

TO BE USED FOR FINDINGS ONLY

Dated: 07 Mar 08

[REDACTED] (President)

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] (Senior Member) [REDACTED] (Junior Member)

REMARKS BY CONVENING AUTHORITY

1. I am satisfied that the Board has carried out a thorough investigation of the events surrounding the unfortunate death of Cpl Greenough and his children, and I commend the Board for producing an extremely comprehensive report that addresses all of the key issues set out in my Terms of Reference. The findings and comments of the Board flow from and are cross-referenced to hard evidence and they have made a significant number of recommendations for change and/or improvements many of which are already in hand.

2. I accept the view of the Board that it is not possible with absolute clarity to identify the exact cause of the fire since there is no conclusive evidence and neither of the specialist fire reports has been able accurately to determine the seat of the fire and therefore its cause. There is, however, reasonably strong evidence to suggest that the fire started in the shed adjoining the house and because of this the smoke and fumes from the fire gained rapid access to the house through the roof space. The Board has shown that the products of combustion would have included such high concentrations of toxins that from the time these fumes entered the house, it would have taken very little time before the occupants were incapacitated and thus the fire rapidly became non-survivable. I agree with this analysis. I also agree that the most likely cause of the fire was an electrical fault in the shed, the exact nature of which will never be known.

3. The investigation of the Board has revealed the presence of a previously unknown void space adjacent to both the kitchen and shed spaces that appears to have been created during the installation of new kitchens in the properties many years ago. That this void was uncapped and led directly to the roof may have caused it to act as a chimney, drawing the products of combustion into the roof space and thence throughout the house. I have already directed Defence Estates to cap these voids as a matter of utmost priority and work is already underway.

4. The report has highlighted three general areas of immediate concern to me and I intend to commission reviews on each: the safety of the Cawood construction SFA across the estate; the C2 arrangements between DFRS and Akrotiri Station; and the C2 arrangements between the emergency services ie Police, Fire and Medical. I will be taking these issues forward as a matter of priority

5. Two other issues of immediate concern were raised under QR 1270 by the Board during their investigations. First, they recommended on the advice of the Board's SME that enhanced fire warning should be fitted within the Cawoods. "Now that the (previously undiscovered) voids are in the process of being capped, the buildings will again meet the minimum standard as prescribed by the appropriate fire regulations. However, in light of the additional risk in these circumstances, I have instructed my staff to examine ways in which the sheds of these houses could be protected by a fire alarm of some kind. In addition, we have instituted a campaign to raise public awareness of the dangers of overloading electrical systems through the use of extension leads and multi-way adapters. Second, the presence of previously unrecorded asbestos within a wall has been found in 15 Anne's Close. This may be a one-off as some 40 Cawoods have recently been demolished as the first phase of a major project to provide better quality SFA, and no asbestos has been found in the demolished houses. Nevertheless, we will need to find out whether asbestos is present in the remaining Cawoods.

6. Many of the detailed recommendations put forward by the Board will be addressed during the 3 reviews. However to ensure that nothing is missed I have also directed Commander Cyprus Garrison to chair a multi-disciplinary group of the key staff collectively to address all the recommendations and associated comments by end of Jul 08, reporting progress to me on a monthly basis.

7. I have noted and I agree with the Board's recommendation that certain individuals are deserving of commendation for their actions during the tragic incident. I will ensure this aspect is also taken forward.

8. I have considered the comments raised by those warned under QR 1269 and specifically with regard to [REDACTED] comment on C2 arrangements, have directed that it be considered by Commander Cyprus Garrisons in his overall review.

Unit: Headquarters British Forces Cyprus

Date: 11 Sep 08

R H Lacey
Air Vice-Marshal
Commander British Forces Cyprus

REMARKS BY REVIEWING AUTHORITY

1. This has been a complex investigation into a very tragic incident in which three people lost their lives, two of them very young children. While it has taken longer than anyone would have wished to finalise the proceedings, I recognise that the Board had to wait for the police investigation to conclude, and that much further work and deliberation has been required after the initial Report was made by the President of the Board in March this year. I am grateful to the Board for conducting a very thorough investigation and for producing this detailed report. I consider that the Board has met its Terms of Reference and I endorse all the Board's findings, recommendations and observations.

2. I note that some of the recommendations of the Board have already been implemented and I fully endorse the intention of CBF Cyprus to conduct in-depth reviews into 3 areas: the safety of Cawood construction SFA across the estate; the C2 arrangements between DFRS and Akrotiri Station; and the C2 arrangements between the Emergency Services. On the first of these, given that concerns were highlighted as early as 2001, it is essential that the reviews are concluded as soon as possible and that, stemming from the recommendations of this Inquiry, any necessary improvements to building safety are made. I am reassured that Commander Cyprus Garrison has been made chair of the multi-disciplinary group of key staff charged with addressing the recommendations. This should ensure that the collective activity is appropriately coordinated and delivered to maximum effect. However, given that the Permanent Joint Headquarters is responsible for command and funding of the UK bases in Cyprus, I have copied my remarks to Commander Joint Operations so that he may factor these thoughts into his prioritisation of resource.

3. Within my area of responsibility, I was concerned to read the remarks on the potential limitation in the use of airfield fire and rescue service for domestic fire-fighting¹. I have instructed Air Command's Air Officer Battlespace Management to review the instructions to RAF Air Traffic Control personnel on decision-making in releasing fire assets for actual versus contingent emergencies, with a view to making the default presumption one of dealing with actual fires and emergencies and taking contingent liabilities at risk for short periods.

4. It is not possible to read these proceedings without recognising the profound impact this incident has had on all those involved and on the wider Service community in Cyprus. Whilst, once the fire had taken hold, there is little anyone could have done to affect the disastrous outcome, it is important that we learn all the lessons in order to stand the best chance of safeguarding our personnel and their dependants in future.

¹ Mentioned in the BOI at paragraphs 4.49, 13.5 and O.4.1 and O.4.2.

5. I conclude by commending the efforts of the Emergency Services who tried so desperately hard to save the lives of Cpl Greenough and his two children. But, above all, I offer my deepest sympathy to Mrs Greenough, who has suffered the most terrible loss as a result of this tragic incident.

Date: *7 October 2008*

Iain W McNicoll
Air Marshal
Deputy Commander-in-Chief Operations
Air Command