



Ministry of Defence

Ministry of Defence
Main Building
Whitehall
London SW1A 2HB
United Kingdom

Telephone : +44 (0)20 721 89000

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11 September 2015

Dear [REDACTED],

Thank you for your recent enquiry to the Ministry of Defence (MOD) in which you requested the following information regarding the Legion d'Honneur:

- 1) How many such applications have been received, in each month since June 2014 and in total?
- 2) How many have been passed on to the appropriate French authorities, in each month since June 2014 and in total?
- 3) How many have actually been awarded in each month since June 2014 and in total?
- 4) What have been the reasons for these delays and what actions will be taken to remedy the problems?
- 5) How are you prioritising the applications?
- 6) Which Minister held responsibility for this in the last government, which Minister is now responsible, and what are their contact details?
- 7) What are the contact details for the officers and the department of the French embassy and the French government with whom you are liaising?
- 8) When does the MoD expect to have processed all the applications received to date?

I am treating your correspondence as a request for information under the Freedom of Information Act (FOI) 2000. Following a search of our records, I can confirm that the MOD does hold some information relating to your request. For ease of reference the responses have been numbered in accordance with your original questions.

1) The MOD does not hold information on the number of applications received on a month-by-month basis. To date we have received 4132 applications, but application forms continue to arrive.

2) The application forms received by the MOD have not been passed to the French authorities on a monthly basis. Up to the end of March 2015, 3200 cases had been submitted to the French (the majority in November/December 2014); after that point the forwarding of cases was suspended due to the backlog of cases that had built up in the French system. Since 1 July 2015, we have been re-submitting the cases that form the French backlog under a new administrative arrangement.

3) This information is not held by the MOD.

4) Initially, the sheer number of applications overwhelmed the MOD's ability to process them. The French authorities also face similar problems as the number of Legion d'Honneur applications considerably exceeds the number of awards normally handled in a year by the Chancellery of the Legion. As in the UK, the awarding of a decoration undergoes a more thorough qualifying criteria, than for a medal. A revised application processed has now been agreed with the French authorities and the MOD is now re-submitting an agreed 100 applications per week to the French Government. Approval of the re-submitted applications should take the French authorities between 3-4 weeks.

5) Recommendations for the Legion d'Honneur are being forwarded to the French authorities in approximately the order in which they were received by the MOD. However, we do have the ability to prioritise in cases such as serious ill-health.

6) Lord Astor of Hever was Parliamentary Under Secretary for Defence when the initial announcement was made by the French President. Following the May 2015 General Election, Earl Howe was made Minister of State and Lords Spokesman on Defence. Lord Astor can be contacted via the House of Lords, London, SW1A 0PW. Earl Howe can be contacted via the Ministry of Defence, Whitehall, London SW1A 4HB.

7) The published address of the French Embassy in London is 58 Knightsbridge, London SW1X 7JT. The contact details for individuals working within the French Embassy or the Chancellery of the Legion d'Honneur are not within the MOD's authority to release.

8) The MOD continues to receive applications for the Legion d'Honneur and therefore an end date for processing applications cannot be estimated.

I hope that this information will be helpful to you.

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.org.uk>.

Yours sincerely,


Defence People Secretariat