Ministry of Defence

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Ref: FOI2015/05307

[redacted]

15 July 2015

Dear [redacted]

Thank you for your email of 16 June 2015 requesting the following information:

> *I would like to make a freedom of information act request in relation to the Armed Forces' decision not to administer or prescribe Lariam to military pilots and/or divers. I am unsure about the basis and reasoning behind this decision.*
>
> *Please can you let me know when this decision was made, why, and on what basis?.*

Your enquiry has been treated as a request for information under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) 2000 and the Ministry of Defence (MOD) can confirm that it holds information within the scope of your enquiry.

The MOD's policy on the use of mefloquine (commercial known as Lariam) by military aircrew and divers can be found in Joint Service Publication 950 leaflet 3-3-1. This states that:

"Aircrew are not to take mefloquine as there is a small, but significant, risk of side-effects, which could degrade concentration and co-ordination. There is also a risk of cardiac conduction defects with this drug. Aircrew in non-flying roles may take mefloquine, but will be classed as, 'unfit flying duties,' for 3 months after taking the last dose of the drug. Aircrew who inadvertently take mefloquine, are to be grounded, and made, 'unfit flying,' for a period of 3 months after the last dose of mefloquine.

"Use of mefloquine is not compatible with diving duty due to its significant side effect profile, in particular, the risk of seizures. Any diver who has used Mefloquine for any medical indication is Temporarily Medical Unfit (TMU) for Diving for 12 weeks after their last dose. Therefore, any use of mefloquine by military divers (to include military sports divers) must be closely regulated to avoid any unintended adverse impact on a service-member's availability for military duties."

A search of available records was unable to establish when the decision was made not to prescribe the drug to aircrew or divers. However, the Department's policy on the use of all anti-malarials is kept under continual review and is based on the expert guidance of the Public Health England Advisory Committee for Malaria Prevention.

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 the Headquarters of the Surgeon General 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 FOIA. 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,

Headquarters of the Surgeon General