

DRAFT

Written Question

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on plastic baton rounds.

Answer:

I understand that tests have shown that a significant proportion of a batch of plastic baton rounds, approved for use by the Armed Forces in public order situations, by police forces in England and Wales and by the Royal Ulster Constabulary, have muzzle velocities in excess of the upper limit in the equipment specification. These rounds, which were on issue from early 1994, were withdrawn from all operational use in April this year. Replacement stocks, which do not exceed the specified velocity, have been issued.

The Government will ensure that further stocks, conforming to a tightened specification, are made available over the next few weeks, to the RUC in the first instance. Plastic baton rounds and the procedures governing their use will be kept under continuous review. In addition, procedures are being put in place to ensure that stocks in operational use are tested regularly to ensure that they continue to conform to specification. A programme has been put in hand to take advantage of emerging technologies, with the aim of developing improved baton round equipment to meet operational needs but with reduced injury potential. We will continue to look at other effective means for controlling public disorder and riot situations.