



Ministry  
of Defence

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[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

Ref: FOI2017/11034

Telephone [MOD]: [REDACTED]

Facsimile [MOD]: [REDACTED]

E-mail: [navysef-foimailbox@mod.uk](mailto:navysef-foimailbox@mod.uk)

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

21 November 2017

Dear [REDACTED]

Release of Information

Thank you for your correspondence of 2 November 2017 in which you requested the following information:

'I retired from the RN in June this year to take up position as the Chief Executive of the Northern Ireland Fish Producer's Organisation with responsibility for around 135 fishing vessels. Part of my remit is to promote the responsible sourcing of our product, and it is with increasing dismay that I note the rise of unevidenced, anecdotal allegations of slavery at sea in the UK EEZ. If such an issue exists it is incumbent on both industry and government to eradicate it. In order to successfully do that we must first have reliable data as to the magnitude of the problem. Given that the Fishery Protection Squadron conducts unannounced at sea boardings on fishing vessels throughout the jurisdiction of the Marine Management Organisation they are uniquely placed to provide accurate and trustworthy data. To that end I seek the support of the Fishery Protection Squadron in answering the following questions as per the Freedom of Information Act:

1. How many fishing vessels has the Fishery Protection Squadron boarded in the last 10 years?
2. Are RN Marine Enforcement Officers instructed to look out for evidence of mistreatment or slavery?
3. Is it RN policy to pass on every plausible allegation or suspicion of slavery and mistreatment to the appropriate investigating authority?
4. As a result of RN fish boardings how many incidences of alleged mistreatment of fishing vessel crew have been reported to the appropriate investigating authority in the last 10 years?
5. As a result of RN boardings how many incidences of alleged slavery among fishing vessel crew have been reported to the appropriate investigating authority in the last 10 years?'

Your enquiry has been considered to be a request for information in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (the Act).

A search for the information you require has now been completed within the Ministry of Defence and I can confirm that some information in scope of your request is held.

Taking your questions in order, in response to your first question, 9681 inspections of fishing vessels have been conducted by the Royal Navy (RN) over the last 10 years.

With regard to your second and third questions, RN Marine Enforcement Officers are not specifically instructed to look out for evidence of mistreatment or slavery. However, the RN and the Marine Management Organisation (MMO), work jointly with other agencies, to report any instances of perceived slavery to United Kingdom Border Force (UKBF) who conduct any follow up action. The UKBF are the lead enforcement agency for this, with the support of the RN as and when required.

With regard to questions four and five, the Ministry of Defence holds no recorded information to satisfy this part of the request. The UKBF are the lead enforcement agency who should be able to provide this information.

Under section 16 – Duty to Provide Advice and Assistance – of the Act, the UKBF are part of the Home Office and can be contacted as follows:

Address: Direct Communications Unit, 2 Marsham Street, London, SW10 4DF

Email: [foirequests@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:foirequests@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk)

If you have any queries regarding the content of this letter, please contact me 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.uk](mailto:CIO-FOI-IR@mod.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

Navy Command Secretariat – FOI Section