



Ministry
of Defence

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Ref: FOI2021/00033

29 January 2021

Mr Chris Cole
chris@dronewars.net

Dear Mr Cole,

We refer to your request dated 04 January 2021, which asked for the following information:

- “1) For each month between October 2020 and December 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 October 2020 and December 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 October 2020 and December 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 October 2020 to December 2020, broken down between Reaper and Typhoon?*
- 5) Please can you tell me, for each month between October 2020 and December 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 October 2020 and December 2020 and if so, how many missions and where they occurred?”*

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 SHADER as this information would put sensitive and protected individuals on operations at risk, providing the adversary with an advantage. The information would prejudice the future security of relevant forces by providing adversaries with greater understanding of the operational profile of REAPER.

Section 27 (International Relations) has also been applied, as established diplomatic relationships would be undermined, 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 in not releasing additional details that it would prejudice the security of UK personnel serving abroad and which would provide advantage to our adversaries and 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. 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). 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 2020

Annex A - Operation SHADER Data Tables – October to December 2020

1. For each month between October 2020 and December 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	October	68	46	114
	November	23	47	70
	December	38	49	87
Grand Total:		129	142	271

b. The number of missions entering Syria

Sum of mission count (total):		Aircraft Type		Grand Total
Year	Month	(i) Reaper	(ii) Typhoon	
2020	October	29	23	52
	November	8	39	47
	December	10	35	45
Grand Total:		47	97	144

c. The number of missions entering Iraq

Sum of mission count (total):		Aircraft Type		Grand Total
Year	Month	(i) Reaper	(ii) Typhoon	
2020	October	39	23	62
	November	15	8	23
	December	28	14	42
Grand Total:		82	45	127

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.

2. For each month between October 2020 and December 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	October	1		1
	November			
	December			
Grand Total:		1		1

b. Syria – Nil recorded

3. For each month between October 2020 and December 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	October		1		1
	November				
	December				
Grand Total:			1		1

b. Syria – Nil recorded

4. The number of UK weapon release events in a) Iraq and b) Syria per month from October 2020 and December 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	October		1		1
	November				
	December				

Grand Total:		1		1
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b. Syria – Nil recorded

5. Please can you tell me, for each month between October 2020 and December 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	October	958	521	1480
	November	296	547	842
	December	453	541	994
Grand Total:		1707	1609	3316

The variance in Reaper flying hours is due to aircraft serviceability, crew availability, and weather.

6. Please can you confirm if RAF Reapers flew operations outside of Operations Shader between October 2020 and December 2020 and if so, how many missions and where they occurred?

Following a public interest test, details of 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.