



Ministry of Defence

J9 FOI Secretariat

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Reference: FOI 2020/04281

Mr C Cole
chris@dronewars.net

15 May 2020

Dear Mr Cole,

We refer to your request dated 1 April 2020, which asked for the following information:

Please can I ask the following under the Freedom of Information Act:

- 1) For each month between January 2020 and March 2020 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 January 2020 and March 2020, 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 January 2020 and March 2020, 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 January 2020 and March 2020, broken down between Reaper and Typhoon?*
- 5) Please can you tell me, for each month between January 2020 and March 2020, 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 between January 2020 and March 2020 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 and releasable. 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). 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 – January to March 2020.

OPERATION SHADER DATA TABLES – JANUARY to MARCH 2020

1. Quarterly (Jan-March 20) 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	
2020	January	40	46	86
	February	39	44	83
	March	39	50	89
Grand total:		118	140	258

b) the no of missions entering Syria.

Sum of mission count (Syria):		Aircraft type:		Grand total:
Year	Month	Reaper	Typhoon	
2020	January	5	22	27
	February	1	15	16
	March	5	19	24
Grand total:		11	56	67

c) the no of missions entering Iraq.

Sum of mission count (Iraq):		Aircraft type:		Grand total:
Year	Month	Reaper	Typhoon	
2020	January	35	24	59
	February	38	28	66
	March	34	31	65
Grand total:		107	83	190

The Air Warfare Centre (AWC) records are focused on sorties flown and weapons released. The AWC 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 will have transited through (and possibly operated in) Iraq due to the basing location of this platform. For Typhoon AWC 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 AWC 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.

The table lists all recorded cases of those two Syrian airspace entry cases (transit through Syria to Iraqi airspace and operating in Syrian airspace) in the 'Syria' columns. The remainder of the missions flown are listed as limited to Iraqi airspace. Some of these might have transited Syrian airspace to reach Iraqi airspace but we have no record of it. Weapon release locations are invariably recorded, i.e. all weapons releases in Iraq and Syria are specifically recorded as such.

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.

2. The number of sorties with 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	
2020	January	514	548	1063
	February	470	519	986
	March	503	619	1122
Grand total:		1487	1684	3171

6. The number of sorties flown by RAF Reaper aircraft outside of Operation Shader between January and March 2020 and where.

Following a public of interest test, the location and number sorties flown outside of Operation SHADER is withheld under FOI Exemptions Section 26 (Defence). If released, the information would put sensitive and protected individuals on operations at risk, providing the adversary with an advantage. The information is also withheld under Section 27 (International Relations) as established diplomatic relationships would be undermined, putting UK interests abroad at risk.