



Ministry  
of Defence

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United Kingdom

Our Ref: FOI2016/03430

E-mail: JFC-HQSecretariat@mod.uk

[REDACTED]

16th May 2016

Dear [REDACTED]

Thank you for your email of 18th March 2016 requesting the following information:

*"Can the MOD state why would such an exercise involving live ammunition be conducted next to a hospital in the early hours of the morning and last over 9 hours?"*

*Can the MOD state what the purpose of the exercise was?*

*Can the MOD state whether similar exercises are planned in the future, if so when and where?*

*Why did the MOD not choose to use a military owned piece of land (such as the training land at the nearby Sennybridge area) for such a loud and disturbing operation?*

*What activity took place on the ground when the military were seen landing vehicles in the vicinity?*

*What targets were fired at during the operation?*

*What was the cause of the two explosions that were heard by residents?*

*Why did the M4 need to be closed?*

*If there was danger to cars on the M4, was there also potential danger to residents in the nearby hospital which was not closed?"*

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

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.

The information you have requested can be found at annex A. However, some of the information falls entirely within the scope of the qualified exemptions provided for at Section 26 (Defence) of the FOIA and has been withheld.

Section 26(1)(b) has been applied to some of the information because it would reveal considerable detail about Defence's exercise programme and capabilities, which would increase the security risk around planned exercises and provide tactical advantage to our enemies. The balance of public interest was found to be against releasing the information as doing so would prejudice the capability, effectiveness or security of our Armed Forces. For these reasons I have set the level of prejudice against release of the exempted information at the higher level of "would" rather than "would be likely to".

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, 1<sup>st</sup> 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 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,

**Joint Forces Command HQ Secretariat**

**Annex A to FOI2016/03430**

*Can the MOD state why would such an exercise involving live ammunition be conducted next to a hospital in the early hours of the morning and last over 9 hours?*

No live ammunition was used. Exercising troops were issued with 'blank' simulated ammunition which mimics the sound of firing without any projectile exiting the weapons.

*Can the MOD state what the purpose of the exercise was?*

The exercise is one of a number carried out on a regular basis by our armed forces as part of their ongoing commitment to the defence of the UK.

*Can the MOD state whether similar exercises are planned in the future, if so when and where?*

Qualified exemption Section 26 (Defence).

*Why did the MOD not choose to use a military owned piece of land (such as the training land at the nearby Sennybridge area) for such a loud and disturbing operation?*

Whilst MOD training areas are most often used for training they do not always contain the features required for certain activities. In these cases alternative locations are sought and used with the agreement of the landowner.

*What activity took place on the ground when the military were seen landing vehicles in the vicinity?*

Qualified exemption Section 26 (Defence).

*What targets were fired at during the operation?*

No live ammunition was used therefore no targets were fired on.

*What was the cause of the two explosions that were heard by residents?*

The explosions were controlled detonations of simulated munitions to assist the exercise

*Why did the M4 need to be closed?*

No information is held by the MOD. Decisions on road closures are made by the local Police Authority – in this case South Wales Police.

*If there was danger to cars on the M4, was there also potential danger to residents in the nearby hospital which was not closed?*

Please see the previous answer.