

Prime Minister:

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MINIS IN MOD

Mr Heseltine
sent this note on
how he is proposing
to introduce MINIS
in MOD.

Introduction

1. MINIS (Management Information System for Ministers) is a management technique introduced into the Department of the Environment by Mr Heseltine, when he was Secretary of State for the Environment.

2. A form of MINIS is now to be introduced in the MOD. Replying to a parliamentary question, the Secretary of State has said, "I intend to introduce a Management Information System for Ministers into my Department very soon. The Ministry of Defence is a large and complex executive Department and I have not yet decided on the detailed application of the system. But it will complement and link with the management control, information and accounting systems which already exist in the Department."

3. The purpose of this paper is to explain what MINIS is and how it is planned that such a system will be developed for the MOD, in accordance with the Secretary of State's directions.

What is MINIS?

4. In brief, the purpose of MINIS is to record detailed

information about a Department's activities, costs and performance to provide a basis for Ministers and senior officials to review the work of the Department and to decide on future action, including studies leading to changes in organisation and the deployment of departmental manpower and other resources.

5. It seeks to achieve these aims by calling on all the senior officers in an organisation to set out information about their organisation, staff numbers and costs, functions, objectives and performance in a broadly standard form and in a significant degree of detail. The Senior Officers are then questioned by Ministers and other top managers to ensure that their objectives and priorities are reflected in the objectives, priorities and activities of the organisation itself. The process enables top management to manage positively rather than reactively.

MINIS in the MOD

6. The Secretary of State wishes MINIS in the MOD to be concerned not only with administration and staff costs, but to take account also of programme expenditure where relevant. It should thus bond together and link existing information and control systems rather than simply overlay them. It should be an integrated system across the board but also be capable of adaptation to the needs of the different line management areas.

7. The MINIS cycle falls broadly into three parts:

a. The collection of information, on a series of forms, about the work of all management areas (normally headed at 2-star level);

b. The review of this information, including meetings between the Secretary of State, senior management and the officials in charge of particular areas of departmental work; and

c. the preparation and approval of future action plans, including the commissioning of studies, consultations with Trade Unions where necessary, and the timetable for final decisions, as appropriate, by the Secretary of State.

8. We may separate out the initial objectives of "MINIS 1" from probable future developments:

MINIS 1: To prove the system, and introduce the MINIS style of management to the Department;

To start the necessary data collection within Directorates and Divisions;

To provide a systematic source of information to the Secretary of State on Departmental organisation and responsibilities;

To identify areas of work for further study, particularly with a view to privatising or contracting out, reorganising or abandoning tasks.

MINIS 2 and subsequent rounds: To integrate the MINIS system with existing departmental planning procedures (including those for Service and civilian manpower); and in particular to link the MINIS system to Responsibility Budgets, and other cost and management accounts.

9. Some of the objectives set out above may be for the longer term: the immediate objective is to record detailed information about the Department's activities.

Who is covered by MINIS?

10. The MINIS system must go deep enough down into the Department and away from MOD Headquarters to ensure that Ministers are aware of the full range of departmental activities - in other words, until a discrete and relatively homogeneous area of work is reached. For Headquarters staff this will normally be the Branch or Division; for

outstations, it will be the Line Management Unit (dockyard, hospital, depot, R&D establishment etc). The "subject" of MINIS - the "Senior Officer", as we propose to call him in the MOD - is the 2-star officer or Under Secretary (or, in a few rare cases a 3-star or 1-star officer). The Senior Officer will be responsible for providing to the Secretary of State a description of his organisation, staff, responsibilities, objectives, broken down in sufficient detail to enable the Secretary of State (or other senior management) to have a meaningful discussion with the Senior Officer about his tasks.

11. Between 140 and 150 MINIS Senior Officers have now been identified, covering all the MOD HQ "managers" in the Centre, Service Departments, PE, Naval Home Command and RAF Support Command. Lists of these Senior Officers are given (Annexes A - E), together with lists of the main line management units and executive operations for which they will be expected to provide certain key summary information as part of the MINIS process (see para 13 below).

12. Initially, the MINIS system will extend laterally to cover all MOD Headquarters, and the major Headquarters controlling support organisations, but not the Headquarters of Front Line Units (ie not the HQs of CINCFLEET, UKLF, or Strike Command, nor the HQs in BFG and their combat arms).

What will MINIS tell us?

13. The information will be presented to the Secretary of State in a series of forms.

Form 1 This will contain basic data on the anatomy of the organisation, including an organisational chart, and making clear the MINIS Senior Officers's responsibilities for staff (with Servicemen and civilians shown separately), money (in its various forms including SFO/vote management, vote coordination, requirement scrutiny etc); and making clear the responsibility of the Senior Officers, if any, for "executive operations" such as outstations, establishments, training areas etc. For Senior Officers with a responsibility for executive operations, a separate sheet of form 1 will be provided, so that basic management information can be recorded, including the nature of the responsibility for the unit (military command, administration, functional responsibility, tasking of the unit etc); the size and cost of the unit; the availability of accounts or other management information.

Form 1 will also contain for each subject, the total numbers in post in immediately preceding

years, and a planning guideline of the numbers expected to be in post at the beginning of the next and immediately succeeding financial years.

Form 2 will list the Senior Officer's major objectives. This is intended as a summary of the major strategic objectives that these (mainly) 2-star officers propose to achieve with the resources deployed, in order of priority where possible, including comments on manpower or any other constraints which have affected the framing of objectives. The aim is to produce a list of about 4 or 5 objectives (which will normally reflect the Senior Officer's main divisional/branch/unit activities).

Form 3 is intended as a detailed description of the functions and tasks of the area, probably arranged by directorate, division, or unit. It should be possible to achieve this with not more than 6 or so functions/tasks per subsidiary Division or Directorate. For each function/task the form will show the associated costs in the immediately preceding period (the 12 month period, 1982-83, for MINIS 1), and the associated Vote/expenditure responsibilities

over the current financial year; an assessment of performance to be expected during the period covered by the MINIS round; and the planned performance (including proposed new functions or tasks) for a convenient period ahead.

Form 4 will contain additional summary information relevant to project managers in the PE.

The MINIS Timetable

14. The Secretary of State has decided that, once MINIS is established, there should be a MINIS "round" annually, rather than twice a year.

15. The intention is that the MINIS system should be fully operational on the second round. In order to achieve this, an experimental MINIS cycle (MINIS 1) will start shortly. The issue of forms and detailed guidance notes will not be until March/April, but a great deal of preparatory work will be required beforehand (much of which should be unnecessary for subsequent rounds).

16. In practice, a full MINIS round - issue and completion of forms, briefings and meetings, and preparation of action plans - lasts about six months. MINIS 1 is likely to be shorter. The "live" MINIS 2 would then start in September/October 1983, and be completed by the end of March 1984.

17. The timing has implications for the gathering of data, and detailed instructions will be issued. However, it may be worth noting at this stage that MINIS 1 will be designed to record a performance assessment for the financial year 1982/83; to indicate planned performance and objectives for the remainder of the financial year 1983/84; and to look forward to FY 1984/85. For MINIS 2 and subsequent rounds, the timespan is likely to be more restricted. MINIS 2 may thus review performance for the first half of FY 1983/84, taking account of the results of MINIS; and look forward to the remainder of FY 1983/84 and FY 1984/85.

18. The DGMA is responsible for the development of MINIS under the Secretary of State. A small, permanent MINIS Unit has been established initially in the Management Services (Organisation) Division. It will be augmented as necessary with other staff from that Division and the Inspectorates of Establishments.

19. The MINIS Unit is responsible for planning and developing the application of MINIS to the MOD. The Unit will issue detailed guidance on the completion of MINIS forms, advise further as necessary and ensure that the forms are suitably presented in a consistent format. The DGMA will also brief the Secretary of State when the completed MINIS forms are submitted to him, in preparation for MINIS meetings, copying his brief to the Senior Officers concerned.

20. While the Senior Officer has the final responsibility for the content of his MINIS forms, experience elsewhere suggests that it is convenient for him to delegate many of the associated tasks to a MINIS Liaison Officer (LO), probably at Colonel or equivalent/Principal level. The latter acts as the main point of contact with the MINIS Unit, represents the Senior Officer where possible and may play an important role in consultation/liaison with the Senior Officer's Directorates/Divisions/ executive operations. In particular, he coordinates the provision of the information that is required on manpower, by grade, devoted to particular functions, so that it can be costed to a common format by the MINIS Unit. Quite frequent discussions with the MINIS Unit may be required, depending on the complexity of the problems encountered. Since all concerned will be on a learning curve in MINIS 1, it is important that the LO should be carefully selected. It would be preferable for the same LO to be available for MINIS 2, or to train his successor.

21. In order to achieve the timetable for MINIS 1, it will be crucial to reach early decisions on the break-down of functions, since much of the material to be provided on the forms depends on it. Judgements will have to be made by the Senior Officers and proposals cleared with the MINIS Unit, to ensure consistency of presentation to the Secretary of State. Guidance will be issued shortly.

Conclusion

22. For some parts of the MOD, the MINIS style of management will not be new; for others, perhaps the majority, it will imply considerable changes. The successful operation of MINIS will take time and trouble. MINIS 1 is experimental and part of its purpose is to test the basic mechanics. The more smoothly they can be made to function, the better for all concerned. However, the proving of the system will be the use made of MINIS by Ministers and management at all levels.