

It should have been a good news story, for which the MoD is usually desperate.

Tucked away in the Defence Contracts Bulletin daily alert was an announcement that SGS UK Ltd at Camberley in Surrey had won an £83,000 contract from Central TLB in Glasgow for the verification of MoD sites under the EU's Emissions Trading Scheme. Green, small contract being placed direct, good news all round.

Until the writer wanted to ask a couple of simple questions. How many people are employed at Camberley? Have they done any defence business before? In which case, how does this compare? Is it the start of a whole new market sector? And what does it actually mean?

After an ominous pause on hold, the company says it hasn't heard officially that its got the business so it's forbidden by the MoD to speak to the media.

CTLB in Glasgow say that the two people who can talk about this are away. But the difference between the public domain announcement in the DCB and the company getting told might be something to do with the "Alcatel period", a 10 day standstill while people who didn't get the business can challenge the decision. But there again, if the winner doesn't know officially then presumably the losers don't either, so difficult to see how that works.

With heavy heart, one is referred to the MoD press office (a general number not the Equipment Desk.) From whom, despite stating that the story will be published today and that the good news one had turned into a bad news one about process, a response is still awaited....

Having run this story past the MoD as a courtesy, the writer is then "ticked off" for going to TCLB and where they directed him. The Press Officer will do her best to get an answer but isn't convince this is an equipment story anyway - which is what the silent Duty Desk, rung some five hours earlier, had been adamant it was.

It's always a good idea to blame the messenger...