



Ministry
of Defence

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Reference: **FOI 2014/03893**

Mr [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Date: **04 August 2014**

Dear Mr [REDACTED]

Thank you for your email of 25 July 2014 requesting the following information:

"What was the number of individuals medically discharged from the Armed Forces between 1st January 2001 and 31st March 2014?

Please could you provide the primary causes for discharge and year?"

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. Some of the information falls entirely within the scope of the absolute exemptions provided for at section 40 (Personal Data) of the FOIA and has been withheld.

Section 40(2) has been applied to some of the information in order to protect personal information as governed by the Data Protection Act 1998. This is also in line with Defence Statistics rounding policy, in which numbers fewer than five are suppressed in order to reduce the possible inadvertent disclosure of individual identities. Section 40 is an absolute exemption and there is therefore no requirement to consider the public interest in making a decision to withhold the information.

The information you have requested can be found below.

Medical discharges in the UK Armed Forces involve a series of processes, at times complex, which differ in each Service to meet their specific employment requirements. Due to these differences between the three Services, comparisons between the single Service statistics are judged to be invalid. Therefore, the figures in this answer are presented separately for each Service. Between 1 January 2001 to 31 March 2014 there were **4,590** Naval Service, **14,601** Army and **2,565** RAF UK Regular personnel medically discharged.

Tables 1-3 provides the number of UK Regular Naval Service (Includes Royal Navy and Royal Marines), Army and RAF Service personnel medically discharged by principal condition and year for the period 1 January 2001 to 31 March 2014.

Under section 16 of the Act (Advice and Assistance), you may find it useful to note the following:

Defence Statistics release annual updates on medical discharges in the UK Armed Forces as an Official Statistic publication. In accordance with the Code of Practice for the release of National/Official Statistics we are unable to provide the data for 2014/15 prior to the next statistical release, due in July 2015, as set out in the Statistics and Registration Service Act, 2007. The latest report can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ministry-of-defence/about/statistics>.

Medical discharges are the result of a number of specialists (medical, occupational, psychological, personnel, etc) coming to the conclusion that an individual is suffering from a medical condition that pre-empts their continued service in the Armed Forces. Statistics based on these discharges do not represent measures of true morbidity or pathology. At best they indicate a minimum burden of ill-health in the Armed Forces. Furthermore, the number and diversity of processes involved with administering a medical discharge introduce a series of time lags, as well as impact on the quality of data recorded.

The information on cases was sourced from electronic personnel records and manually entered paper documents from medical boards. The primary purpose of these medical documents is to ensure the appropriate administration of each individual patient's discharge. Statistical analysis and reporting is a secondary function.

Although Medical Boards recommend medical discharges they do not attribute the principal disability leading to the board to Service. A Medical Board could take place many months or even years after an event or injury and it is not clinically possible in some cases to link an earlier injury to a later problem which may lead to a discharge. Decisions on attributability to Service are made by the Service Personnel and Veterans' Agency.

The tables in this FOI response have been scrutinised to ensure individual identities have not been revealed inadvertently. In line with Defence Statistics' rounding policy for health statistics (May 2009), and in keeping with the Office for National Statistics Guidelines, all numbers less than five have been suppressed and presented as '~'. Where there is only one cell in a row or column that is less than five, the next smallest number (or numbers where there are tied values) has also been suppressed so that numbers cannot simply be derived from totals.

Principal cause is the first principal coded cause on the medical discharge paperwork (F Med 23). Contributory cause contains all other principal coded causes and any contributory coded causes on the medical discharge paper (F Med 23).

Figures have been compiled using the International Classification of Diseases & Related Health Problems version 10 (ICD 10) cause codes.

Would you like to be added to our contact list, so that we can inform you about updates to our statistical publications covering Medical Discharges in the UK Regular Armed Forces and consult you if we are thinking of making changes? You can subscribe to updates by emailing DefStrat-Stat-Health-PQ-FOI@mod.uk

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 Deputy Chief Information Officer, 2nd 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>.

I hope you find this information useful

Yours sincerely,
Defence Statistics (Health) Head (B1)