



Ministry of Defence

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Our Reference: FOI2016/04144

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

24 May 2016

Dear [REDACTED],

Thank you for your email to the Ministry of Defence (MOD) dated 11 April in which you requested the following information:

- How many service personnel have gone AWOL since 2011? Please can you break down the figures on a yearly basis and into separate categories of RAF, Army, Navy and other.
- Of those of who have gone AWOL, how many were prosecuted for desertion and what were the sentences? Again please can you break down the figures on a yearly basis and into separate categories of RAF, Army, Navy and other.

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 within the scope of your request. I apologise for the delay in responding.

With regard to your first question the following information has been provided. Please note that due to the way information is recorded by the MOD, the below figures are for the total number of instances of Absent With Out Leave (AWOL) reported to the Service Police in any given year. If an individual went AWOL more than once in any single year, each of these instances would be counted within the total i.e. one person going AWOL five times would count as a total of five. If an individual was AWOL for several years, it would only show once in the year it was reported. Following the reporting of an incidence of AWOL, information may come to light of extenuating circumstances, such as for compassionate reasons, hospitalisation or travel delays beyond the individual's control. In such cases the individual may not have been formally charges but the incidence is still recorded.

Royal Navy

| YEAR | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016* |
|---------|------|------|------|------|------|-------|
| REPORTS | 50 | 40 | 20 | 10 | 20 | ~ |

Royal Marines

| YEAR | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016* |
|---------|------|------|------|------|------|-------|
| REPORTS | 10 | ~ | 10 | 10 | 10 | - |

Army

| YEAR | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016* |
|---------|------|------|------|------|------|-------|
| REPORTS | 1460 | 1060 | 820 | 670 | 540 | 160 |

Royal Air Force

| YEAR | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016* |
|---------|------|------|------|------|------|-------|
| REPORTS | 10 | ~ | 10 | ~ | ~ | - |

(* - Data for 1 January 2016 to 12 May 2016)

In accordance with the Data Protection Act and our obligations in relation to the protection of confidentiality when handling personal data, the figures provided have been rounded to the nearest 10, where “-“ denotes zero, “~” denotes a number less than or equal to five. When rounding up to the nearest 10, numbers ending in 5 have been rounded to the nearest multiple of 20 to prevent systematic bias.

With regard to your second question, under Section 21 of the FOI Act the MOD is not obliged to supply information that is reasonably accessible to the applicant, by other means. In this case information on prosecutions is regularly published online and can be viewed here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/court-martial-results-from-the-military-court-centres>

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In keeping with the spirit and effect of the Freedom of Information Act, all information is assumed to be releasable to the public unless exempt. The MOD therefore will be simultaneously posting the information you requested, together with any related information that will provide a key to its wider context, in our online FOI Disclosure Log at <http://www.foi.mod.uk>.

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, 2nd Floor, Zone N, 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