



# Ministry of Defence

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Thank you for your email of 23 February 2016 which requested the following information:-

*1. How many weapons have been confiscated from pirates operating off the Somalia coast by UK armed forces personnel in the 2014 and 2015 months?*

*2. How many vessels were sunk in 2014 and 2015. Can you provide the date and location of each vessel sunk; description of the vessel involved; number of people detained, killed or believed killed as part of the operation. The number and type of Weapons seized from each vessel and the amount of cash or other property seized from each vessel.*

Your correspondence has been treated as a request for information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA). The information you have requested can be found below.

The definition of the crime of piracy is contained in article 101 of UNCLOS, which reads as follows<sup>1</sup>:

"Piracy consists of any of the following acts:

(a) any illegal acts of violence or detention, or any act of depredation, committed for private ends by the crew or the passengers of a private ship or a private aircraft, and directed:

(i.) on the high seas, against another ship or aircraft, or against persons or property on board such ship or aircraft;

(ii.) against a ship, aircraft, persons or property in a place outside the jurisdiction of any State;

(b) any act of voluntary participation in the operation of a ship or of an aircraft with knowledge of facts making it a pirate ship or aircraft;

(c) any act of inciting or of intentionally facilitating an act described in subparagraph (a) or (b)."

The UK has been a key contributor to the three multi-national counter-piracy operations: EU Operation ATALANTA<sup>2</sup> launched December 2008; NATO Operation OCEAN SHIELD<sup>3</sup>

launched August 2009; and as part of the 31-naval partnership Combined Maritime Forces (CMF)<sup>4</sup> whose counter-piracy task force was established in January 2009. The Royal Navy also supports the UK National Marine Trade Organisation<sup>5</sup>. Further details and figures are published on the web pages referenced here.

These operations have been extremely successful in reducing piracy and deterring would-be pirates. As a result, figures for 2014 and 2015 are vastly reduced to single figures, down from the peak figures in 2010/2011, and the UK contribution has been much lower in these latter years.

As a result of the success of these operations, there are no recorded interdictions of any pirate vessels by UK armed forces personnel under any one of these operations during 2014 or 2015. As such, in direct response to your questions:

1. UK armed forces personnel have not confiscated any weapons from pirates operating off the Somalia coast in 2014 or 2015;
2. The UK did not sink any vessels in 2014 and 2015, nor has the UK detained, killed or believed killed any persons as part of any operation; the UK has not seized any amount of cash or other property.

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 this office 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, <http://www.ico.org.uk>.

Yours sincerely,  
PJHQ J9 FOI Secretariat

<sup>1</sup> [http://www.un.org/depts/los/piracy/piracy\\_legal\\_framework.htm](http://www.un.org/depts/los/piracy/piracy_legal_framework.htm) accessed 1200 11/03/2016

<sup>2</sup> <http://eunavfor.eu/> accessed 1200 15/03/2016, <http://eunavfor.eu/key-facts-and-figures>,

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.mc.nato.int/about/Pages/Operation%20Ocean%20Shield.aspx> accessed 1200 15/03.2016, <http://www.mc.nato.int/about/Pages/Operation%20Ocean%20Shield.aspx>

<sup>4</sup> <https://combinedmaritimeforces.com/about/> accessed 1200 15/03/2016

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.royalnavy.mod.uk/news-and-latest-activity/news/2014/may/13/140513-ukmto-reservists>