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Police Division  
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CENT SEC

- cc PS/Secretary of State (B&L)
- PS/Mr Mates (L)
- PS/PUS (B&L)
- PS/Mr Feal
- Mr Ledlie
- Mr Steele
- Mr Lyon
- Mr Alston
- Mr Wood (B&L)
- Mr Leach
- Mr Templeton
- Mr Maccabe
- Mr Rickard
- Mr McClelland
- Mrs Collins

mm 720/6

cc Mr Watkins

Mr Hazell

Mr Murphy

PS/Mr Mates (B)

**NOTE FOR INFORMATION: REPLACEMENT PLASTIC BATON ROUND WEAPON SYSTEM**

This submission invites Ministers to note the outcome of the joint MOD/Home Office/NIO/PANI/RUC programme which was aimed at replacing the two existing plastic baton round systems in service in the UK with a single, improved and safer system for use by the Army, the RUC and mainland police forces.

Background

In February 1990, Ministry of Defence, Home Office and Northern Ireland Office Ministers agreed that a joint programme should be set in hand to identify a plastic baton-round system which would meet the requirements of the RUC, and the Army (including the UDR) in Northern Ireland and the mainland police forces.

In view of the sensitivities associated with the use of PBR's, Ministers were anxious to ensure that a standard system would be available for use by all existing and potential users. This would be particularly important in Northern Ireland where, for practical and presentational reasons, the move to the new system by the Army and the RUC should be simultaneous.

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The joint programme was taken forward as quickly as possible and a very comprehensive set of tests carried out on three weapon systems, the Arwen Ace; the Heckler and Koch HK69A1 and the Hilton Gun Company's MPRG. However, at an inter-departmental meeting in October 1990, it was found that none of the three weapon systems under consideration, met in full the requirements of both the police and the Army. A further series of tests and trials was then carried out on the only two systems, the HK69A1 and the MPRG, which seemed likely to meet the joint requirements of the Army/police.

As it turned out, the Hilton Gun Company went into receivership in July 1991 and the only weapon system left in the running was the Heckler and Koch 69A1 which, after further re-trialling, passed all subsequent operational and medical tests.

### Present Position

At the joint Acceptance Meeting in October last year, it was agreed that the HK69A1 met the joint operational requirements of all users; and that the MOD Procurement Executive should proceed to contract on their behalf.

The contract for the supply of the weapon system was placed with Heckler and Koch on 27 February this year. Of the 2548 guns ordered, 1668 are for the Army; 600 for the RUC; and 280 for mainland police forces. 880 weapon slings, enough spares for two years, and 88 sets of special tools and test equipment will also be supplied. The first 500 guns and slings will be delivered by the end of October 1992; the remaining slings, all spares, and various other ancillary equipment by the end of November 1992; and the remaining guns by the end of March 1993.

### In-service Date

Taking account of the phased delivery programme and the training requirements of the users, and bearing in mind that all users, particularly the RUC and the Army in Northern Ireland, should be in a position to deploy the new weapon system on the streets

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simultaneously, it was also agreed that MOD/Home Office/NIO would agree at a mutually convenient in-service date, to be agreed following the final delivery of weapons in March 1993.

Baton Round

The new weapon system will be used to fire the L5A4 baton round which is presently in service. The L5A4 will however eventually be replaced by a new round, the XL16, which is presently under development, but is unlikely to come into service until early 1994. In the meantime, and since stocks of the L5A4 are low, a modified version of the L5A4 is to be brought into service; it will be safe for use with both the existing baton round equipment and the new H&K69A1.

Publicity

At NIO's request, the MOD obtained their Ministers' agreement to let the contract to Heckler and Koch on the basis that no announcement would be made either about the intention to replace the existing weapon system, or the fact that Heckler and Koch had been awarded the contract. NIO gave this advice on the grounds that an early announcement would unnecessarily generate extensive and perhaps emotional criticism about the use of baton rounds generally, and call into question the continued use of the weapon system presently in use. If an announcement were to be made, it should only come when the new guns were ready for deployment on the streets in Northern Ireland.

Having adopted this low-key approach, we are now slightly concerned that the recent article in the magazine 'Engineer' (copy attached) might create a stir. We have therefore prepared a line to take (attached) which has been agreed with officials in the Home Office and the MOD, and which, if Ministers are content, can be used should the need arise.



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## DEFENCE

# MoD investigates design faults in plastic bullets

By Bill Goodwin

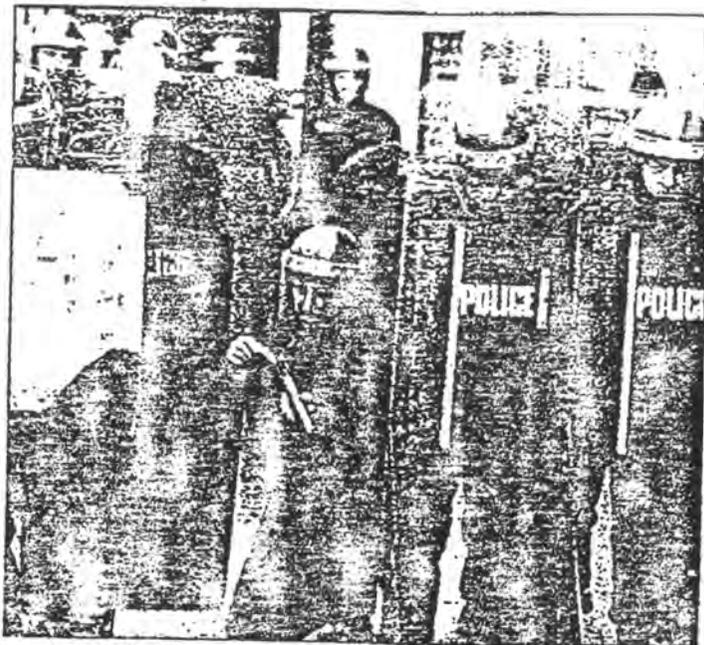
THE Ministry of Defence has begun technical investigations into a dangerous design fault in Britain's stock of anti-riot baton rounds, more usually referred to as plastic bullets.

According to its own internal documents, the MoD has been aware of the design fault, which can lead to plastic bullets exploding in the gun breech, since 1978.

Although 22 service personnel have been injured by breech explosions in the past four years, the MoD has not taken any steps to change the design since the fault was first identified 12 years ago.

Glasgow-based munitions manufacturer Brocks Explosives is understood to have supplied 5 000 plastic rounds to the government's Chemical Weapon's Research Establishment at Porton Down for in-depth tests. These could lead to the introduction of a new anti-riot gun to replace the antiquated L67A1, a converted flare gun.

Brocks Explosives refused to comment on the tests. The com-



Despite 22 injuries in the past, the MoD has only just decided to investigate

pany is in dispute with the MoD over the cause of the breech explosions, which occur when bullets expand and lodge in the breech during warm weather.

MoD officials had insisted that the explosions were caused by poor manufacture. Industry sources say that the officials changed their stance earlier this

year when *The Engineer* revealed that the MoD had been aware of defects in plastic bullets produced by a number of manufacturers since the first introduced in 1978.

The MoD says that it plans to replace the L67A1 with a purpose-built gun as early as 1993. A confidential report produced by the Ordnance Board in 1978, obtained by *The Engineer*, made it clear that the board had expected the guns to be replaced by a purpose-built gun as early as 1978. It then recommended that no action was needed to change the design of the L67A1 because it said the L67A1 was due to be superseded by another weapon.

## TRADE

## Nedo urge Europe to face up to Japanese

EUROPEAN companies warned yesterday not to take refuge from Japanese competition through protectionism.

Dr Walter Ertis, director general of the National Economic Development Office (NEDO), said that European products could become uncompetitive if the Japanese were excluded.

He said European firms would simply trade among themselves while the rest of

## MOTOR INDUSTRY

## Rover looks set for 1993 takeover

CAR maker Rover will be taken over by Honda or Volkswagen within the next two years, according to a report published today by automotive consultant Euromotor.

Tom Lowry, author of the study, says that the battle for the takeover of the firm will be fought in mid-1992 when British Aerospace is free to sell its 80% stake in the company. Although Honda already owns the other 20% and should make a strong

bid for Rover, Volkswagen is also showing interest, he says.

The Rover takeover is just one of many 'battering' changes Europe's car makers must brace themselves for over the next few years, says the report, *Euromotor Yearbook 1992*.

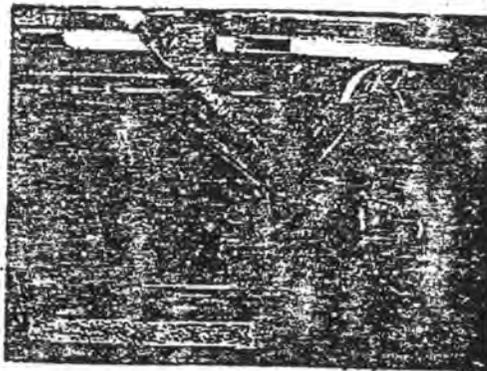
Car makers are thinking increasingly of investment outside their traditional bases in West Europe, says Lowry, adding that the industry's returns on equity and assets nosedived from 91% to 44% in 1989-1990.

German car makers are leading the way in deserting their home bases in search of better returns on investment. Opel is increasing production in former East Germany, BMW and Audi are looking to make cars in the USA while Mercedes is assessing Mexico.

Euromotor also says that concern at Ford about low productivity at its UK plants will lead to an expansion of its Spanish operations. Ford-owned Jaguar could also be forced to move its production to mainland Europe because of a lack of up-to-date facilities and space at its Coven-

try complex, says Lowry.

Among volume car makers Renault faces a particularly hard time. Lowry predicts its alliance with Volvo will eventually lead to a full-scale merger. Fiat of Italy also looks for a merger with Ford, Peugeot or Chrysler.



Volkswagen and 2 stakeholder Honda will be bidding hard for Rover

DRAFT LINE TO TAKE FOR NEW RIOT GUN

The existing riot equipment used by both the police and the Armed Forces is nearing the end of its service life and is increasingly expensive to maintain.

The current weapons and their rounds are fully serviceable and will remain in use until deliveries of the replacement gun are completed. Initially the new gun will be used with the L5A4 baton round which is in service at the moment. A new round is under development and we hope it will be ready to be brought into service during 1994.

The new gun will replace the L67 riot gun used by the Army in Northern Ireland and by the Home department police forces in England and Wales, and the Webley-Schermuly used by the RUC.

A joint procurement has allowed the best available weapon, the Heckler and Koch 69A1, to be selected for all users of riot guns in the United Kingdom. The new system offers a number of improvements over the existing weapons. It will be brought into service as soon as possible once all users have been fully trained. The introduction of the new gun should reduce the risk of baton rounds causing fatal head injuries.

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