Future Force structures will be considered as part of the Modernising Defence Programme which, as you are aware, is currently underway.

I hope you have found this information useful.

THE RT HON GAVIN WILLIAMSON CBE MP

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