



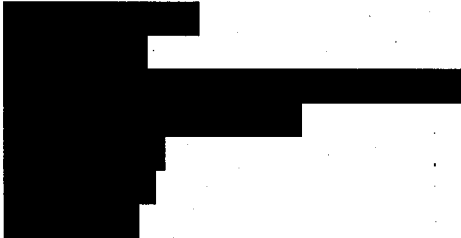
Ministry of Defence

Ministry of Defence
Main Building
Level 6 Zone K
Whitehall
London SW1A 2HB
United Kingdom

Telephone: +44 (0)20 721 89000

Email: People_SecFoiMailbox@mod.uk

Our Reference: FOI2015/02562



13 April 2015

Dear

Thank you for your letter of 4 March requesting the following information:

I am interested in obtaining any information or documentation concerning the Ministry of Defence's policy and training of military personnel in relation to potential interaction with children (including child soldiers or child combatants) on the battlefield. Any information concerning the type of information and training provided to British armed forces personnel prior to or during deployment would be gratefully received in either hard or electronic formats. Information and training concerning the complex human terrain with regard to children would be relevant.

I am treating your correspondence as a request for information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA). I apologise for the delay in responding.

I can confirm that some information is held which falls within the scope of your request.

At present, the three Armed Services (Army, Royal Navy and Royal Air Force) do not deliver any training that focuses on just children. The Law of Armed Conflict (LOAC) training is provided to all Service personnel from their initial training and at frequent intervals throughout their career. This training covers the behaviour of soldiers and the treatment of combatants and non-combatants, but not specifically children. Therefore, I have not provided this document.

In respect of the Army, if tasked to operate in an environment where specific child issues are identified, such as child soldiers, these would be incorporated into Mission Specific Training.

For the Royal Navy specific pre-op briefing in operations where juveniles or children could be encountered might include the following article (0407) of Navy BRd 9622 "Detention of Captured Persons (CPERS) in the Marine Environment"

"0407. Special Treatment

Certain categories of CPERS should always be afforded special treatment as follows:

- a. **Juveniles.** *Captured juveniles are defined as all CPERS aged 15, 16 or 17 who will be processed through the same administrative/induction arrangements as adult CPERS to ensure consistency with existing policies. Where they do not form part of an*

apparent family group, or there are concerns over their welfare and safety during the period of detention, consideration should be given to segregating them during both the initial custody process and throughout the detention period. Initial questioning of juveniles can also be carried out to establish the identity and age of the individual and will also be subject to transfer to a HN authority or other nations' authorities, but such transfers will be governed by MOD policy.

*b. **Children.** Captured children are defined as all CPERS under the age of 15 and should not be detained unless it is absolutely necessary to prevent imminent danger to UK Armed Forces or any other person or property. If they are detained and do not form part of a family group or there are concerns over their welfare and safety during the period of detention, consideration should be given to segregating them from other CPERS. The exception to this is when segregation would cause further unnecessary distress to them. Where there is a requirement to segregate they must be accommodated in a manner that takes into account their age, particular needs and vulnerability and ensures protection from any form of violence, abuse or negative influence from other CPERS.*

There may be instances where CPERS do not know or are unwilling to reveal their date of birth and it may be extremely difficult to ascertain the age of young CPERS. It will be better to assume that where this doubt exists the CPERS is a child until more detailed checks can be made. Determination of age will be made by the Medical Officer taking into account all relevant evidence, if an individual reasonably claims or is assessed to be less than 15 years of age, the individual should be treated as a child and neither tactically questioned nor interrogated.

When accommodated separately, children must be supervised by a minimum of two UK personnel, one of whom should be a female if possible. Under no circumstances should they be subjected to any form of questioning other than to establish basic details or in pursuit of their health and well being.

JUVENILES AND CHILDREN MUST NOT BE SUBJECTED TO ANY FORM OF TACTICAL QUESTIONING"

I hope this information is helpful.

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.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>.

Yours Sincerely,

Defence Personnel Secretariat