



Ministry  
of Defence

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09 November 2016

Dear [REDACTED],

Thank you for your email dated 12 October 2016 requesting the following information;

*“Can I please request the total number of suicides both in the UK and abroad broken down into the services Army, Navy and RAF for the years 2000 to 2016.*

*If I could also get the numbers for the Royal Marines specifically for the same periods.”*

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 the 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 44 (Prohibitions on Disclosure) of the FOIA and has been withheld.

Section 44(1)(a) has been applied as the disclosure of some of the information is prohibited by the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007. Defence Statistics release annual updates on suicides in the UK Armed Forces as a National Statistic publication. In accordance with the Code of Practice for the release of National and Official Statistics, as set out in the 2007 Act, we are unable to provide the data for 2016 prior to the next statistical release at the end of March 2017. Section 44 is an absolute exemption and there is therefore no requirement to consider the public interest in making a decision to withhold the information.

Between 1 January 2000 and 31 December 2015 (latest information available), there were **242** coroner confirmed Suicide and Open verdict deaths among serving UK regular Armed Forces personnel. **Table 1** presents this information by service.

**Table 1: UK regular Armed Forces<sup>1</sup> suicide and open verdict deaths<sup>2</sup> by year, 1 January 2000 to 31 December 2015, Numbers**

Service	All	Year															
		2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
All	242	37	16	15	25	20	22	12	10	10	15	7	15	16	8	9	5
Royal Navy	37	5	1	3	3	1	4	-	4	-	2	4	4	1	1	4	-
Royal Marines	9	1	1	1	-	1	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	2	-	-
Army	160	23	12	11	15	16	13	10	6	8	10	2	10	10	5	4	5
RAF	36	8	2	-	7	2	4	2	-	2	2	1	1	4	-	1	-

<sup>1</sup> Figures are for in-Service personnel only.

<sup>2</sup> Figures are for regular personnel and only those reservists who have died whilst on operational deployment.

In addition, there were a further **17** deaths for which a coroner's inquest has yet to be held and the mechanism suggests the possibility of suicide (waiting verdicts). Therefore the number of suicides presented here may be subject to change when the results of the inquests are known.

Under section 16 of the Act (Advice and Assistance) you might like to note:

More detailed analysis on deaths and suicides in the UK Armed Forces can be found in the following National Statistic publications produced by Defence Statistics at the end of March each year.

Suicide and Open Verdict Deaths in the UK Regular Armed Forces 1984 - 2015

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/uk-armed-forces-suicide-and-open-verdict-deaths-index>

Deaths in the UK Regular Armed Forces

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/uk-armed-forces-deaths-in-service-statistics-index>

The Suicide and Open Verdict Deaths in the UK Regular Armed Forces National Statistic showed for the 20 year period 1996-2015, male suicide rates for the UK regular Armed Forces was statistically significantly lower than the UK general population. It also highlights the following key points:

- For the 20-year period 1996-2015, the overall UK regular Armed Forces male suicide rate was 9 per 100,000 personnel at risk; the Naval Service suicide rate was 8 per 100,000; the Army rate was 10 per 100,000 and the RAF rate was 6 per 100,000.
- Suicide remains a rare event in the UK regular Armed Forces; as a result some of the numbers presented in the notice are small.
- Only 17 suicide and open verdict deaths occurred among female personnel during the period 1996-2015.

Defence Statistics (Health) compiles the Department's authoritative deaths database for all UK Armed Forces personnel who died whilst in Service going back to 1984. Information is compiled from several internal and external sources from which we release a number of internal analyses and external National Statistics Notices.

When providing statistics on suicides, Defence Statistics (Health) rely exclusively on the information provided by coroners in England and Wales and in Northern Ireland, and the Procurator Fiscal in Scotland. This ensures the Department's objectivity, as all accidental deaths and those resulting from violent action have to be referred to these officials for investigation. For sake of brevity these sources of information have been labelled collectively as "coroner's verdicts".

The statistics provided include both coroner-confirmed suicides and open verdict deaths, in line with the definition used by the Office for National Statistics (ONS), since research has shown that these deaths share many similarities with suicides except that in the case of open verdict deaths, the intention of the deceased to take their life has not been sufficiently proven to the satisfaction of the coroner.

In order to identify deaths that may result in a coroner returning a suicide or open verdict (awaiting verdicts), Defence Statistics (Health) use the Joint Casualty and Compassionate Centre (JCCC) reporting category violent and unnatural causes (VUC) as an indicator for suspected suicides. Defence Statistics (Health) exclude from this number any death that has been identified as an assault on the Notification of Casualty form (NOTICAS).

Would you like to be added to our contact list, so that we can inform you about updates to our statistical publications covering Suicides in the UK 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](mailto: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 Information Rights Compliance team, 1<sup>st</sup> Floor, MOD Main Building, Whitehall, SW1A 2HB (e-mail [CIO-FOI-IR@mod.uk](mailto: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

Defence Statistics (Health)