



Ministry  
of Defence

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Ref: FOI2020/07560

12 August 2020

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

Dear Mr Cole,

We refer to your email dated 2 July 2020, which requested the following information:

*“For each month between April 2020 and June 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 April 2020 and June 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 April 2020 and June 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 April 2020 and June 2020, broken down between Reaper and Typhoon?*

*5) Please can you tell me, for each month between April 2020 and June 2020, how many hours have UK a) Reaper and b) Typhoon flown on Operation Shader?*

*6) In your response to me dated 23 March 2018 (your ref: FOI2018/02711), you confirmed that only one Reaper operations had occurred outside Operation Shader until December 2017. Please can you confirm if any Reaper operations outside Operations Shader occurred:*

*a) in 2018; b) between January and June 2019; c) between April 2020 and June 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 some information in scope of your request is held.

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.gov.uk](mailto:CIO-FOI-IR@mod.gov.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 Secretariat

Annex:

A. Operation SHADER Data Tables – April to June 2020

## Annex A - Operation SHADER Data Tables – April to June 2020

1. For each month between April 2020 and June 2020 and broken down between i) Reaper and ii) Typhoon:

a. The total number of missions undertaken by these aircraft on Operation Shader.

Sum of mission count (total):		Aircraft Type		Grand Total
Year	Month	(i) Reaper	(ii) Typhoon	
2020	April	39	50	89
	May	37	50	87
	June	48	52	100
Grand Total:		124	152	276

b. The number of missions entering Syria

Sum of mission count (total):		Aircraft Type		Grand Total
Year	Month	(i) Reaper	(ii) Typhoon	
2020	April	2	12	14
	May	1	9	10
	June	9	7	16
Grand Total:		12	28	40

c. The number of missions entering Iraq

Sum of mission count (total):		Aircraft Type		Grand Total
Year	Month	(i) Reaper	(ii) Typhoon	
2020	April	37	38	75
	May	36	41	77
	June	39	45	84
Grand Total:		112	124	236

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 second table lists all recorded cases of Syrian airspace entry cases (transit through Syria to Iraqi airspace and operating in Syrian airspace). The remainder of the missions flown are listed as limited to Iraqi airspace (third table). 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. For each month between April 2020 and June 2020, the number of sorties with weapons released by a) Reaper and b) Typhoon and broken down between Iraq and Syria?

a. Iraq

Sum of mission count (total):		Aircraft Type		Grand Total
Year	Month	(a) Reaper	(b) Typhoon	
2020	April	1	4	5
	May	5	2	7
	June	0	5	5
Grand Total:		6	11	17

b. Syria – Nil recorded

3. For each month between April 2020 and June 2020, the number and type of weapons released by a) Reapers, and b) Typhoon, broken down between Iraq and Syria?

a. Iraq

Number of Weapons Released:		Aircraft Type			Grand Total
Year	Month	(a) Reaper		(b) Typhoon	
		AGM-114	GBU12	PWIV	
2020	April	0	1	12	13
	May	2	5	3	10
	June	0	0	9	9
Grand Total:		2	6	24	32

b. Syria – Nil recorded

4. The number of UK weapon release events in a) Iraq and b) Syria per month from April 2020 and June 2020, broken down between Reaper and Typhoon?

a. Iraq

Number of Weapon Release Events:		Aircraft Type			Grand Total
Year	Month	Reaper		Typhoon	
		AGM-114	GBU12	PWIV	
2020	April	0	1	12	13
	May	2	5	3	10
	June	0	0	9	9
Grand Total:		2	6	24	32

Please note that in a recent Parliamentary Question response the number of weapon release events for May was listed as 6. The total has increased here due to the dates over which the data is calculated.

b. Syria – Nil recorded

5. Please can you tell me, for each month between April 2020 and June 2020, how many hours have UK a) Reaper and b) Typhoon flown on Operation Shader?

Flying hours by aircraft type (rounded to the nearest hour)		Aircraft type:		Grand Total
Year	Month	(a) Reaper	(b) Typhoon	
2020	April	522	621	1143
	May	512	579	1091
	June	706	649	1354
Grand Total:		1740	1849	3588

6. In your response to me dated 23 March 2018 (your ref: FOI2018/02711), you confirmed that only one Reaper operations had occurred outside Operation Shader until December 2017. Please can you confirm if any Reaper operations outside Operations Shader occurred:

a) in 2018; b) between January and June 2019; c) between April 2020 and June 2020 and, if any, where these sorties occurred?"

Following a public of interest test, the location and number sorties flown outside of Operation SHADER is withheld under FOI Exemption 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.

Information referred to in FOI2018/02711 has already been provided to you in the response to that request and is already available within the public domain.

Under Section 16 (Advise and Assist) you might like to be aware that there have recently been Parliamentary Questions on this topic. The links to the questions recorded on the website, They Work for You, are recorded below:

- <https://www.theyworkforyou.com/wrans/?id=2020-06-09.HL5457.h&s=Reaper#gHL5457.q0>
- <https://www.theyworkforyou.com/wrans/?id=2020-06-09.HL5491.h&s=Reaper#gHL5491.q0>
- <https://www.theyworkforyou.com/wrans/?id=2020-06-11.58612.h&s=Reaper#g58612.q0>