



Ministry
of Defence

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE
FLOOR 5 ZONE B MAIN BUILDING
WHITEHALL LONDON SW1A 2HB

Telephone: 020 7218 9000 (Switchboard)

THE RT HON EARL HOWE PC
MINISTER OF STATE IN THE HOUSE OF LORDS

MSU/4/8/2/3/is

31st March 2016

Dear Judith,

Thank you for your continued interest in the Armed Forces Bill and your thoughtful contributions during Grand Committee. During the debate I committed to write to you answering the question you raised concerning the quality of Operational Ration Packs (ORPs) used by Royal Marines in the Arctic Circle.

Firstly, for context, let me explain that all food procured for Ministry of Defence (MOD) personnel must comply with all UK and EU production standards. MOD personnel in the UK, and permanent bases overseas, are primarily catered for through a number of multi-activity contract, whereas personnel serving on operations, exercises and HM Ships and Submarines, are catered for under a single food supply contract; it is under this contract that ORPs are provided.

The current range of ORPs is nutritionally balanced and subject to extensive testing, both in the field and during manufacture, to ensure that rations are in line with current Military Dietary Reference Values, and the tastes of the end user. Individual 24 hour ORPs (which have a shelf life of two years) are available in 88 different menus including Sikh/Hindu, Vegetarian and Kosher options. In addition to the 24 hour ORPs, a 10 Man Pack (which is designed primarily for use by military chefs) made up of five different menus is also available. This pack is designed to provide 10 military personnel with a balanced and nutritional diet for 24 hours.

Turning to the specific points that you raised, the Cold Climate ration (CCR) is a specialist, lightweight, high calorie 24 Hour ORP designed for use by troops above the snow line or in the high Arctic. It principally comprises dehydrated main meals, with a range of snacks designed to be eaten on the move. There are currently eight menu choices for the CCR and each provides a minimum of 5,500 Kcals per ration. This ration has been extensively trialled with the Defence Equipment & Support (DE&S) ORP Team, working with both the Royal Marines 3 Commando Brigade Catering Warrant Officer and the dietician from the Institute of Naval Medicine based at the Commando Base at Lymington.

Baroness Jolly
Defence Spokesperson
House of Lords
London
SW1A 0PW

The calorific intake of 5,500 per day in this high intensity operational environment has been determined by the Institute of Naval Medicine to be entirely appropriate. However, if there is a requirement for a further calorific boost, our new Single Meal Ration (SMR) has been designed to meet this need. SMR has been developed as a completely flexible single meal ration. It could be used on its own (e.g. for drivers, remote guard posts etc.) or as a supplement to an ORP. The SMR provides a minimum of 1,500 Kcals per ration to fill a nutritional gap where daily expenditure is likely to exceed 6,000 Kcals.

In the debate you specifically queried the provision of a chocolate bar in the ORP. This is part of a range of grazing items which support the main meals provided, and are designed to be eaten on the move. Other examples of such items are beef jerky, biscuits, pates, spreads and shelf stable bread items. We currently have no plans to replace the chocolate bar option, as it is consistently rated as the most popular item in this ORP and its inclusion is supported by our dietician from the Institute of Naval Medicine.

Finally, please let me assure you that we constantly review the contents of our ration packs. Assessments of ORPs are regularly undertaken by review panels; including military personnel who have recently returned from operational deployment or overseas exercises. In addition each ORP contains a feedback form to enable service personnel to comment on the quality and content of the ORP. These forms are used by DE&S to carry out trend analysis of current food selection and meal components and adjust them appropriately.

I hope you find this information helpful and a copy of this letter has been placed in the Library of the House.

Yours sincerely,

Frankie

THE RT HON EARL HOWE PC