



# Ministry of Defence

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[Redacted]

10 May 2016

Dear [Redacted],

Thank you for your email of 11 April 2016 requesting the following information:

*'I have a problems with one set of statistics, for which I have two conflicting sets of figures.*

*What I understood to be the 'official' figures allowed me to write –*

*'The detachments at the final six SAR bases completed 34,025 callouts and rescued 26,853 persons in distress in the period from 1983, when statistical record-keeping was started, through to 2015. These figures do not take into account rescues undertaken from SAR bases which had already been closed, or those flown before 1983.'*

*But another source (an RAF report on the 18 February SARF disbandment parade at Valley) <http://www.raf.mod.uk/news/archive/raf-search-and-rescue-force-disbandment-parade-18022016> quotes 'Since official records began on 1 January 1983, RAF SAR helicopters in the UK have responded to a total of 34,122 callouts and have given life-saving assistance to 26,916 people.'*

*Are you able to state which of these is correct? My heartfelt thanks for any elucidation you may be able to supply.'*

I am treating your correspondence as a request for information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA).

The two sets of figures found represent two slightly different time periods. Both sets of figures are for the six RAF bases that were still in operation at the beginning of 2015, which are:

<b>RAF SAR Detached Flight, Squadron, Base</b>	<b>Date SAR Operations Ceased and Detached Flight Stood Down</b>
D Flight of 202 Squadron, RAF Lossiemouth	01 April 2015
E Flight of 202 Squadron, DST Leconfield (Normandy Barracks)	01 April 2015
C Flight of 22 Squadron, RAF Valley	01 July 2015
B Flight of 22 Squadron, Wattisham Airfield	14 August 2015
A Flight of 202 Squadron, RAF Boulmer	30 September 2015
A Flight of 22 Squadron, RMB Chivenor	04 October 2015

These figures do not include the two Royal Navy units still in operation at this time, the two Mountain Rescue Units that continued to operate, the SAR helicopter units based in Cyprus and Falklands or any SAR bases that closed prior to 2015. In addition the figures for 'rescues' or 'life-giving assistance' represent the total number of persons moved, including medical transfers.

The first set of figures, which gave numbers of 34,025 callouts and 26,853 persons moved, covers the period from 1 April 1983 to 31 July 2015. At this end point three RAF bases were still in operation, B Flight of 22

Squadron at Wattisham Airfield, A Flight of 202 Squadron at RAF Boulmer and A Flight of 22 Squadron at RMB Chivenor.

The second set of figures, 34,122 callouts and 26,916 persons moved, covers the period from 1 April 1983 to 31 December 2015, at which point all bases had closed and the MOD had ceased Military Helicopter SAR activities within the UK.

Please also note that all callouts, along with their details, have been published for the years 2011-2015 at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/military-search-and-rescue-annual-statistics-index>

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, 2<sup>nd</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,

Head of Branch  
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