



Ministry
of Defence

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

Ref: FOI2015/09781

27 November 2015

Email: [REDACTED]

Dear [REDACTED]

Thank you for your email dated 2 November 2015, requesting the following information:

- 1. One should note that Commissioned Officers/Pilots are not necessary to operate Drones.*
- 2. How many and what rank and experience are those on the RAF Drone Air Wing.*
- 3. What is the cost thereof including pay and pensions.*

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

We have now completed a search for the information you requested and I can confirm that information in scope of your request is held.

Please find below the responses to your request:

1. Royal Air Force personnel who pilot the aircraft are all commissioned officers. The sensor operators and the Mission Intelligence Coordinators (MIC) are a mixture of commissioned and non-commissioned personnel.
2. There are approximately 170 personnel in total on the Reaper squadrons, and this number includes all support staff. The ranks of the Reaper crews range from Corporal to Wing Commander. Their experience includes deployment on operations in places such as Afghanistan, Iraq, and Libya. Aircrew come from Harrier, Tornado GR4, Tornado F3, Puma, Chinook, Merlin, Lynx, C-130, Tristar, Nimrod MR2, E-3D and Predator backgrounds. MIC experience includes analysts from various intelligence disciplines with experience of deployment on operations.
3. The cost of pay and pensions is some £11 million and is based on the average paid strength of two squadrons for FY2014-15. The cost comprises pensionable and non-pensionable pay elements, employer paid National Insurance contributions, and employer paid pension contributions.

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, 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.org.uk>.

Yours sincerely

HQ Air Command
Secretariat