



Ministry
of Defence

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3 February 2015

Dear 

Further to my letter of 21 December, I have now undertaken the public interest test into your Freedom of Information request, which was as follows:

"On 19 October 2001 an Mi-24 'Hind' helicopter operated by Jesa Air West Africa on behalf of the Sierra Leone government crashed after an engine failure. In addition to its contract crew it was carrying several British personnel and one Australian officer. One of the British officers, Major Vanessa Lang, was killed in the crash. I will discuss the crash in my chapter but the information relating to its cause that I have obtained thus far from Australian records and press reports is a little vague.

Given that the crash involved UK service personnel I was wondering if your organisation holds any reports relating to it that you may be able to make available."

As I stated in my previous letter, some of the information held was considered under the scope of Section 27 (International Relations) of the Freedom of Information Act. As this is a qualified exemption under the Act, I undertook a public interest test to consider if the information concerned should be released. Arguments for release of the information concerned would be the openness and transparency in releasing an MOD report into the accident and its causes; the public interest in a document involving the death of a British Army officer; and, the release of the document will be consistent with the release of reports into accidents involving British aircraft. However, the release of elements of the report could damage relations and defence engagement with Sierra Leone. On balance I have decided that parts of the report should be withheld as it would likely to be prejudicial to the future relations between the United Kingdom and Sierra Leone and defence engagement in that country.

Following the public interest test, please find attached are copies of a Royal Navy Flight Safety & Accident Investigation Centre report and a Board of inquiry conducted by the Sierra Leone Army Forces into the accident. In addition to the redactions referred to above, I have also redacted personal information, such as names of junior personnel, signatures and contact details. This is in accordance with Section 40 of the Freedom of Information Act. This is an absolute exemption and does not require a public interest test.

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, <https://ico.org.uk>.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be a stylized 'Z' or similar character, on a small white rectangular piece of paper with a perforated edge on the right side.

Disclosure and Litigation Leader