



Ministry of Defence

Air Command Secretariat
Spitfire Block
Headquarters Air Command
Royal Air Force
High Wycombe
Buckinghamshire
HP14 4UE

Ref. FOI2016/04605

By email: [REDACTED]

12 May 2016

Dear [REDACTED],

Thank you for your email of 19 April requesting the following information relating to Low Flying complaints.

I would be grateful to know if you have any statistics for a recent year (the start date does not have to be 1st January) which gives:

- 1. The total number of complaints;*
- 2. How these are split between noise and damage;*
- 3. What proportion of the damage complaints resulted in compensation.*

I am treating your correspondence as a request for information under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) 2000. We have now completed a search for the information you requested and I can confirm that some information in scope of your request is held.

In respect of question 1, I can confirm that the total number of complaints received by the Ministry of Defence (MOD) Low Flying Complaints & Enquiries Unit for Financial Year (FY) 2014-15 was 1,134.

In respect of questions 2 and 3, I can confirm that this information is not held.

Under Section 16 of the Act, the Department is required to provide advice and assistance. Consequently, you may wish to note that records of low flying complaints and compensation payments in relation to low flying incidents are recorded separately and there are no records that compare these two separate records. It follows that we do not hold records that show what proportion of low flying complaints resulted in compensation payments. Additionally, as indicated in the published FOI2015/1878 response, compensation payments made in any one year may include settlement of claims submitted in earlier years.

You may also wish to note that in addition to the 62 cases where compensation was paid in in FY 2014/2015, as published in the FOI2015/1878 response, a further 36 claims were received. Of these 22 were not pursued, 13 were repudiated and 1 claim is ongoing.

I can assure you that the MOD takes its responsibilities to the general public very seriously indeed. However, to put the reason for low level flying training into perspective, many nations possess modern, capable air defence systems against which an aircraft's best chance of survival lies in using ground contours to delay detection and reduce the effectiveness of enemy air and ground defences. Low flying is a perishable skill that can only be perfected through rigorous training and continuous practice in a realistic environment. If the skill were to be allowed to lapse through lack of training, combat effectiveness would be considerably reduced and the scope for losses increases noticeably.

Further information explaining the importance of military low flying and measures taken to minimise disturbance can be found on the Gov.uk website at the following link:
<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/military-low-flying>.

If you are not satisfied with this response or 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, 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,

[Signed]



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