



# Ministry of Defence

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4 February 2014

Dear Mr Cole

Thank you for your email of 30 April 2013 requesting the following information:

1. *The number of weapons launched from Reaper UAVs up until 30 April 2013. I would be grateful if you could provide the information:*
  - a) *Broken down into types of weapons launched (ie Hellfire and GBU-12) as you have done previously.*
  - b) *Broken down by month rather than just by year*
2. *Have any of the Reaper UAVs controlled from RAF Waddington launched weapons up until April 30<sup>th</sup>. If so please can you provide details.*
3. *On 24<sup>th</sup> April in the House of Commons Mr Robathan corrected an earlier reply he had given in a written answer and stated that UK personnel embedded with the US Air Force had flown 2,150 operational missions using US Reaper and Predator RPAS in support of operations in Afghanistan, Libya and Iraq. Can you tell me how many weapons were launched during these operations broken down into country.*

I am treating your correspondence as a request for information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000. I have now completed a search of our records and I can confirm the MOD holds some of the information requested. I am sorry it has taken so long to reply.

The table below provides details of weapon releases, broken down by type, from May 2008 to 30 April 2013, the date of your request.

<b>Month</b>	<b>GBU</b>	<b>Hellfire</b>
May 2008	1	0
June 2008	2	7
July 2008	4	3
August 2008	1	1
September 2008	2	0
October 2008	1	4
November 2008	2	1
December 2008	0	0
January 2009	2	3
February 2009	0	0
March 2009	0	0
April 2009	1	2
May 2009	0	1
June 2009	4	3
July 2009	1	4
August 2009	0	2
September 2009	0	1
October 2009	2	4
November 2009	3	6
December 2009	0	7
January 2010	0	3
February 2010	0	3
March 2010	0	3
April 2010	0	5
May 2010	0	5
June 2010	0	3
July 2010	1	2
August 2010	3	5
September 2010	4	4
October 2010	2	5
November 2010	2	10
December 2010	3	10
January 2011	0	4
February 2011	1	0
March 2011	4	10
April 2011	0	1
May 2011	0	2
June 2011	0	8
July 2011	1	2
August 2011	2	9
September 2011	0	17
October 2011	2	18

November 2011	1	24
December 2011	0	5
January 2012	0	2
February 2012	0	4
March 2012	0	6
April 2012	0	5
May 2012	0	4
June 2012	0	12
July 2012	0	8
August 2012	0	18
September 2012	0	16
October 2012	0	14
November 2012	0	11
December 2012	0	4
January 2013	0	3
February 2013	0	3
March 2013	0	10
April 2013	0	2

I can confirm that up to 30 April 2013 there has been one weapon release from a Reaper piloted remotely from RAF Waddington.

Under Section 16 of the FOIA, it may be helpful if I explain that Rehman Chisti's Parliamentary Question had asked how many times British forces had flown US unmanned aerial vehicles and was therefore not solely about UK personnel embedded with the US Air Force. For ease, I have reproduced the question and answer in full below:

#### Unmanned Air Vehicles

**Rehman Chishti:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many times (a) British forces have flown US unmanned aerial vehicles and (b) US forces have flown British unmanned aerial vehicles in the latest period for which figures are available. [128974]

**Mr Robathan:** The information will take time to collate. I will write to the hon. Member as soon as it is available. UK Forces have only ever flown US unmanned aerial vehicles outside Afghanistan, during Operation Ellamy in Libya.

*Substantive answer from Andrew Robathan to Rehman Chishti:*

I undertook to write to you in answer to your Parliamentary Question on 29 November 2012 (Official Report, column 461W) about Remotely Piloted Aircraft Systems (RPAS). I apologise that it has taken so long to reply.

I should point out that my answer contained an error in the final sentence that I would like to take this opportunity to correct. My answer stated that UK Forces had only ever flown US unmanned aerial vehicles outside Afghanistan during Operation Ellamy in Libya.

The answer should have said that UK personnel embedded with the US Air Force have only flown US RPAS in support of operations in Afghanistan, Libya and Iraq.

I have asked for the Official Record to be corrected.

Between October 2006 and 31 December 2012, UK aircrew had flown approximately 2,150 operational missions using US REAPER and PREDATOR RPAS in support of operations in Afghanistan and Libya.

UK and US personnel also operate both nation's RPAS as part of the launch and recovery phase in Afghanistan. Unfortunately, information on the number of occasions they have done so is not held centrally and could only be provided at disproportionate cost. Information about operations in Iraq is also not held centrally.

Of the 2,150 missions flown by UK personnel, there were 271 missions in Afghanistan when UK personnel utilised a US Reaper as a UK Reaper was unavailable. During these missions, UK personnel released 39 weapons.

I am withholding information about weapons released by UK personnel embedded with the United States Air Force on operations in Afghanistan and Libya under Section 27 International Relations. Section 27 is a qualified exemption and as such it is necessary for us to decide whether, in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosure.

I have carried out a public interest test. In favour of release there is some public interest in access to information about UK personnel embedded with the US Air Force operating US Reaper and Predator in Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya. Releasing the information would provide a limited additional understanding of the UK's relationship with the US over that which is already in the public domain in relation to operations in Afghanistan and use of RPAS.

In favour of withholding the information, there is a very strong public interest in maintaining trust and confidence between states as a key tenet of international relations. Releasing the information concerned, when the other Government has not given permission to do so, would undermine the relationship of trust that exists between the UK and other countries. Consequently, I am withholding the information under Section 27(1) (a) and (c) of the FOIA.

Information is not held for operations in Iraq.

If you are not satisfied with this response or you wish to complain about any aspect of the handling of your request, then you should contact me in the first instance. If informal resolution is not possible and you are still dissatisfied then you may apply for an independent internal review by contacting the Information Rights Compliance team, 1<sup>st</sup> Floor, MOD Main Building, Whitehall, SW1A 2HB (e-mail [CIO-FOI-IR@mod.uk](mailto:CIO-FOI-IR@mod.uk)). Please note that any request for an internal review must be made within 40 working days of the date on which the attempt to reach informal resolution has come to an end.

If you remain dissatisfied following an internal review, you may take your complaint to the Information Commissioner under the provisions of Section 50 of the Freedom of Information Act. Please note that the Information Commissioner will not investigate your case until the MOD internal review process has been completed. Further details of the role and powers of the Information Commissioner can be found on the Commissioner's website, <http://www.ico.gov.uk>.

Yours sincerely

[Original signed]

Elaine Kerr  
Air DRes Sec 3