

GROUP DIRECTOR, COMMUNICATIONS &  
THE C3i PROGRAMME

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Dear Richard

Thank you for your letter dated the 1<sup>st</sup> February which I received on 6<sup>th</sup> February. By their nature the questions you posed required some lengthy explanation to answer them properly. I have laid out all the answers in 'Appendix A'. I hope you will find this a useful way to ensure you get as full an answer as possible. There is one question I have referred back to you as I am not sure exactly what you mean and I need clarification.

I think it is important to point out a few overarching issues regarding the MPS position with regard to Airwave and Metradio. If I comment on Metradio first. We have had this system in place for over 10 years and it is fully owned by the MPS. In that time we have constantly 'sharpened and honed' the system to make sure it meets our requirements within its limitations. The system has reached its full capacity and this has meant that 'personal' radios had to take on a different meaning in that many BOCU's had to move to a pool basis in order to accommodate the growth in the MPS over recent years and to make sure all patrolling officers had a radio to use for their tour of duty. The radios themselves are no longer made and whilst we can maintain the system until we lose the frequencies in 2008, it is fair to say the infrastructure will by then have moved much closer towards the end of its useful life. The system is unencrypted and therefore open to all who have the equipment and care to listen in.

If I now move to Airwave. As you know we have not fully transitioned all the BOCU's onto Airwave but even now we have made adjustments to make the system more aligned to our unique requirements. The O2 Airwave system is provided under a National contract signed by PITO [soon to be part of the NPfA] and like all other UK police services we lease space on that network through PITO. I have tried in my answers to indicate where O2 and PITO have a role, you may wish to refer to PITO or O2 as you see appropriate. The core of the contract administered by PITO is coverage at street level in the open air, any coverage in vehicles or in buildings is referred to as 'incidental' under the contract. I am also informed by O2 that no radio system can ever offer 100% coverage everywhere. These may be specific areas where you may feel PITO and O2 can assist you in your questions. The MPS has purchased a 'higher probability' of incidental coverage in Central London where public order and events at Stadia justify the additional cost above the core contract. All BOCU's that have moved onto Airwave now have 'personal' issue in line with

the original meaning of the word. The policing family is therefore much better placed to grow and to have essential effective communications. The system is encrypted and information/intelligence that could not be passed on Metradio can be passed on Airwave. While we are transitioning, all response team officers need to carry Metradio and Airwave for maximum resilience and to ensure effective cross border and Pan London communications.

I have tried to be as helpful as possible. This is a broad subject and if I can help anymore please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

Ronald S E McPherson  
Deputy Assistant Commissioner  
C3i Programme Director

## **APPENDIX A**

### **RESPONSE TO LONDON ASSEMBLY REVIEW COMMITTEE QUESTIONS ON AIRWAVE**

1. Before any Borough migrates onto Airwave, extensive testing is conducted. Arqiva, the Company employed by the MPS to validate technical issues, conducts thorough drive testing of the whole Borough. Then three weeks prior to the Borough going live, further confidence checks are conducted in consultation with Borough staff, Police Federation and Union representatives who are invited to be present. Where there is an unexpected lack of coverage in the open air, our suppliers are directed to take action to rectify the problem. Where the problem is in a police building, such actions as are possible are implemented to improve the situation. In relation to public buildings where strategically Airwave capability would be desirable/needed, Territorial Policing have recently been requested to survey Borough policing requirements in order for an assessment to be made of what improvements may be possible. It should be noted that in-building coverage is purely incidental to the contracted coverage provision.
2. A large part of the LUL network is above ground and benefits from the normal Airwave coverage that exists across London. In some semi-covered and covered sections incidental Airwave coverage exists however, this is very limited. The actions as outlined in question 1 are used to check the actual coverage enabling a local risk assessment to be completed so all officers are aware of the radio service limitations. Current MPS operational notices give guidance to officers who have to enter LUL or any other railway property.

Extending Airwave specifically into the LUL network is a Project managed by PITO and has recently been agreed and funding authorised through the National Airwave Programme Board. Each LUL line will be completed in turn that will, when completed; provide a limited Airwave capability in the public areas of the network. The MPS continues to work closely with BTP and other agencies so we can take advantage of this new service when it is available. The installation has not yet begun but the environment and geography of the LUL network could mean that there are coverage and capacity issues. This has yet to be validated but I anticipate close working with partners to work towards an operationally acceptable service.

In addition to a fixed Airwave service within the LUL network, O2 through PITO and the MPS has available a number of Emergency Response Vehicles that can attend a major incident and deploy a limited temporary Airwave capability for use by responders. This provides a limited capability to cover spontaneous incidents and is important because any fixed system could be subject to damage due to the incident. The deployment of this system was recently tested.

3. Airwave coverage at ground level, in line with the National contract, is superior to that of Metradio. A few small and isolated areas of poor coverage have been identified. These are however, within the allowable parameters of the nationally agreed coverage criteria. Operation risk assessments are conducted locally in these cases. For example Metradio never offered coverage in locations such as the Limehouse, Blackwall and Rotherhithe Tunnels, these are all covered with Airwave.

4. The MPS have worked closely with its suppliers in resolving any issues that have been identified. Weekly technical meetings are held to review all reported faults, which are then reviewed by a fortnightly business-led Silver group meeting. Where faults or other issues subject to contract are identified they are correctly reported and progressed by our suppliers. I meet regularly with the CEO of O2, Richard Bobbett; you will recall he also gave evidence to the Review Committee.

With regard to non-contractual issues such as in-building capability, the MPS is currently assessing the business need for such capability in relation to the possibility of meeting the expressed need. Where a clear and urgent strategic requirement for coverage in a building under police control is identified, a 'Special Scheme' is provided. Such schemes have been implemented in Walworth Road Police Station, the National Stadium, Wembley and Heathrow Airport. A 'Special Scheme' provides the same coverage as at street level.

5. All reports of emergency activation malfunction are investigated individually, with the co-operation of the officer concerned. To date the majority of such reports have been resolved as either a local training need (where a police officer or a communications officer has not fully understood the way the new radio or the network functions), or as a known system limitation (eg where a radio out of coverage needs to re-affiliate to the network on coming back into coverage). In all cases the result is fed back to the originating officer through their supervisor.
- 6/7. All reports of hardware or software malfunction are notified through MPS reporting procedures to our suppliers. At the time of reporting the nature of the fault is frequently not within the user's knowledge. Some reports relate to failures in the nationally provided infrastructure and are managed by O2 Airwave. Reported fault levels in relation to radio terminals are well within anticipated and projected levels. During the transitional period as Airwave is extended to all parts of the MPS, a fortnightly business-led meeting ensures that any such reports with serious operational implications are highlighted to suppliers and resolutions expedited.

During rollout a small number of instances of software malfunction have been identified. These have ranged from the backlight not functioning as expected to the radio resetting itself unexpectedly. A further upgrade will incorporate remedies together with planned enhancements. This will commence shortly and will take several months to complete. A system called 'multi-programming' is being designed which when implemented will enable such upgrades to be conducted much more quickly.

8. Inter-zone patching is a national problem, which is being managed by PITO. In the MPS, which operates on four zones the impact is more severe than for other Forces which mostly operate on one zone only. The impact is to restrict the ability of control room operators to 'patch' or link two talk groups together. Operating procedures enabling effective communications without the necessity to 'patch' are in place while O2 Airwave and PITO research a solution.

9. Included in previous answers. Each issue is dealt with on its merits and its solutions identified. The major outstanding issue is that of inter-zone patching, which is being managed by internal business process whilst a national solution is found by PITO/O2 Airwave.
10. Clarification has been requested as at this time I do not understand the question in order to give a complete answer.
11. Any major Change Programme will encounter problems. C3i and the Airwave rollout are no exception. For example a deficiency in capacity has been identified in the Westminster area. Action is being taken and expenditure authorised to increase capacity in order to allow the planned transition of Westminster Borough and Public Order policing to Airwave. This and the matters discussed above encompass known problems at this time.