

The House of Commons Defence Select Committee published their report 'Medical care for the armed forces' on 18 February 2008.

The full report is available at:

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200708/cmselect/cmdfence/327/327.pdf>

In the report, the committee praises the 'second to none' clinical care provided to soldiers and the 'exceptional' rehabilitation services available to injured troops. Significantly, it endorses the government's decision to embed secondary-care units in NHS trusts and close specialist military-only hospitals as 'sound'.

Responding to the vociferous press criticism of the treatment of military inpatients at Birmingham's Selly Oak hospital, it condemns the coverage as misrepresentative and 'reprehensible'. While calling for the Ministry of Defence to do more to care for families, the report points out that many of the reported indignities that military patients have allegedly suffered at Selly Oak have no factual basis.

Nevertheless, it does express concerns about medical services for the armed forces in a number of key areas. It argues that better procedures to provide priority access to care for veterans should be put in place, and that the contribution of reserve personnel should be better recognised. The committee reserves particular ire for the Scottish Executive's failure to prioritise armed forces medical care, which it denounces as 'totally inadequate'.

Media reactions

Press coverage of the report focussed largely on its condemnation of the Scottish Executive's handling of armed forces medical care.

Richard Norton-Taylor, 'Sick veterans being let down, say MPs', Guardian (18 February 2008)
'MPs urge improved healthcare for veterans', ePolitix.com (18 February 2008)