A £3.80m investment by Defence Estates for the Military Court Service has delivered a naturally lit and simultaneously quiet complex of courtrooms at Bulford Camp, serving army detachments locally in the Salisbury Plain area as well as Royal Navy, Royal Marines and RAF units globally.

The buildings incorporate AAD’s leading edge acoustic design details helping to bring military justice into the 21st century. This facility is the first permanently sited military court ever on the UK mainland; because courts martial are closed proceedings, speech intelligibility is very important. Another vital matter is because there is no legal obligation for overseas civilian witnesses to attend court, high-spec video conferencing facilities are used to allow such witnesses to give evidence without traveling.

This important communications facility also avoids expense of bringing back military personnel from important operations. Early evidence links to the new courts were from Royal Navy ships in the Red Sea. This Military Court Service’s new facility is now up and running and plans are already being made to roll out a similar scheme in Germany.
Technical Overview

The acoustic challenges

- Very high external noise levels from fixed and rotary wing military operations;
- Maximum use of natural light;
- Courtroom and video conference standards of internal acoustics.

Sound and Light

- The courtrooms incorporate full length glazed lantern fixed lights;
- Air gap between panes is 500mm;
- Secondary units are 10.8mm with 50% openable area for access;
- Three separate layers of dense material in built-up roof;
- Resilient hangers used to decouple building fabric elements;
- Surface absorption and diffusion to deliver suitable room responses;

Phil Mansfield, AAD Director and project consultant comments… “our approach to the scheme was to deliver the top drawer acoustic performance necessary, using pragmatic design details and construction solutions that are understandable and build-able and capable of outperforming their relatively modest expense. The design and construction teams worked very well together and we are pleased to hear the facility is delivering the goods.”

Other reading: Building Design, October 2006
Building, September 2006