

# CHAPTER 5 – MILITARY SEARCH AND RESCUE

## INTRODUCTION

### The Military Search and Rescue Service

The Military Search and Rescue (SAR) service exists primarily to assist military and civilian aircrew in difficulty, although a large proportion of its work involves assisting shipping or people in distress, both on land and at sea. SAR cover for the United Kingdom and a large area of the surrounding sea is provided 24 hours a day and 365 days a year by the Royal Air Force and the Royal Navy.

The Military SAR force currently consists of RAF and RN SAR Sea King helicopters operating from eight locations around the UK and four RAF Mountain Rescue Teams. The Nimrod fixed-wing aircraft based at RAF Kinloss were withdrawn from service in March 2010. Two RAF SAR helicopter units operate in Cyprus and the Falklands.

Incidents can include long range medical evacuation from ships at sea, assistance to vessels in distress, cliff fallers, swimmers, divers and surfers. On land many callouts are to search for missing persons or to rescue injured climbers, walkers, riders or those involved in road traffic accidents. SAR units are also often called upon to provide hospital-to-hospital transfers. Missions can include the rescue of foreign mariners, assistance to foreign flagged vessels or to other countries such as France.

Additional aeronautical Search and Rescue services are provided by four Maritime and Coastguard Agency helicopter units. Details of their activity are not included.

The RAF Aeronautical Rescue Co-ordination Centre (ARCC) at RAF Kinloss controls all military aerial resources. It watches over an area extending from the Faeroe Islands in the North, the English Channel in the South, about halfway across the Atlantic Ocean and halfway across the North Sea. It has direct data and voice links with rescue assets in the UK and Europe. Detailed maps and charts are combined with an intimate knowledge of UK topography to enable controllers to match resources to tasks quickly and co-ordinate the rescue operation.

More information about Royal Navy and RAF SAR can be found at:  
<http://www.royalnavy.mod.uk/operations-and-support/fleet-air-arm/sar-operations/> and  
<http://www.raf.mod.uk/careers/lifeintheraf/searchandrescue.cfm>

### Data Information

The UK Military SAR data source is a weekly download from the ARCC database at RAF Kinloss. Every incident recorded by ARCC is included in these tables. Incident data from Cyprus and the Falklands is received by email on an ad-hoc basis and may be incomplete. All data is validated and checked by DASA on receipt.

**Table 5.1** shows the numbers of incidents, callouts and people moved from 2000 to 2010.

**Table 5.2** shows the number of callouts and people moved by UK Military Search and Rescue units from 2000 to 2010.

**Table 5.3** shows the numbers of callouts and people moved by UK Military Search and Rescue units by type of assistance from 2000 to 2010.

**Table 5.4** shows the numbers of callouts and people moved in each region around the UK from 2000 to 2010.

**Table 5.5** shows the locations of UK Military Search and Rescue callouts in 2010.

### Key Points

- During 2010 the number of incidents fell by 13% and the number of callouts by 15%, compared to 2009. The number of persons moved fell by 12%. This was the first time since 2004 there had been an annual decrease in the number of callouts.
- There was a decrease in the number of callouts across all types of assistance during 2010, with the biggest decreases being in Recovery (50% decrease), Top Cover (39%) and Search (36%). The fall in Top Cover callouts can be partly explained by the withdrawal from service of the Nimrod fixed wing aircraft in March 2010.
- The number of Medrescue callouts in 2010 fell slightly compared with 2009. However, the number of Medrescue callouts was the second highest since 2000.
- There was an absence of any large single incidents during 2010. For example, during 2009 the floods in Cockermonth contributed to the large number of callouts and persons moved. Likewise, during 2007 the floods in Yorkshire, Gloucestershire and Worcestershire contributed to the large number of persons moved.

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**Table 5.1 Military Search and Rescue incidents, callouts and people moved: 2000 - 2010**

**Incidents** are emergencies attended by Royal Navy or Royal Air Force units whose primary task is Search and Rescue, plus other military aircraft and ships that are available to Aeronautical Rescue Co-ordination Centres.

Each Search and Rescue unit attending an incident is described as a callout. An incident may result in one or more callouts. An example is two callouts to a mountain incident, with a helicopter and a Mountain Rescue Team working together to assist a casualty. Callouts are for Royal Navy and RAF units whose primary task is Search and Rescue, plus other military aircraft and ships that attended incidents because they were available to Aeronautical Rescue Co-ordination Centres.

**Persons moved** involves moving people from a hostile environment to a safe environment or to a medical facility to receive urgent medical attention and between medical facilities at the request of the NHS.

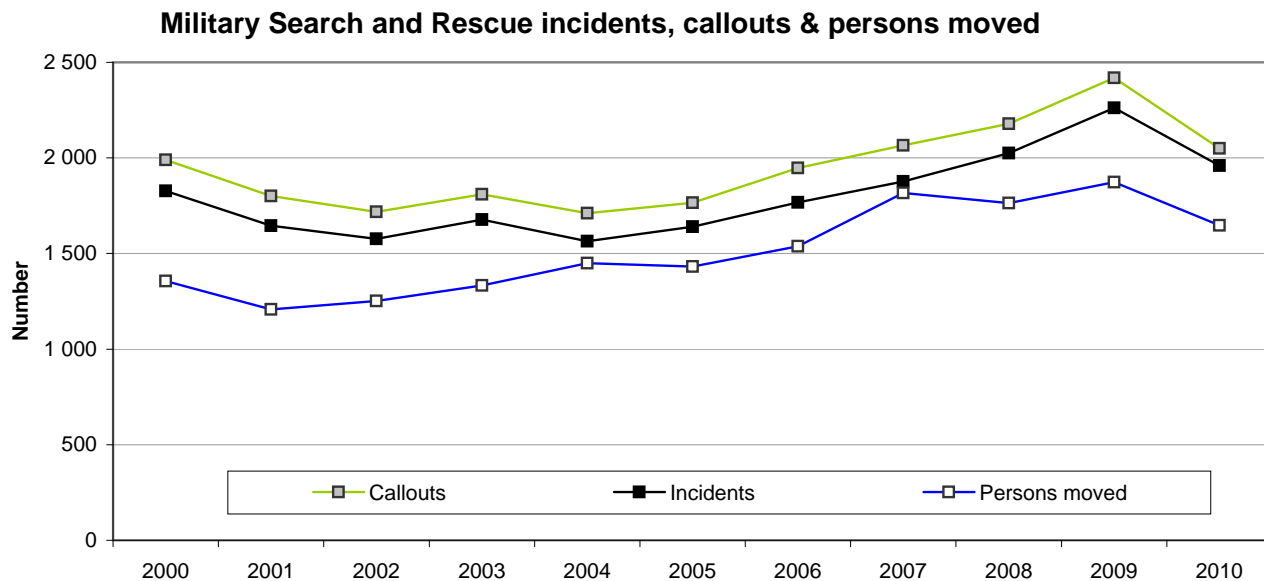
UK SAR units are co-ordinated by the Aeronautical Rescue Co-ordination Centre at Kinloss (Scotland). Aldergrove (N. Ireland) closed in 2002. The overseas SAR units are based at RAF Akrotiri in Cyprus and Mount Pleasant in the Falkland Islands.

	Incidents			Callouts			Persons moved		
	All	UK	Overseas	All	UK	Overseas	All	UK	Overseas
2000	1 827	1 781	46	1 990	1 941	49	1 356	1 316	40
2001	1 645	1 608	37	1 800	1 763	37	1 207	1 182	25
2002	1 577	1 544	33	1 718	1 684	34	1 251	1 224	27
2003	1 677	1 600	77	1 809	1 714	95	1 333	1 273	60
2004	1 564	1 504	60	1 711	1 638	73	1 449	1 412	37
2005	1 641	1 584	57	1 766	1 702	64	1 431	1 384	47
2006	1 767	1 703	64	1 948	1 875	73	1 538	1 463	75
2007	1 877	1 803	74	2 065	1 973	92	1 817	1 767	50
2008	2 025	1 941	84	2 179	2 083	96	1 763	1 607	156 <sup>1</sup>
2009	2 262	2 191	71	2 418	2 337	81	1 873	1 810	63
2010	1 960	1 901	59	2 050	1 983	67	1 647	1 605	42

Source: DASA(Price Indices)

1. This figure includes two incidents:

- The transfer of 79 military personnel in the Falklands during March
- The rescue of 15 military personnel in the Falklands during February.



# CHAPTER 5 – MILITARY SEARCH AND RESCUE

**Table 5.2 Callouts and people moved by UK Military Search and Rescue units: 2000 - 2010**

The primary role of Search & Rescue units is to recover military aircrew from crashed aircraft. However the vast majority of callouts are to assist the general public.

**Royal Navy Search and Rescue helicopters:** The Royal Navy's SAR units are 771 Squadron based at the Royal Naval Air Station Culdrose (HMS Seahawk) in Cornwall and the HMS Gannet SAR Flight located at Glasgow Prestwick International Airport.

**Royal Air Force Search and Rescue helicopters:** RAF Sea King rescue helicopters of Nos. 22 and 202 Squadrons operate from six locations - RAF Boulmer, RAF Valley, RAF Lossiemouth, RAF Leconfield, RAF Chivenor and RAF Wattisham.

**Other helicopters:** 'Other' types of helicopters are primarily Sea King helicopters operated by contractors.

**RAF Mountain Rescue Service:** The Mountain Rescue Service HQ is based at RAF Valley and coordinates the RAF's four Mountain Rescue Teams (MRT) based at: RAF Kinloss, RAF Leuchars, RAF Leeming & RAF Valley.

**RAF Nimrod:** Specially equipped Nimrod maritime patrol aircraft were often used to act as "Top Cover" - an on-scene coordinator for helicopters or ships involved in the rescue operation. The Nimrod aircraft were withdrawn from service in March 2010.

Callouts	UK Total	Helicopters			MRT	Fixed wing aircraft		Ships	Civilian	Military
		RN	RAF	Other		Nimrod	Other			
2000	1 941	499	1 278	-	92	71	1	-	1 819	122
2001	1 763	502	1 115	-	91	54	1	-	1 660	103
2002	1 684	436	1 122	-	79	46	1	-	1 586	98
2003	1 714	424	1 173	-	80	37	-	-	1 618	96
2004	1 638	453	1 079	-	67	37	2	-	1 538	100
2005	1 702	478	1 114	-	73	37	-	-	1 610	92
2006	1 875	497	1 258	1	86	32	1	-	1 785	90
2007	1 973	592	1 258	-	102	21	-	-	1 892	81
2008	2 083	586	1 377	-	91	29	-	-	2 028	55
2009	2 337	758	1 479	-	86	13	1	-	2 268	69
2010	1 983	639	1 282	-	59	3	-	-	1 944	39

Persons moved	UK Total	Helicopters			MRT	Fixed wing aircraft		Ships	Civilian	Military
		RN	RAF	Other		Nimrod	Other			
2000	1 316	360	934	-	22	-	-	-	1 267	49
2001	1 182	386	781	-	15	-	-	-	1 139	43
2002	1 224	314	900	-	10	-	-	-	1 181	43
2003	1 273	320	922	-	31	-	-	-	1 206	67
2004	1 412	416	978	-	17	-	1	-	1 355	57
2005	1 384	380	907	-	97	-	-	-	1 315	69
2006	1 463	479	968	-	16	-	-	-	1 409	54
2007	1 767	507	1,219	-	41	-	-	-	1 710	57
2008	1 607	516	1 062	-	29	-	-	-	1 565	42
2009	1 810	656	1 135	-	19	-	-	-	1 761	49
2010	1 605	539	1 047	-	19	-	-	-	1 575	30

Source: DASA(Price Indices)

# CHAPTER 5 – MILITARY SEARCH AND RESCUE

## Table 5.3 Callouts and people moved by UK Military Search and Rescue units by type of assistance: 2000 - 2010

Two definitions have been renamed for figures from 2007 onwards (see below).

The types of assistance that involve moving people are:

**Medrescue (including Search-Medrescue):** Moving an injured casualty from a hostile environment to a medical facility.

**Rescue (including Search-Rescue):** Moving an uninjured person from a hostile to a benign environment.

**Recovery (including Search-Recovery):** Moving people declared dead on scene or confirmed dead on arrival by a qualified doctor.

**Medtransfer (formerly Medevac):** Moving a sick person between medical facilities such as a hospital, or occasionally to move transplant organs.

**Transfer (formerly Airlift):** Moving military personnel, or their families, on compassionate grounds.

The types of assistance that do not involve moving people are:

**Search:** Search for craft, people, etc which does not result in a recovery or rescue.

**Not Required:** Arrived at the scene of an incident but no action needed.

**Recalled:** Recalled from an incident whilst en route.

**Assist (including Search-Assist):** Transporting personnel or equipment to the scene of an incident, or providing on-scene assistance.

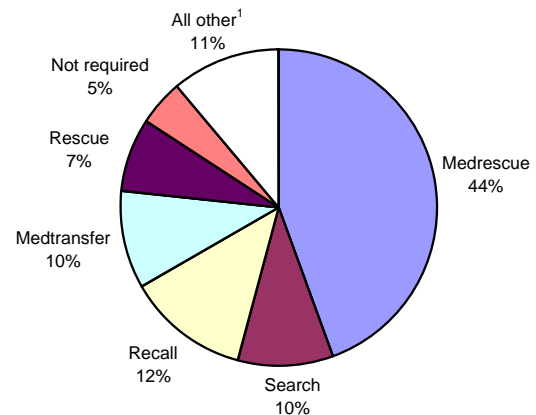
**Top Cover:** On-scene assistance, e.g. communications, that does not result in further intervention.

**Other:** Includes False Alarm, Hoax, Precaution, Aborted and Civil Aid.

Callouts	UK total	Type of Assistance involving moving people					Other Types of Assistance					
		Med-rescue	Rescue	Med-transfer	Recovery	Transfer	Search	Not Req	Recall	Assist	Top cover	Other
2000	1 941	607	135	230	24	16	366	173	131	95	87	77
2001	1 763	562	121	218	35	7	316	116	173	91	75	49
2002	1 684	583	112	198	21	5	311	101	171	61	65	56
2003	1 714	669	123	174	25	14	280	94	180	48	55	52
2004	1 638	593	122	186	29	15	271	60	192	58	64	48
2005	1 702	670	119	141	31	22	283	105	188	39	65	39
2006	1 875	736	102	175	37	23	328	89	238	49	48	50
2007	1 973	724	138	197	20	15	312	123	225	87	52	80
2008	2 083	779	139	208	40	10	322	88	289	100	31	77
2009	2 337	947	174	213	38	14	305	106	293	115	38	94
2010	1 983	880	148	202	19	10	194	91	246	77	23	93

Persons moved	UK total	Med-rescue	Rescue	Med-transfer	Recovery	Transfer
2000	1 316	713	276	241	29	57
2001	1 182	629	281	228	36	8
2002	1 224	654	343	201	21	5
2003	1 273	779	280	174	25	15
2004	1 412	672	494	195	33	18
2005	1 384	778	408	143	31	24
2006	1 463	830	384	175	43	31
2007	1 767	872	658	198	22	17
2008	1 607	869	450	219	40	29
2009	1 810	1 064	445	224	44	33
2010	1 605	964	379	219	21	22

### Callouts by type of assistance: 2010



1. All other includes Top Cover, Other, Assist, Recovery and Transfer

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**Table 5.4 Callouts and people moved by UK Military Search and Rescue units in each region: 2000 - 2010**

The statistical regions of the United Kingdom are the Government Office Regions for England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. Callouts are allocated to regions using coordinates provided by the Search and Rescue Units. The regions on this table are calculated using Microsoft MapPoint 2004 software. The At Sea figures are dependent on the algorithm used in MapPoint to define the coastline. Further information on the UK Government Office Regions can be found at: <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/geography/index.html>

## Callouts

	<b>UK total</b>	North East	North West	Yorkshire & Humber	East Midlands	West Midlands	East of England	London	South East	South West	Wales	Scotland	Northern Ireland	At Sea
2000	<b>1 941</b>	60	102	46	40	9	65	2	33	185	206	473	15	705
2001	<b>1 763</b>	30	62	54	32	11	55	4	39	253	197	438	16	572
2002	<b>1 684</b>	48	88	61	27	13	52	2	19	209	213	375	14	563
2003	<b>1 714</b>	54	82	61	25	9	76	5	30	182	243	397	11	539
2004	<b>1 638</b>	60	96	35	22	8	62	10	29	196	207	371	11	531
2005	<b>1 702</b>	48	96	62	20	8	57	7	13	234	221	383	15	538
2006	<b>1 875</b>	50	109	48	34	6	78	15	19	259	253	433	8	563
2007	<b>1 973</b>	49	84	103	46	21	57	11	25	227	239	475	9	627
2008	<b>2 083</b>	67	108	116	43	6	64	7	27	242	237	571	6	589
2009	<b>2 337</b>	67	134	103	37	14	58	5	30	360	357	593	13	566
2010	<b>1 983</b>	55	130	80	30	2	57	11	18	312	299	484	18	487

## Persons moved

	<b>UK total</b>	North East	North West	Yorkshire & Humber	East Midlands	West Midlands	East of England	London	South East	South West	Wales	Scotland	Northern Ireland	At Sea
2000	<b>1 316</b>	44	86	22	23	1	26	2	15	158	162	311	4	462
2001	<b>1 182</b>	22	49	41	18	6	22	3	48	159	149	276	10	379
2002	<b>1 224</b>	32	71	28	10	4	22	2	9	146	172	235	15	478
2003	<b>1 273</b>	29	72	35	12	3	48	2	9	163	223	314	6	357
2004	<b>1 412</b>	39	124	34	15	3	24	9	15	179	180	318	8	464
2005	<b>1 384</b>	39	128	61	10	6	36	6	6	183	193	366	12	338
2006	<b>1 463</b>	46	63	33	25	3	47	11	14	204	204	404	3	406
2007	<b>1 767</b>	41	81	155 <sup>1</sup>	15	97 <sup>1</sup>	24	11	9	283	205	348	6	492
2008	<b>1 607</b>	67	102	81	14	3	28	7	5	214	192	457	4	433
2009	<b>1 810</b>	48	142 <sup>2</sup>	54	13	7	22	2	21	351	305	452	11	382
2010	<b>1 605</b>	44	111	60	10	2	28	7	20	244	287	415	13	364

Source: DASA(Price Indices)

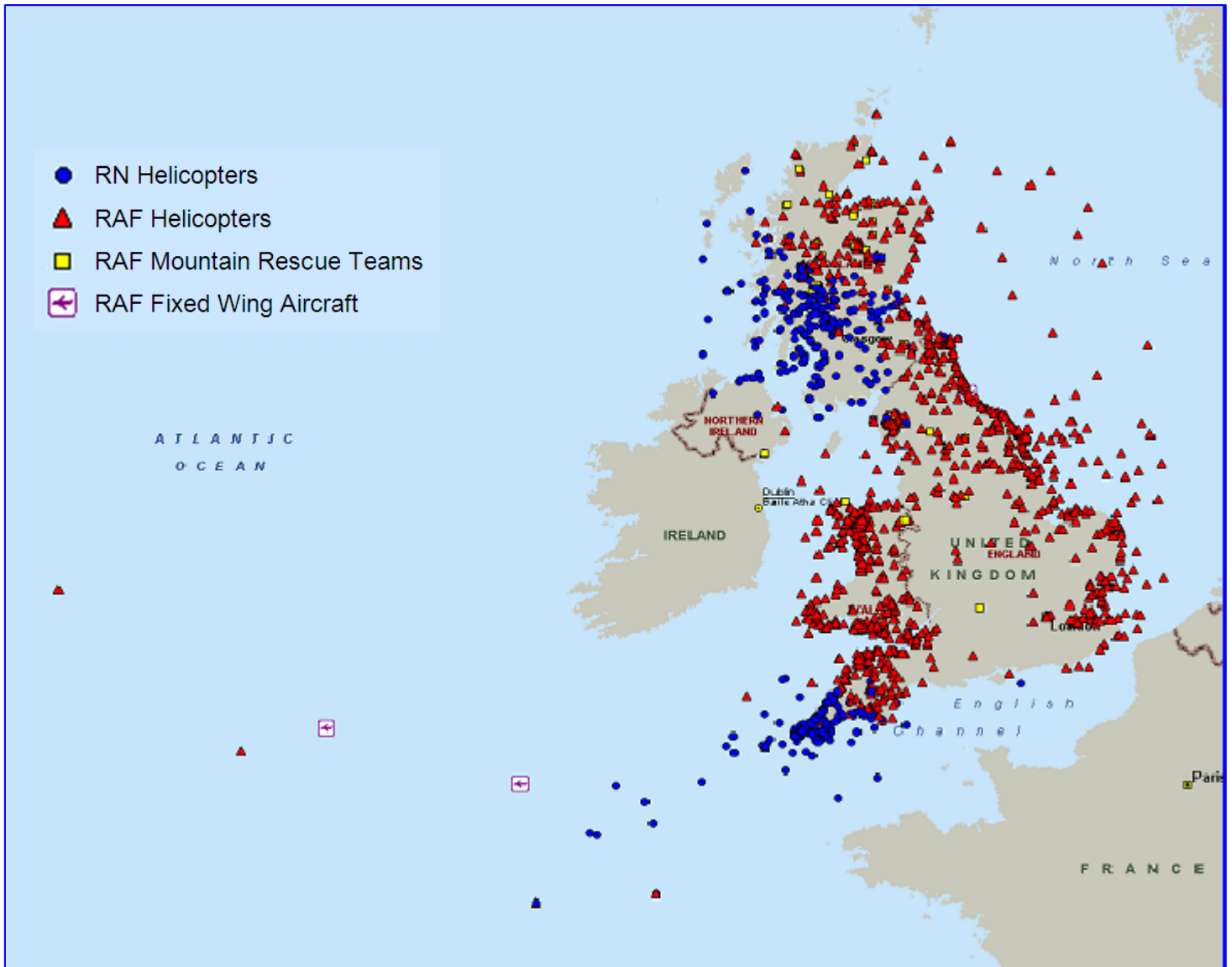
1. There were a high number of people moved in 2007 in the Yorkshire & Humber and West Midlands regions due to flooding in Yorkshire and Worcestershire.

2. The figure for the North West region includes people rescued from flooding in Cocker mouth.

## CHAPTER 5 – MILITARY SEARCH AND RESCUE

Table 5.5 Map of UK Military Search and Rescue callouts: 2010

Military Search and Rescue units are based at eight locations around the UK. The Sea King helicopters have a maximum endurance of six hours, giving a radius of action of approximately 300 nautical miles. Helicopter coverage is also provided by the Maritime & Coastguard Agency by units based in Shetland and Stornoway in Scotland, and Lee on Solent and Portland on the south coast of England. Callouts attended by the Coastguard are not shown on this map.



Source: DASA(Price Indices)