

3449P (190)

**Mr. McNulty** [*holding answer 20 July 2004*]: Network Rail's borrowing benefits from support arrangements provided by the Strategic Rail Authority (SRA). As announced to the House by the Secretary of State for Transport on 15 July 2004, the SRA is to be closed. Its financial obligations, including those in support of Network Rail's borrowing, will be transferred to the Department for Transport, subject to the passage of the necessary legislation. In the meantime, the existing SRA support arrangements will continue.

#### Pay Systems

**Malcolm Bruce**: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will place in the Library the most recent review of (a) his Department's pay systems, (b) the pay systems of the non-departmental public bodies for which he is responsible and (c) the departmental equal pay action plan. [181356]

**Mr. McNulty**: A copy of the Department's equal pay action plan will be placed in the Libraries of the House once it is finalised.

#### Transport Statistics

**Norman Baker**: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what estimate he has made of the average journey time between central London and the centre of (a) Manchester, (b) Edinburgh, (c) Bristol and (d) Newcastle by (i) air, (ii) rail, (iii) lorry and (iv) car, including, in the case of air, check-in time at the airport. [182376]

**Mr. McNulty**: Data on journey times by mode between these cities are not held centrally.

#### Travel Costs

**Dr. Cable**: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what the travel costs were of civil servants in (a) his Department, (b) its predecessor Department and (c) its related agencies in each year since 1997. [183892]

**Mr. McNulty**: The Department for Transport came into existence on 29 May 2002 following Machinery of Government changes. The total travel and subsistence costs for civil servants in the Department for fiscal year 2002-03 were £1,606,589, and for 2003-04 were £1,919,678. Information for earlier years can be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

The totals for the Department's agencies in the same years were £18,696,176 (2002-03), and £21,975,803 (2003-04).

All travel undertaken by civil servants in the Department for Transport complied with the requirements of the Civil Service Management Code.

### DEFENCE

#### Iraq

**Mr. Wiggin**: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether British troops charged with torture or mistreatment of prisoners in Iraq could be tried in an Iraqi court under Iraqi law. [183244]

**Mr. Ingram**: I refer the hon. Member to the reply my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary gave on 1 July 2004, *Official Report*, column 432W, to the right hon. Member for Devizes (Mr. Ancram). British troops serving in Iraq have immunity under Coalition Provisional Authority Order 17.

United Kingdom armed forces, wherever they operate in the world, are subject to English criminal law. They can be tried by court martial for acts committed overseas if those acts would constitute a criminal offence if committed in the UK.

**Sir Menzies Campbell**: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when and in what circumstances Ministers were first informed of the practice of hooding; what the nature of the practice was; and what the reasons were for its abandonment. [183944]

**Mr. Ingram** [*holding answer 20 July 2004*]: The hooding of detainees for the purposes of arrest or transit was a standard procedure for United Kingdom troops prior to Operation Telic and, as such, was not specifically brought to the attention of Ministers. The UK believes that hooding during arrest and transit is acceptable when there is a strong military reason, for example to offer security to our own forces and locations or to provide protection to the detainee (through the prevention of identification by other detainees).

Military commanders became aware that the practice of hooding could be harmful to prisoners, especially if it was applied inappropriately. They judged that these concerns outweighed the military justification for the continued use of hooding as a means of blindfolding, and that the most prudent, immediate response was to introduce a ban.

**Mr. Pope**: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many members of the Queen's Lancashire Regiment were (a) awarded medals and (b) mentioned in despatches following their recent deployment in Iraq. [184500]

**Mr. Caplin**: Following their recent deployment to Iraq (from June 2003 to November 2003), four personnel from the Queen's Lancashire Regiment were awarded medals and two were Mentioned in Despatches.

**Adam Price**: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence pursuant to his answer of 7 July 2004, *Official Report*, column 721W, on Iraq, why he decided to publish the extracts from the document. [185600]

**Mr. Hoon** [*holding answer 20 July 2004*]: The extract contained the relevant information.

**Adam Price**: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) whether he was informed in July 2003 that the SIS had, in that month, withdrawn reporting from a source who claimed that production of biological and chemical agents had been accelerated by the Iraqi regime, because the source of the reporting had subsequently been deemed unreliable; [185656]

(2) when he was informed that SIS had withdrawn reporting from the source who claimed that production of biological and chemical agents had been accelerated by the Iraqi regime, because the source of the reporting had subsequently been deemed unreliable. [185691]