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## The Military Corrective Training Centre – safe, decent and free of drugs and violence, but concerns over public protection

Media

News Releases

The Military Corrective Training Centre (MCTC) in Colchester, the only secure training centre for armed services, has had very good inspections in recent years and 2017 proved no exception to HM Chief Inspector of Prisons, Peter Clarke.

Inspectors found the MCTC to be safe, decent and purposeful and could not recall ever having been more respectful institution. It exuded “an extraordinarily strong ethos where the care and rehabilitation of the detainees was the unequivocal and overriding objective.” Drugs and violence were virtually unknown.

Activities were tailored to whether detainees were going to return to their units or to civilian life on discharge. In either case, Mr Clarke said, “the quality of what was available was high.” Detainees who had been held in the MCTC frequently returned to their units with better military skills and physically fitter than when they entered the centre, and often achieved promotion. A good range of accredited qualifications was available for those who were returning to civilian life.”

However, Mr Clarke said, there was “one potentially serious deficiency that was beyond the control of the centre” – the lack of post-release supervision or statutory engagement from the public authorities responsible for public protection arrangements for higher-risk violent or sex offenders. “This arose because of a statutory anomaly that does not include the military in the arrangements that apply to non-military offenders on release. This meant that the few offenders being released into the community who presented a high risk of harm to others were being released without proper supervision or risk-management.”

The report noted that at the time of the inspection, the centre held eight sex offenders and at least two perpetrators of domestic violence. “Protecting the public from harm by those detainees who had been convicted of serious criminal offences was hampered by two issues. Firstly, those released did not have a period of statutory probation supervision (as they would have done if they were being released from prison). Secondly, while those convicted of an offence within Schedule 3 of the Sexual Offences Act 2003 (and sentenced to 112 days or more at the MCTC) were placed on the Sex Offender Register (SOR), the Ministry of Defence was not recognised as a ‘responsible authority’ or a ‘duty to cooperate’ agency under the Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) legislation.”

As a result, the report added, with the exception of SOR requirements managed by Essex Police, non-sex offenders “who would normally have been managed under MAPPA were not.” Mr Clarke said that HM Inspectorate had made a specific recommendation to the Ministry of Defence on this public protection issue and “the Inspectorate would support the necessary policy or legal changes.”

Overall, Mr Clarke added:

“It was refreshing for HM Inspectorate of Prisons to inspect a training centre where drugs and violence were virtually unknown, and where the culture was incredibly positive, forward-looking and not at all punitive. It was also notable that, since the last inspection in 2014, our previous recommendations have clearly been taken seriously, with the vast majority being fully implemented. I am confident that the recommendations flowing from this inspection will be treated in a similarly positive fashion. We are confident that the MCTC will continue to provide an excellent model of a corrective training establishment.”

– ENDS –

Notes to editors

1. A copy of the full report, published on 2 March 2018, can be found [here](#).
2. HM Inspectorate of Prisons is an independent inspectorate, inspecting places of detention to report on conditions and treatment, and promote positive outcomes for those detained and the public.
3. The Military Corrective Training Centre (MCTC) in Colchester is the Ministry of Defence’s only secure corrective training establishment. It was established shortly after the Second World War at

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Berechurch, which previously held German prisoners of war. In 1988, this was replaced by a new purpose-built facility. Although under Army command, it is a tri-service establishment, with staff drawn from the Royal Navy, Army and Royal Air Force. However, the majority of detainees are from the Army and the majority of staff are Army officers and senior non-commissioned officers from the Military Provost Staff (MPS) Regiment.

4. The MCTC can hold up to 323 male and female detainees, although in practice the population has rarely exceeded 180, and routinely stands at approximately 50. All detainees are held in accordance with the rules determining committal to custody within the Armed Forces Act 2006. The vast majority are serving periods of detention following court martial or a summary hearing by a unit commanding officers. Most detainees have offended against Armed Forces law (employment rather than criminal law), although some are committed for offences that would have resulted in custody if they had been civilians. The centre receives only those who have been sentenced to periods of up to two years' detention.
5. Those individuals sentenced to imprisonment at court martial are only held at the MCTC for a short period of time – usually only a matter of days – before transfer to prison. The centre may also hold remanded detainees under investigation (some of whom may be charged with serious offences) who have been committed to the centre because it was judged necessary to hold them in secure conditions. These can include civilians subject to service discipline (CSSD).
6. At the time of the inspection, the centre held a small but complex mix of detainees. Just over half of them had been convicted of military offences, while the remainder had committed criminal offences. Just under half were serving short sentences of 60 days or less but a small proportion had been convicted of serious sexual or violent crime. Those sentenced to over two years were transferred to a prison but others remained at the MCTC throughout their period of detention.
7. This unannounced inspection took place between 30 October – 3 November 2017.
8. Please contact John Steele at HM Inspectorate of Prisons press office on 020 3334 0357 or 07 787452, or at [✉ john.steele@justice.gov.uk](mailto:john.steele@justice.gov.uk) if you would like more information about the inspection report. Please note that the Chief Inspector will not be available for interview on 1 March.
9. For Ministry of Defence enquires please contact [✉ Patrick.Laredo100@mod.gov.uk](mailto:Patrick.Laredo100@mod.gov.uk) (67.60 kt 020 7218 7931).

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Updated: Friday, 02 March 2018

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