



# Ministry of Defence

## J9 FOI Secretariat

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Reference: FOI 2020/00018

Mr C Cole  
[chris@dronewars.net](mailto:chris@dronewars.net)

17 February 2020

Dear Mr Cole,

We refer to your request dated 2 January 2019, which asked for the following information:

- 1) *For each month between October 2019 and December 2019, and broken down between i) Reaper and ii) Typhoon*
  - a) *the total number of missions undertaken by these aircraft on Operation Shader; b) the number of those missions entering Syria; c) the number of those missions entering Iraq?*
- 2) *For each month between October 2019 and December 2019, the number of sorties with weapons released by a) Reaper and b) Typhoon and broken down between Iraq and Syria?*
- 3) *For each month between October 2019 and December 2019, the number and type of weapons released by a) Reapers, and b) Typhoon, broken down between Iraq and Syria?*
- 4) *The number of UK weapon release events in a) Iraq and b) Syria per month from October 2019 to December 2019, broken down between Reaper and Typhoon?*
- 5) *Please can you tell me, for each month between October 2019 and December 2019, how many hours have UK a) Reaper and b) Typhoon flown on Operation Shader?*
- 6) *Please can you detail how many sorties have RAF Reaper aircraft flown outside of Operation Shader during 2019 and, if any, where these sorties occurred?"*

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 information concerning part of your request is held. The information requested can be found at Annex A.

The data contained in this statement is believed to be complete and correct at the time of issue. The MOD operational activity databases are frequently reviewed, and any errors and omissions are corrected. It is therefore possible that future statements might not match

this statement exactly. The MOD regrets any difficulty that this may cause but emphasises that our aim is to ensure that our records are as complete and correct as possible.

If you have any queries regarding the content of this letter, please contact this office in the first instance.

If you wish to complain about the handling of your request, or the content of this response, you can request an independent internal review by contacting the Information Rights Compliance team, Ground 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 should be made within 40 working days of the date of this response.

If you remain dissatisfied following an internal review, you may raise your complaint directly to the Information Commissioner under the provisions of Section 50 of the Freedom of Information Act. Please note that the Information Commissioner will not normally investigate your case until the MOD internal review process has been completed. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at: Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF. Further details of the role and powers of the Information Commissioner can be found on the Commissioner's website at <https://ico.org.uk/>.

Yours sincerely,

PJHQ J9 FOI Secretariat

Annex:

A. Operation SHADER Data Tables – October to December 2019.

**OPERATION SHADER DATA TABLES – OCTOBER to DECEMBER 2019**

1. Quarterly (Oct-Dec 19) request for information broken by Reaper and Typhoon as follows:

a) Total number of missions undertaken by these aircraft.

Sum of mission count (total):		Aircraft type:		Grand total:
Year	Month	Reaper	Typhoon	
2019	October	27	45	72
	November	48	46	94
	December	41	40	81
Grand total:		116	131	247

b) the no of missions entering Syria.

Sum of mission count (Syria):		Aircraft type:		Grand total:
Year	Month	Reaper	Typhoon	
2019	October	11	41	52
	November	18	41	59
	December	8	30	38
Grand total:		37	112	149

c) the no of missions entering Iraq.

Sum of mission count (Iraq):		Aircraft type:		Grand total:
Year	Month	Reaper	Typhoon	
2019	October	16	4	20
	November	30	5	35
	December	33	10	43
Grand total:		79	19	98

2. The number of sorties wither weapons released by aircraft type and broken down between Iraq and Syria.

Nil sorties with weapon releases in this period in either Syria or Iraq.

3. *The number and type of weapons released by aircraft type and broken down between Iraq & Syria.*

Nil weapon releases in this period in either Syria or Iraq.

4. *The number of UK weapon releases events in Iraq & Syria broken down by aircraft type.*

Nil weapon release events in this period in either Syria or Iraq.

5. *Hours flown by aircraft type on Op SHADER, rounded to nearest hour.*

Flying hours by aircraft type:		Aircraft type:		Grand total:
Year	Month	Reaper	Typhoon	
2019	October	329	494	823
	November	640	519	1158
	December	557	466	1023
Grand total:		1526	1479	3004

Caveat:

The MOD records are focused on sorties flown and weapons released. The MOD Air Warfare Centre does not record all cases of entry into Syrian airspace by RAF Reaper and Typhoon aircraft. For Reaper, all missions recorded as entering Syrian airspace may have transited through (and possibly operated in) Iraq due to the basing location of this platform. For Typhoon, MOD records some Syrian airspace entry cases and these might be for (a) transit to Iraqi airspace or (b) to reach their area of operation in Syria. The MOD records all cases of weapon release in Iraq and Syria so any sortie/mission involving weapon release in Syria will be recorded as having entered Syrian airspace.

Even if the cases of sorties releasing weapons in specific nations are added to the totals of sorties flown in specific nations, that latter total will still not necessarily be the complete total of entry into that nation's airspace. This incompleteness is simply a function of the database design, i.e. focused on weapon expenditure and performance.

6. *The number of sorties flown by RAF Reaper aircraft outside of Operation Shader during 2019 and where.*

The location and number sorties flown outside of Operation SHADER is withheld under FOI Exemptions Section 26 (Defence) and Section 27 (International Relations).

Section 26 is a qualified exemption and therefore a public interest test has been conducted. If released, the information would provide the public with greater

understanding of the operations of Reaper, however conversely it could put sensitive and protected individuals on operations at risk, providing the adversary with an advantage. Therefore, on balance I have decided to withhold the information. The level of prejudice has been set at the lower level of 'would be likely' to cause harm if released.

Section 27 is also a qualified exemption and therefore a public interest test has been conducted. Release of the information would provide insight into global military activity and relationships between the UK and other states, however diplomatic relationships could be undermined, putting UK interests abroad at risk if the information was released. Therefore, on balance I have decided to withhold the information. The level of prejudice has been set at the lower level of 'would be likely' to cause harm if released.