



MINISTER OF STATE FOR  
THE ARMED FORCES

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE  
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D/MSU/2/6/is

*JM*  
January 2009

*Dear Sir:*

I would like to take this opportunity to respond to your campaign on the allegations that this Department is to parachute German Shepherd dogs into operational theatres. I ask that you take this letter as a formal response to your campaign, and that you please place this text on your website and inform your members of this response.

Your emails specifically mention the SAS in relation to the allegation of parachuting dogs. It is the policy of this Department to not ordinarily comment on matters relating to UK Special Forces, and we can therefore neither confirm nor deny the accuracy of any reporting, nor make any comment relating to the operational capabilities of UK Special Forces.

Dogs make a vital contribution to overall military capability in a number of key areas, and the Ministry of Defence is committed to taking every action possible to maintain the health and welfare of dogs on operations. The Ministry adopts the highest standards with regards to animal welfare and works hard to ensure that service animals are housed in excellent conditions and are not exposed to unnecessary risks. Military vets are located in both Iraq and Afghanistan to ensure the working dogs remain healthy; the dog handlers receive extensive training on administering first aid to the dogs should this prove necessary.

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We continually work to improve the conditions on operations for our dogs. The Royal Army Veterinary Corps (RAVC) ensure that all aspects of the dogs' welfare from their selection, through their initial assessment, training, and to their retirement to maintain their health and fitness. The RAVC ensure commanders on the ground have the resources to utilise working dogs to achieve military objectives whilst ensuring good working practices such as strict control over the hours the dogs work. Specifically made air-conditioned kennels have been delivered to both Iraq and Afghanistan to ensure dogs maintain a steady temperature when not working and care is taken to ensure that dogs are acclimatised to the conditions before undertaking operational duties.

I would like to reassure you that the Ministry of Defence does everything it can to provide the best standards of care and minimise the risk of life to service animals.

*Reynolds*  
*Bob Ainsworth*

The Rt Hon Bob Ainsworth MP