



Ministry
of Defence

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Email: UKStratCom-PJHQ-J9-FOI-Mbx@mod.gov.uk

Ref: FOI2020-11042

29th October 2020

Mr C Cole
chris@dronewars.net

Dear Mr Cole,

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

“ 1) For each month between July 2020 and September 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 July 2020 and September 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 July 2020 and September 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 July 2020 to September 2020, broken down between Reaper and Typhoon?

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

6) Please can you confirm if RAF Reapers flew operations outside of Operations Shader between July 2020 and September 2020?”

I am treating your correspondence 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 I can confirm that some information in scope of your request is held.

The information you have requested can be found at annex A. Some of this information falls entirely within the scope of the qualified exemptions provided for at Sections 26 (Defence) and 27 (International Relations) of the FOIA and has, therefore, been withheld.

Section 26 and 27 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 question 6 regarding information on REAPER operations outside of Op SHADER as the release of this information would put sensitive information into the public domain putting deployed personnel at risk. Additionally, the release of the information would also prejudice the future security of UK forces by providing adversaries with a greater understanding of the operational profile of REAPER.

Section 27 (International Relations) has also been applied to question 6 as the release of relevant information would undermine established diplomatic relationships, putting UK interests abroad at risk.

The balance of public interest was found to be in favour of withholding the information given that, overall, the public interest is best served by not releasing additional details that would prejudice the security of UK personnel serving abroad and which would provide an advantage to our adversaries. For these reasons I have set the level of prejudice against release of the exempted information at the higher level of “would” rather than “would be likely to”

The data contained in this statement is believed to be complete and correct at the time of issue but please be aware that the MOD’s 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). 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 – July to September 2020

Annex A - Operation SHADER Data Tables – July to September 2020

1. For each month between July 2020 and September 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	July	40	54	94
	August	86	50	136
	September	55	36	91
Grand Total:		181	140	321

b. The number of missions entering Syria

Sum of mission count (total):		Aircraft Type		Grand Total
Year	Month	(i) Reaper	(ii) Typhoon	
2020	July	24	9	33
	August	31	17	48
	September	19	23	42
Grand Total:		74	49	123

c. The number of missions entering Iraq

Sum of mission count (total):		Aircraft Type		Grand Total
Year	Month	(i) Reaper	(ii) Typhoon	
2020	July	16	45	61
	August	55	33	88
	September	36	13	49
Grand Total:		107	91	198

The Air & Space Warfare Centre (ASWC) records are focused on sorties flown and weapons released. The ASWC 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 ASWC 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 ASWC 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 July 2020 and September 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	July			
	August	2		2
	September			
Grand Total:		2		2

b. Syria – Nil recorded

3. For each month between July 2020 and September 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	July				
	August	2			2
	September				
Grand Total:		2			2

b. Syria – Nil recorded

4. The number of UK weapon release events in a) Iraq and b) Syria per month from July 2020 and September 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	July				
	August	2			2
	September				
Grand Total:		2			

b. Syria – Nil recorded

5. Please can you tell me, for each month between July 2020 and September 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	July	469	658	1127
	August	1133	627	1761
	September	749	419	1169
Grand Total:		2351	1705	4056

6. Please can you confirm if RAF Reapers flew operations outside of Operations Shader between July 2020 and September 2020??”

Following a public of interest test, details of sorties flown outside of Operation SHADER have been withheld under FOI Exemption Section 26 (Defence). If released, the information would put individuals on operations at risk, providing the adversary with an advantage. The information is also withheld under Section 27 (International Relations) as its release would undermine established diplomatic relationships, putting UK interests abroad at risk.



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Ref: FOI2020/12095

27th November 2020

Mr Chris Cole
chris@dronewars.net

Dear Mr Cole,

Thank you for your email of 01 November 2020 requesting the following clarification on the recent FOI response (reference: FOI2020-11042):

“Please may I ask you to confirm the figure given for number of hours flown by RAF Reapers on Operation Shader for August 2020, which is given as 1,113 hours.”

I am treating your correspondence as a request for information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA).

The information currently held by the MOD confirms a 1,113 flying hour figure for MQ-9 on Operation Shader during August 2020.

This figure is believed to be complete and correct but please be aware that the MOD's operational activity databases are frequently reviewed, and any identified 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.

While the August figure is higher than preceding months, there is always variance in flying hours due to aircraft serviceability, crew availability, and weather.

Yours sincerely,

PJHQ J9 FOI Secretariat