



Ministry of Defence

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

Ref. 2016/00287

[REDACTED]

3 February 2016

Dear [REDACTED],

Thank you for your e-mail of 8 January 2016 clarifying your previous FOI request of 18 December 2015 asking for information about documents or publications held by the RAF.

Your clarification stated:

"Sometimes, air defence squadrons and wings (in Australia and the USA) detect and track oddities, illegal aircraft, errant missile firings, etc.. That data (track files, screen shots of the events, reports, forms, etc) are sent to further areas for study. For example, in Australia, 41 Wing, RAAF sends any suspect data to the Defence Science and Technology Organization's (DSTO) Radar Propagation branch for analysis. In the USA, when Air Operation Centers (AOCs) of North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD) detect and track any unknowns, the data gets forwarded to the NORAD/NORTHCOM Center for Aerospace Analysis, or, NORAD's in-house J3(3) area. This same information for the UK has never been made overly public. I wish to study it, so, I need the things I have asked for in my FOI request. Also, I am trying to build up a more generalised picture (aside from studying the above mentioned names/locales of analysis directorates) of UK Air Defence in regards to unknowns and the plotting of such on systems.

As for date range, I am happy to ask for anything from 1998 onwards."

I am writing to confirm that MOD holds the information on the subjects you have requested.

Under Section 16 (Advice and Assistance) of the Act you may find it helpful to note that the MOD does not attempt to identify every radar return or contact. If aircraft are not acting in a manner that in a controllers judgement gives cause for concern in terms of security or air safety the controller would not necessarily attempt to make any further attempt at identification. It is routine that controllers will not attempt to identify radar returns which are not under their direct control. Instead, they will provide avoidance guidance to the aircraft under their control notifying them of the existence of the radar return. The identification of aircraft within UK airspace is a matter for the Civil Aviation Authority and NATS and varies based on the civil classification of airspace.

The UK is responsible to NATO for tracking aircraft of military significance flying in its defined area of responsibility. Air Surveillance and Control System (ACACS) is the organisation responsible for delivering this task and the direction and procedures to be followed by RAF Boulmer and Numbers 1,2,3,6 and 11 Squadrons of the RAF are defined in the "Air-Com Ramstein Supplan 24600D "Constant Effort" which is a NATO document.

Further information is held in the Manual of Military Air Traffic Management (MMATM) which is published by the Military Aviation Authority and which can be found at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/manual-of-military-air-traffic-management-mmatm>

Series 3000 of that document covers Air Traffic Management and you may find the following links helpful for procedures in positive identification of aircraft directly under their control:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/regulatory-article-ra-3227-methods-of-identification>

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/472707/RA3204_Issue_2.pdf

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/398361/RA3236_Initial_Issue.pdf

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/regulatory-article-ra-3205-radar-analysis-cell-rac>

The primary role of RAF Fylingdales is to maintain an uninterrupted missile warning service, thereby demonstrating that a surprise missile attack could not succeed. To this end it works closely with our US allies. The "JFCC Space Operations Instruction (OI) 534-9" which is a US document provides appropriate direction on the processes to follow should RAF Fylingdales radar detect an uncorrelated object. The Joint Space Operations Centre Space Situational Awareness Cell (JSPOC SSA) at Vandenberg Air Force Station in the USA will use the information from RAF Fylingdales to try to identify and catalogue the item. Whilst RAF Fylingdales will pass information to JSPOC SSA, in many cases it will be obvious that a new item appearing on its radar will be part of an expected satellite launch.

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,



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