



Mr Chris Cole

via

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Dear Mr Cole,

Thank you for your email of 20 January 2022 requesting the following information:

a) *A list of accidents (according to Air Safety Information Management System or equivalent) involving Watchkeeper and Reaper UAVs since 1 Jul 2021 until present. Please can the response include:*

1. *Date of accident;*
2. *Location of accident;*
3. *Cause of accident;*
4. *Aircraft type;*
5. *Tail number/serial number of aircraft;*
6. *Status of the aircraft after incident (for example write off, withdrawn from service, repaired and returned to service, etc.) and where appropriate*
7. *Repair category.*

b) *How many Reaper and Watchkeeper UAVs were in service as of 1st Jan 2022.*

I am treating this as a request for information under the Freedom of Information (FOI) Act 2000.

The Ministry of Defence (MOD) holds information within the scope of your request, but Section 26 (Defence) and Section 24 (National Security) have been applied to some of the information to ensure that the MOD safeguards national security, and because the information would prejudice or is likely to prejudice the capability, effectiveness and security of British forces. As these exemptions are qualified it was necessary to undertake a Public Interest Test to determine whether the balance for withholding the information outweighs that for public disclosure.

There would be public interest in enhancing the accountability of Government by releasing information, which would also demonstrate the MOD's commitment to openness and transparency, thus making the Government more accountable to the electorate. The FOI Act also contains a presumption of release. However, 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 information that would prejudice the UK's national security strategy or releasing detailed information on the location of specific operations that could allow enemies to draw conclusions about Armed Forces' capabilities. For these reasons I have set the level of prejudice against release of the exempted information at the higher level of "would prejudice" rather than "would be likely to".

Please see below a response to your request.

- a) There has been one accident involving Reaper, since 1 July 2021:
1. Date of accident – 1 December 2021
 2. Location of accident – withheld under Section 24(1) and Section 26(1)(b)
 3. Cause of accident – failure of nose wheel steering on landing
 4. Aircraft type – MQ-9 Reaper
 5. Tail number/serial number of aircraft – ZZ209
 6. Status of the aircraft after incident – no information held – under investigation
 7. Repair category – no information held – under investigation

There have been no accidents involving Watchkeeper since 1 July 2021.

b) As at 1 January 2022 the MOD had 24 Watchkeeper and nine Reaper UAVs in service.

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,

DE&S Secretariat.