

22 October 2009

## **ROYAL RECOGNITION FOR HERO SCIENTISTS**

HRH The Earl of Wessex opened the new Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (Dstl) headquarters, Minerva Building, at Porton Down, Salisbury on Thursday 22 October. He saw a range of Dstl's work which saves lives on the frontline and presented medals to scientists recently returned from Afghanistan.

During his visit, the Earl was given an outline of Dstl's world-leading research to counter improvised explosive devices (IED), focussed on operations in Afghanistan. Dstl's counter IED team draws on expertise from across the organisation to access the best ideas from industry and academia to leave 'no stone unturned' in studying, inventing and trialling new ideas to protect armed forces.

His Royal Highness met representatives from one dedicated Dstl team that has been given the challenge of identifying, developing and delivering solutions to counter these roadside bombs over the next six months. The team includes Ministry of Defence (MOD) scientists, procurement specialists, military experts plus scientists from eight leading technology organisations working together to support frontline operations.

The Earl saw a demonstration of Dstl's urban dispersion model. This is a mathematical computer model which predicts how gases disperse in urban areas, taking into account the shape, size and orientation of buildings and which way the wind is blowing. It is used, for example, in support of armed forces on the frontline, using real-time weather information from the Met Office, where there is the possibility of troops encountering a hazardous gas. Dstl also uses this expertise within the UK to help with gas cloud modelling in support of the emergency services' response to incidents.

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His Royal Highness also saw a presentation of Dstl's chemical, biological and radiological (CBR) support to operations team. This included a description of the work Dstl does providing scientific advice and support to the police and military in counter terrorism operations. In addition a member of the CB specialist response team was on hand wearing full protective clothing to give The Earl an idea of how detection equipment is used in a real-life situation.

During his visit HRH saw some of Dstl's work on sensing and countering the threat to helicopters from heat seeking missiles. Dstl works with both the UK and US military developing infrared and UV missile warning systems for helicopter and countermeasures such as flares. The countermeasures on all UK military helicopters have been designed, developed and tested by staff at Dstl.

The Earl was given a demonstration of a directional infrared countermeasure (Dircm) system which detects incoming missiles and automatically produces a jamming signal using lamp and laser sources. These types of systems are usually used on larger helicopters such as the Merlin used by the RAF.

He also presented Operational Service Medals (OSM) for Afghanistan to five Dstl staff, who have recently returned from providing scientific advice on the frontline. [see separate fact sheet]

Frances Saunders, Dstl chief executive, thanked the Earl for opening the new building and presenting the medals. She said: "As the Ministry of Defence's technical centre of excellence, Dstl plays a crucial role in making sure our armed forces receive the very best in science and technology support, from developing improved protection for our vehicles and body armour for our people, to countering the threat of improvised explosive devices or chemical and biological threats. I am very proud to say there is no question that Dstl's work saves lives, both on the frontline and home front.

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“It is an honour for our medal recipients – the pinnacle of Dstl’s work in support to operations – to receive their recognition from His Royal Highness. These members of staff have gone the extra mile while working alongside our armed forces on the frontline, providing life saving solutions and advice within extremely short time scales.”

His Royal Highness officially opened the new Dstl headquarters Minerva Building, named after the Roman goddess of science, defence, medicine and wisdom.

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For more information contact the Dstl press office on 01980 658088, 07766 134768, [press@dstl.gov.uk](mailto:press@dstl.gov.uk).

Notes to editors:

**Dstl**

The Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (Dstl) is a centre of scientific excellence for the Ministry of Defence (MOD). Its 3,500 strong workforce includes some of the nation’s most talented and creative scientists with the brief to ensure that the UK Armed Forces and Government are supported in-house by the very best impartial scientific and technological advice. Dstl’s position at the heart of the MOD means that its advice is trusted by governments, academia, industry and international partners. It offers timely and accurate advice at all levels of military planning and operations, both overseas and on the home front. For more information please visit [www.dstl.gov.uk](http://www.dstl.gov.uk)