

Defence Support Robotic & Autonomous Systems Sub Working Group

References:

- A. Defence Logistics Enterprise – LOGNET Technology Concept Sub-working groups – Terms of Reference.
- B. Defence Logistics Robotic & Autonomous Systems (RAS) Concept Note.
- C. A guide to using AI technology in the public sector¹.

Reason for Issue

These Terms of Reference set out the responsibilities of the Defence Support Robotic & Autonomous Systems (RAS) Working Group in accordance with Reference A.

Terms of Reference

Purpose

The Defence Support RAS (SWG) is a standing, MOD-Industry body reporting to the Defence Logistics Force Development Board (DLFDB). Its purpose is to guide an accelerated development and exploitation path for RAS technologies across Defence Support² activity. The joint nature of the SWG is designed to promote collaboration and mutually beneficial outcomes in the sustainable delivery of RAS capabilities across the extended Defence Support Enterprise (DSE).

Scope

The WG will consider the application of RAS technologies across the breadth of the Defence Support Enterprise, from capability development to the delivery of support activities at the front-line. To ensure a shared understanding, Reference B will be used as a common reference framework for the Defence requirement. The WG will be invited to recommend changes to the concept note as required.

Structure and Governance

The WG will meet three times a year prior to the DLFDB meetings. It will comprise MOD and industry stakeholders for UK Defence engineering, equipment and logistics support activity. The WG will initiate discrete MOD/industry Task Groups to work collaboratively on specific RAS-related objectives. Based on the findings, the WG's chair will present recommended best practice, policy and investment opportunities to the DLFDB for agreement and adoption. The WG will be preceded by an MOD-only meeting that will act as an internal clearing house, dealing with commercially sensitive details that cannot be exposed to industry.

Approach

The WG will follow the approach detailed in Reference C by undertaking a discovery phase followed by hypothesis-led projects. The projects will be guided by an agreed vision for the use of RAS in Defence Support and a maturity development framework. The individual projects will be undertaken by joint MOD-industry task groups which will report back to the main WG with their findings. As well as seeking technical solutions to improve logistics and engineering processes, the WG will seek to identify ways in which MOD can overcome the organisational and cultural barriers that constrain the rate and effectiveness of technology adoption from industry partners.

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/a-guide-to-using-artificial-intelligence-in-the-public-sector>

² Defence Support encompasses logistics, engineering and equipment support activities.

Goals & Objectives

1. To define the vision and develop a roadmap to accelerate adoption of beneficial RAS capabilities across Defence Support. The roadmap should reflect the shared goals of all members and align the collective priorities.
2. To document and maintain the WG strategic intent that reflects policy, operational and business drivers, and seek Defence agreement from the DLFDB.
3. To ensure cross-Defence coherence and coordination.
4. To identify opportunities to use novel methodologies for applying AI technologies to Defence Support (E.g. Government Digital Services).
5. To support the creation of business cases for new initiatives by confirming the evidence-based benefits.
6. To develop and oversee MOD-industry task groups in delivery of projects.
7. To gather and sentence and exploit ideas from across Defence, industry and academia.
8. To consider the cultural and organisational implications of introducing RAS technologies and to identify good-practice to ensure sustainable adoption.
9. To develop and maintain a Communications Plan to publicise WG activity to key Defence and industry audiences (including LogNet).
10. To inform and validate the delivery of Support Transformation.

Composition

The WG and Communications Events will be chaired by Army HQ as the Lead Front Line Command for RAS development in Defence Support. The chair will be supported by an Industry Technology Lead Representative to reflect the industry view. The WG will be open to industry partners and representatives from across Defence, with a Technology Concept Advocate representing Defence Logistics. Further detail on responsibilities can be found at Reference A.

Dissemination of Information

All meeting minutes, presentation material and task outputs will be maintained at OFFICIAL classification with no commercial sensitivities to allow sharing and transparency across industry partners. Information will be published in the following areas:

- Team Defence Information Website
- MOD's ILIAD evidence base
- Def Log termly reports and presentations to DLFDB (MOD only)
- Briefed at LogNet
- 'Five-Eyes' defence partner engagements