



# Ministry of Defence

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Ref: FOI 2019/13169

Your Ref: 12/19

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17 March 2020

Dear ██████████

Thank you for your email of 18 December. You requested the following information:

*1. Please inform me of the numbers of i) RAF Reaper qualified pilots and ii) Reaper qualified sensor operators, if any, currently seconded to the United States Air Force as 'embedded' personnel in the following USAF units:*

*49 Operations Group, 49 Wing, 19 Air Force.*

*57 Wing Air Combat Command.*

*432 Operations Group, 432 Wing, Air Combat Command.*

*732 Operations Group, 432 Wing, Air Combat Command.*

*25 Attack Group, 432 Wing, Air Combat Command.*

*2. Please can you also advise me:*

*i) Whether there are any RAF Reaper qualified pilots or sensor operators currently seconded to any US Air Force National Guard units, and if so how many.*

*ii) Whether there are any RAF Reaper qualified pilots or sensor operators currently seconded to any other United States military forces, and if so how many and to which force(s).*

*iii) Whether there are any RAF Reaper qualified pilots or sensor operators currently seconded to the air forces of any other nations, and if so to which nations(s).*

I am treating your correspondence as a request for Information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA). I have now completed a search of our paper and electronic records and I can confirm that information is held. Having reviewed the documentation, I have concluded that Section 27 International Relations does not apply.

The information you have requested about the number of RAF Reaper qualified pilots and the number of Reaper qualified sensor operators who are seconded to the United States Air Force (USAF) as embedded personnel falls within the scope of the following qualified exemption under the Act: Section 26 (Defence).

This exemption is a qualified exemption and, as such, it has been necessary to decide whether, in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosure.

A public interest has been conducted and there is a very strong public interest in withholding the number of Reaper Pilots and the number of Sensor Operators who are embedded with USAF. Releasing such information would provide the public with greater transparency on the number of personnel embedded with USAF and would promote openness and transparency about such matters. However, if we were to provide the details it could enable identification of personnel and could, potentially, be used by those with hostile intent to put the safety of UK armed forces personnel at risk.

Under Section 16 (Advice and Assistance), you may wish to note that I am able to provide the number of Reaper personnel who are embedded with the USAF, which is two.

There are no Reaper personnel seconded to the US Air Force National Guard; any other United States military forces; and the Air Forces of any other nation.

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