

Maybe it was the post lunch dead zone. Maybe the show had been on the road for a couple of days. Maybe it was seen through distorting lens of self fulfilling expectation. But this years Defence Systems and Equipment International Exhibition in London's Docklands does seem to be a less mighty beast than in years gone by. Even the protesters seemed to be a bit half hearted – reports of a bit of paint being thrown met by rapid consignment to a "Black Maria" or its modern equivalent.

Time spent in reconnaissance is seldom wasted. So this correspondent's first action as to walk up and down all the aisles and round the edges. Revealing, edges are! There you can see the clever layout that has taken out a bit of a bay. And a whole other one is blanked off. Looking at the site plan it could be that several hospitality chalets weren't taken up, even though Boeing put its toe into that particular water.

Some of the stands seem to be smaller than in the past. The little booths that sometimes line the hall edges seem to be fewer. Many of them seem to have singleton manning, and not too busy at that. The pace somehow seems less frenetic. It's easier to get in and out. The chats in the aisles seem slightly longer. Networking is always useful, but the ExCel is a pretty prime piece of real estate to be holding a chat on. The only crowd pullers spotted so far is the Elbit armed soldier led mission presentation and a noisy Apache demo. Guns are a little more evident at this DSEi than previously.

We've been flagging news from exhibitors on Defence Viewpoints and will be reporting particularly on Counter-IED technology.

But on a lighter note, the short skirt/ high heels award goes to XJ Tag. What do they do? Like most of the attendees passing by their young ladies, I have no idea!