



Ministry  
of Defence

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE  
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**STUART ANDREW MP**  
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE AND MINISTER  
FOR DEFENCE PROCUREMENT

MSU/4/8/1/2/is

3 August 2018

Dear Julian,

Thank you for your letter of 26 June 2018 to my predecessor, Guto Bebb MP, which raised concerns about the RAF's Sentry fleet and enquired into how the Ministry of Defence (MOD) is approaching any potential Airborne Warning and Control System (AWACS) replacement. I am writing to update you on the current position.

Firstly, to address your concerns on Sentry's current performance, the MOD has actively worked with its suppliers to improve availability, predominately by focussing upon addressing and improving output standards from depth maintenance, but also by providing increased numbers of qualified and experienced Northrop Grumman employed technicians onto the Flying Squadron. Collectively, these measures have improved the quality of the aircraft on the front line, and the engineering capacity on the Squadron. Flying hours continue to grow steadily and the Squadron is on track to achieve the agreed NATO flying commitments (one quarter of all E-3 operational hours) this year.

As you will be aware, the AWACS Capability Sustainment Programme was launched following the 2015 Strategic Defence and Security Review, in recognition of the need to invest and improve the RAF's AWACS capability out to at least 2035. Since then, significant work has taken place to understand the rapidly evolving threat environment and identify the defence requirement for this critical capability, working with close allies, to fully understand the options available to us.

Let me assure you that neither I nor my officials have been blind to the options that exist, from across industry and our allies, that potentially meet this future capability requirement. A final decision on the way forward will only be taken in the best interests of national security in the face of intensifying threats, and after full consideration and due process.

I will write to you again once we have concluded this work.

**STUART ANDREW MP**

The Rt Hon Dr Julian Lewis MP  
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