



Ministry of Defence

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Mr Chris Cole

Reference: FOI2016/02689

chris@dronewars.net

Date: 31 March 2016

Dear Mr Cole

Thank you for your email of 1 March 2016 which requested the following information:-

- a) How many RAF Reaper UAVs are engaged in operations against ISIL/ Daesh in Iraq and Syria at today's date (1st March 2016)?*
- b) At which bases are the UK's Reaper fleet currently deployed to at today's date (1 March 2016)? If you do not wish to give the exact location for security reasons, please can you detail their location by country.*
- c) Which RAF aircraft have been engaged in flights over Libyan airspace since 1 January 2016 to current date (1 March 2016).*

Your correspondence has been treated as a request for information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA).

A search for the information has now been completed within the Ministry of Defence, and we can confirm that all of the information in scope of your request is held however it falls entirely within the scope of the qualified exemptions under sections 26 & 27 of the FOIA and has been withheld.

Section 26 (Defence) and Section 27 (international relations) are qualified exemptions and are subject to public interest testing, which means that the information requested can only be withheld if the public interest in doing so outweighs the public interest in disclosure.

Section 26(1)(b) has been applied to some of the information because it contains details which are operationally sensitive which contribute to the effectiveness of air operations and would prejudice the capability and effectiveness of our armed forces. The balance of public interest was found to be in favour of withholding the information given that, with regards to your first question, the public interest is best served in not releasing any details on the number of Reaper deployed on operations as it would prejudice the security of UK personnel serving abroad and would provide tactical advantage to our enemies.

Section 27(1)(a) has been applied because some of the information has the potential to adversely affect relations with our allies. The balance of the public interest test concluded

that whilst release would increase public understanding of and confidence in the relationships the United Kingdom has with other states on international operations, the balance of the public interest lay in withholding this information. We have considered it necessary to apply the higher level of prejudice against release of the exempted information.

Under Section 16 of the Act (Advice and Assistance) you may find it helpful to note that the MOD regularly publishes information about RAF activity in Iraq and Syria at:-

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/update-air-strikes-against-daesh>.

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 this office 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, 1st Floor, MOD Main Building, Whitehall, SW1A 2HB (e-mail 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.org.uk>.

Yours sincerely,

PJHQ J9 FOI Secretariat