

# Interview with Jim Morrison, chief executive officer of the Metrix Consortium

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The UK's £12 billion Defence Training Review (DTR) took another step forward with the signing of an Early Works (EW) contract in January. This is an indication that the UK's largest-ever private finance initiative is on track for full contract signature by the end of 2010, Jim Morrison, chief executive officer of the consortium behind the project, Metrix, told Jane's.

The DTR has been the subject of criticism in the past, accused of being too costly. While Metrix was awarded preferred bidder status three years ago for the technical and logistics packages of the programme, in January 2008 it was stripped of that position for the latter package as the Ministry of Defence (MoD) stated it was "unable to offer an affordable and acceptable solution".

"We of course said we would try, in partnership with the MoD, to see what synergies and designs and activities we could bring together for both packages. Unfortunately we failed," Morrison conceded. "Neither side could get into a position where it was affordable to deliver a solution as a single project.

"But I'm delighted that we've put a lot of that behind us; it's now in the rear-view mirror," he said. "When people say to me about 'delays', I say: 'Well, which one?' That's because they are part of the territory with programmes of this size and complexity. Where we are today is that we are pleased with the progress that has been made over the past year. We've hit our core milestones, we've hit planning permission and we've hit our early risk-reduction tasks - bang on time."

Morrison said that, despite a recent announcement by Armed Forces Minister Bill Rammell that a final decision on the programme would be delayed from early to mid-2010, the Metrix consortium is confident of an imminent deal.

Under the DTR the training of the UK's armed forces will be centralised in a future Defence

Technical College (DTC) at St Athan in Wales. The first major risk-reduction contracts of the project have been agreed, allowing work to continue up to full signature. The USD31 million Early Training Transformation (ETT) contract enables a body of work designed to introduce improvements to key elements of the armed forces' specialist training programmes, while the USD29 million EW contract will allow a series of design, construction and clearance activities to be carried out at St Athan.

The Metrix consortium is led by QinetiQ and Sodexo. Private contractors have conducted similar work in the past, but the DTR differs in terms of scale and complexity, with a "root-and-branch reform of the entire armed forces' military technical training needs that will generate huge efficiencies", Morrison said. "Has private sector training within the forces been done before? Yes. Is flying training provided by a private contractor? Yes. Is aerial photography training provided by a private contractor? Yes. Most of the electro-mechanical training is provided by a private contractor already. Has the transformational aspect been done before? No. Where the DTR project and Metrix is different is that nobody in the UK has taken three full service requirements and put them together. We are a change agent," he said. "Irrespective of what changes come out of the SDR [Strategic Defence Review, SDR], the armed forces will still require technically skilled people to maintain new platforms and technologies. If you do away with tanks you've got to replace them with something; that something will always require top technical skills to support and maintain the new capability."

Regarding the financial aspects, Morrison pointed out that the DTR would not be "funded with new money". He continued: "This isn't a new GBP12 billion proposition. The whole-life project costs also involve money committed from the MoD itself. Remember, Metrix is not single-handedly delivering technical training;



Jim Morrison, CEO of Metrix UK

40 per cent of training will be provided by military trainers. This is training that can't be done by the private sector because it's conducted in an operational context and there are important military ethos elements that need to be maintained."

Raytheon is a key partner in the project, Morrison explained, as it has carried out similar work in both the commercial and government sectors in the past, such as the training work it conducts in the US for GM sales and technical staff and the support it provides to the Federal Aviation Administration's air traffic controller training.

"Raytheon's processes, supported by its analytical tools, will allow us to reconstruct the training environment, with the concomitant benefit of condensing some courses by up to 36 per cent. Getting people swiftly back to duty is, of course, critically important, but it is also important for the individual trainee, who will want to rapidly get back to their unit and apply their skills where they are needed most."

The DTR will last for 30 years. On such a timescale, the project needs to incorporate a degree of flexibility to adapt to both the changing security and technological environments of the future, Morrison explained.

"With the SDR and other defence changes coming through, we've got to be responsive to the broader defence environment. We've always been very conscious that we have to build a DTC that can be reconfigured - and not just in a physical sense. You can re-arrange classrooms and real working environments can be made to adapt to almost any need, but we also need to be able to ensure that the courses we offer are well matched to operational imperatives."