



Ministry
of Defence

Defence Statistics Health

Ministry of Defence

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Dear [REDACTED]

Thank you for your email dated 24 April 2018 requesting the following information:

** Please disclose the number of accidental firearms discharges in the UK in 2016 and 2017 which led to an injury/injuries;*

** For 2017, please provide a breakdown showing date and location of each incident;*

** Please disclose which ended in fatalities.*

I am treating your correspondence as a request for information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000. A search for the information has now been completed within the Ministry of Defence, and I can confirm that information in scope of your request is held. Some of the information falls entirely within the scope of the absolute exemptions provided for at section 40 (Personal Data) of the FOIA and has been withheld.

Section 40(2) has been applied to the information in order to protect personal information as governed by the Data Protection Act 1998. This is also in line with JSP200 Statistics Disclosure Guidelines. Numbers fewer than three have been suppressed in order to reduce the possible inadvertent disclosure of individual identities. Section 40 is an absolute exemption and there is therefore no requirement to consider the public interest in making a decision to withhold the information.

Deaths

Between 1 January 2016 and 31 December 2017, **one** UK Armed Forces person died as a result of an accidental firearm discharge. This incident occurred in Iraq on 2 May 2017.

Injuries

The number of personnel injured as a result of accidental firearms discharges were **fewer than three** between 1 January 2016 and 31 December 2016, and **seven** between 1 January 2017 and 31 December 2017.

Of the seven personnel injured during 2017; **five** were in the UK and **two** had no location information recorded on the centrally held data systems. Information relating to date of incident has been suppressed

to reduce the risk of inadvertent disclosure of individual identities, under Section 40(2) of the FOI Act detailed above.

Under section 16 of the Act (Advice and Assistance), you may find it useful to note the following:

Figures are for tri-Service regular personnel and 'on duty' reservists.

Defence Statistics Health compiles the Department's authoritative deaths database for all **UK Armed Forces personnel who died whilst in Service** going back to 1984. Information is compiled from several internal and external sources from which we release a number of internal analyses and external National Statistics Notices.

Accidental firearms discharges have been sources from three centrally held data systems: Health and Safety, the Munitions Incidents Database (MID), and Notification of Casualties (NOTICAS).

MOD personnel report health and safety incidents using a variety of reporting mechanisms. Since 2005, Armed Forces personnel and civilians report incidents to Incident Notification Cells or via their on-site Safety, Health, Environment and Fire (SHEF) advisors. Defence Statistics Health then collate this data into a single Health and Safety dataset. The data presented cover incidents which include any civilian whose injury was recorded on the following MOD health and safety reporting systems:

- a. Army Incident Notification Cell (AINC) as at 31 December 2017
- b. Accident and Incident Recording System (AIRS) as at 31 December 2017
- c. Defence Equipment and Support Incident Notification Cell (DINC) as 31 December 2017
- d. Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO) as at 31 December 2017
- e. Joint Forces Command (JFC) as at 31 December 2017
- f. Head Office and Corporate Services (HOCS) as at 31 December 2017
- g. Naval Service Incident Notification Cell (NSINC) as at 31 December 2017

A search was carried out on all reported incidents between 1 January 2016 and 31 December 2017 using the keywords "rifle", "SA80", "small arms", "weapon", "shot gun", "machine gun", "negligent", "discharge", "firearm", "gun", and "ND" across all extracts. Defence Statistics Health has visually validated and checked all search returns and excluded all duplicate records and any incidents that did not relate directly to accidental firearms discharge injuries.

Defence Statistics Health compiles Health and Safety statistics on behalf of Defence Safety Authority (DSA). An Official Statistic publication 'MOD Health and Safety Statistics Annual Report' is released each year providing the number of reported injury and ill health incidents to UK Armed Forces personnel, Ministry of Defence (MOD) civilian employees and other civilians that were recorded on the MOD's Health and Safety recording systems. This is available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/defence-health-and-safety-statistics-index>

The MID Cell resides within the Weapons Operating Centre (WOC), and fulfils the regulatory requirement to capture, collate, review, analyse and trend WOME incidents; with analysis and LFE supporting safety improvements within new projects through to existing working practices with stakeholders, enabling appropriate measures to be taken to prevent re-occurrence. MOD Regulation and Policy for munitions incident reporting is detailed in JSP 482 MOD Explosive Regulations – Chapter 25 – Munitions Incidents Reporting and Investigation. MID defines firearms as personal weapons and rifles only.

NOTICAS is the name for the formalised system of reporting casualties within the UK Armed Forces. The NOTICAS reports raised for casualties contain information on how seriously medical staff on operations judge an individual's condition to be. They are not strictly medical categories but are designed to give an indication of the severity of the injury or illness to inform what the individual's next of kin are told.

Would you like to be added to our contact list, so that we can inform you about updates to our statistical publications covering Deaths and Health and Safety in the UK Armed Forces and consult you if we are thinking of making changes? You can subscribe to updates by emailing: DefStrat-Stat-Health-PQ-FOI@mod.gov.uk

If you are not satisfied with this response or you wish to complain about any aspect of the handling of your request, then you should contact me in the first instance. If informal resolution is not possible and you are still dissatisfied then you may apply for an independent internal review by contacting the Information Rights Compliance team, 1st Floor, MOD Main Building, Whitehall, SW1A 2HB (e-mail CIO-FOI-IR@mod.gov.uk). Please note that any request for an internal review must be made within 40 working days of the date on which the attempt to reach informal resolution has come to an end.

If you remain dissatisfied following an internal review, you may take your complaint to the Information Commissioner under the provisions of Section 50 of the Freedom of Information Act. Please note that the Information Commissioner will not investigate your case until the MOD internal review process has been completed. Further details of the role and powers of the Information Commissioner can be found on the Commissioner's website, <http://www.ico.gov.uk>.

I hope this is helpful.

Yours sincerely

Defence Statistics Health Head (B1)