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of Defence

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17 December 2014

Dear

Thank you for your email of 2 October 2014 requesting the following information:

- "1. In November 2012 you provided me with a response [Ref: D/PJHQ/J9/FOI] to a question I asked about how many rounds have been fired by British Forces in each Brigade rotation in Helmand province from Herrick 10 onwards. Please provide your most up to date figures for the same information from Herrick 17 onwards. Please provide the answer in the same format as Parliamentary written answer Ref 168908.*
- 2. Please provide the cost per ammunition type per round or where high numbers are recorded a multiple cost, e.g. cost per 100/1000 rounds.*
- 3. What is the estimate of the total cost to the MoD of military operations in Afghanistan since the start of the campaign?."*

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 some information in scope of your request is held.

The information you requested can be found below and at Annex A, but some of the information falls entirely within the scope of the qualified exemption provided for at Section 43 (Commercial Interest) of the FOIA and has been withheld.

Section 43 is a qualified exemption and is subject to public interest testing which means that the information requested can only be withheld if the public interest in doing so outweighs the public interest in disclosure.

Section 43(2) has been applied to some of the information because it contains details which are commercially sensitive and would be likely to be of significant value to organisations seeking to compete against those companies with which the Ministry of Defence has ammunition contracts. The balance of public interest was found to be in favour of withholding the information given that, overall, the public interest is best served in

not releasing any details of information that potentially damages the commercial position of our suppliers or provides their competitors with a commercial advantage.

The information you requested in part 1 of your request can be found at annex A. As explained in our previous response, it would not be possible to provide information on the amount of ammunition fired in Helmand province by Brigade rotation within the acceptable cost limit set out within the Act as this information is not held centrally within the Ministry of Defence. We have instead provided information on the amount of ammunition expended by British Forces across Afghanistan from Herrick 17 onwards.

The information you requested at part 2 of your request has been withheld under the Section 43 (Commercial Interest). Under Section 16 of the Act (Advice and Assistance) we have instead provided a price range for each type of ammunition used at Annex A.

Turning to part 3 of your request, I can confirm that the total costs of Ministry of Defence operations in Afghanistan between financial years 2001-2002 and 2013-2014 inclusive was £21.3 billion. This represents the Net Additional Cost of Military Operations (NACMO), which consists of costs over and above those that would have been incurred regardless of any overseas operations taking place (pay and pensions for example), offset by savings in the Defence programme arising from the deployment of forces to theatre. Offsetting costs are those such as reductions in the training commitment arising from the cancellation of, or reduced participation in, military exercises. NACMO has mainly been funded by the Treasury's Special Reserve since 2001-2002 rather than through the Defence core programme. This expenditure is audited on an annual basis by the National Audit Office.

The Ministry of Defence publishes an annual analysis of the NACMO in its Annual Report & Accounts which can be accessed at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-ministry-of-defence-annual-report-and-accounts-2013-to-2014>.

NACMO in Afghanistan in financial year 2014-2015 has been withheld under Section 22 (Information intended for future publication). Section 22 is a qualified exemption and, as such, it has been necessary to determine whether, in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosure. Following a Public Interest Test carried out within the Ministry of Defence the figures for 2014-15 have been withheld and will be disclosed in the Ministry of Defence's Annual Report & Accounts for 2014-15 following verification and audit. The Annual Report & Accounts is scheduled for publication in summer 2015.

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,

PJHQ J8 Secretariat

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST

1. Rounds fired in Helmand Province from HERRICK 17 onwards.

Whilst the majority of British forces were based in Helmand Province, there was also a presence in other areas such as Kabul and Kandahar. Data is only collated on the overall amount of ammunition expended by British forces across Afghanistan, and not specifically for Helmand Province. Whilst this information could be broken down, a number of searches would have to be conducted across different data sets held in multiple locations. It has been assessed that this work would exceed the cost limit that we are permitted to spend in providing this information. This is prescribed in Section 12 of the Freedom of Information Act and for central government; it is set at £600, which represents the cost of one person spending 3.5 working days in determining whether the department holds the information and then locating, retrieving and extracting it.

In line with our previous response please see the table below, which contains information on the quantity of ammunition expended by British Forces in Afghanistan from Herrick 17 onwards. Please note that usage figures are approximate and include training and operational rounds expended. Where applicable, figures have been rounded to the nearest 10,000, 1000 or 100.

2. Cost of ammunition type per round or multiple cost for high numbers.

Whilst we understand there is a general public interest in access to information about defence matters and operations overseas, we consider that the public interest in disclosing the information you have requested is outweighed by the public interest in nondisclosure.

Disclosing this information would be likely to be of significant value to organisations seeking to compete against those companies with which the MOD contracts and may damage the commercial position of these companies or provide their competitors with a commercial advantage. The actual cost of each round will not be released under Section 43 (Commercial Interest) of the Freedom of Information Act. However, we are able to provide a price range for each ammunition type per round. This can be seen in of Table below.

| Ammunition type | Herrick 17 (Oct 12 - Mar 13) | Herrick 18 (Apr 13 - Sep 13) | Herrick 19 (Oct 13 to Mar 14) | Herrick 20 (Apr 14 to Sep 14) | Price range min | Price range max |
|-----------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| | Qty | Qty | Qty | Qty | | |
| 7.62mm | 316,460 | 700,606 | 317,681 | 244,601 | £0.19 | £2.31 |
| 5.56mm | 4,658,581 | 1,341,578 | 947,689 | 533,839 | £0.16 | £1.43 |
| 0.5"/12.7mm | 51,398 | 89,294 | 50,842 | 43,685 | £1.86 | £14.76 |
| 9mm | 281,524 | 287,033 | 270,813 | 185,083 | £0.09 | £0.79 |
| 0.338" | | | | | £1.97 | £4.18 |

| | | | | | | |
|--------------------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|-----------|
| | 9,382 | 11,019 | 4,293 | 5,221 | | |
| 12 bore shotgun | 1,595 | 15,981 | 12,583 | 11,734 | £0.14 | £9.41 |
| 105mm | 4,119 | 969 | 1,848 | 1,261 | £50.00 | £2,812.58 |
| 30mm armed fighting vehicle | 23 | 579 | 105 | - | £21.83 | £160.00 |
| 30mm attack helicopter | 51,605 | 55,051 | 47,030 | 37,066 | £47.79 | £188.73 |