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Our ref: FOI 2014/04020

Your ref:

29 August 2014

Dear _____

Thank you for your email of 31 July 2014 requesting the following information:

1. The number of projects, licensed under the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986, currently active at DSTL Porton Down which are funded solely by the United States Government.
2. The number of projects in each of the last five years, licensed under the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986, carried out at DSTL Porton Down which were funded solely by the United States Government.
3. The number of animals, broken down by species, used in projects in each of the last five years, licensed under the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986, at DSTL Porton Down which were funded solely by the by the United States Government.
4. The amount of funding received from the United States Government to carry out projects licensed under the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 at DSTL Porton Down in each of the last five years.
5. The title(s) of any active projects, licensed under the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986, at DSTL Porton Down which are funded solely by the United States Government.
6. The title(s) of any projects from each of the past five years, licensed under the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986, at DSTL Porton Down which were funded solely by the United States Government.
7. The name(s) of any biological and chemical agents used in projects in the past five years at DSTL Porton Down, licensed under the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 and funded solely by the United States Government, and on which species each was used.

8. Which Department(s) within the United States Government has provided funding for any project(s) licensed under the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 in each of the last five years.
9. The number of projects, licensed under the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986, currently active at DSTL Porton Down which are funded solely by overseas sources other than the United States Government.
10. The number of projects in each of the last five years, licensed under the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986, carried out at DSTL Porton Down which were funded solely by overseas sources other than the United States Government.
11. The number of animals, broken down by species, used in projects in each of the last five years, licensed under the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986, at DSTL Porton Down which were funded solely by overseas sources other than the by the United States Government.
12. The amount of funding received from overseas sources other than the United States Government to carry out projects licensed under the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 at DSTL Porton Down in each of the last five years.
13. The title(s) of any active projects, licensed under the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986, at DSTL Porton Down which are funded solely by overseas sources other than the United States Government.
14. The title(s) of any projects from each of the past five years, licensed under the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986, at DSTL Porton Down which were funded solely by overseas sources other than the United States Government.
15. The name(s) of any biological and chemical agents used in projects in the past five years at DSTL Porton Down, licensed under the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 and funded solely by overseas sources other than the United States Government, and on which species each was used.

We are 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, whilst I can confirm that Dstl does hold information within the scope of your request, I have to advise you that in accordance with Section 12 of the FOI Act 2000 (FOIA), we will be unable to answer your request without exceeding the appropriate limit.

It has been calculated that to provide this information would take one person 17.5 days to complete because of the manner in which the information is held; this is explained in more detail later in this letter in accordance with section 16 of the FOIA, and for these reasons the time and effort to complete this task is over cost.

Section 12 of the Act makes provision for the public authorities to refuse requests for information where the cost of dealing with them would exceed the appropriate limit, which for central Government is set at £600. This represents the estimated cost of one person spending 3.5 working days in determining whether the department holds the information, locating, retrieving and extracting it.

Under Section 16 of the Act (Duty to Provide Advice and Assistance) you may find it helpful to understand that several of the individual questions in this request will be over cost in their own right and the amalgamation of the questions will ensure that the whole request is over cost. It might be helpful to consider refining some of the individual aspects of your request to single years rather than a five year period as initially stated.

In addition please be aware that several of your questions will require review in accordance with the exemptions of the FIO Act which would include reviews for exemptions: s27 International Relations and s43 Commercial Interest and will be reviewed accordingly in line with the requirements for Public Interest Testing which may determine that it would not be in the public interest to release all or part of this information.

Dstl takes this responsibility very seriously and operates a single central database that collates information provided by all of the many individual Project Licence holders in accordance with the information required to be returned to the Home Office. The different agents (chemical, biological or nerve), to which you refer in your FOI request, are not categories that are required to be included in the Home Office returns and, therefore, are not collated in the central database. As indicated above, Dstl does hold information within the scope of your request but it will be held by the individual Project Licence holders, of which there are many, in their individual laboratory notebooks or project files. This information would need to be manually reviewed by each individual to confirm whether or not they undertook any research in that particular time period with the agent in question. We have calculated that this would take one person three to four working weeks to complete a search of this nature.

Normally we would ask you to refine and reduce your request but after careful consideration even if we were to ask you to refine your request to a single agent, this would still take a significant number of individuals to manually search a large number of project files and individual laboratory note books. Therefore, for these reasons, the time and effort to complete this task would remain over cost even for a reduced and refined version of your original question.

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.gov.uk>.

Yours sincerely

Dstl Secretariat

