



Ministry
of Defence

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Date: 04 November 2014

Dear

Thank you for your email of 13 October 2014, requesting the following information:

“For each calendar year from 2007 onwards please state:

- 1. How many IED explosions were recorded by Task Force Helmand?*
- 2. How many IEDs were discovered prior to explosion by Task Force Helmand?”*

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 information in scope of your request is held.

The information you have requested can be found below, but some of the information you have requested falls entirely within the scope of the qualified exemption provided for at section 26 (Defence) of the FOIA and has been withheld.

Section 26 has been applied to the information you have requested because it contains details which would prejudice the capability and effectiveness of our armed forces. The balance of public interest was found to be in favour of withholding the information as it could provide tactical advantage to our enemies and pose a direct risk to UK Armed Forces. However, I am able to provide you with information on the total number of IED incidents in Helmand Province, Afghanistan, which have been recorded by UK forces.

Section 26 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.

An 'IED incident' is taken to be when one (or more) of the following activities occurred in a single event;

- Mine strike / IED explosion
- Mine or IED Found and Cleared
- Cache Find, Hoaxes, Tip-offs and Turn-ins

For the purposes of this FOI it been taken that 'Task Force Helmand' (TFH) refers to any IED event experienced by UK forces in Helmand Province. This differentiation has been made as the operational boundaries and role of UK forces within Helmand Province have varied:

- UK forces formally part of TFH have on occasion been required to operate outside the defined TFH Area of Operations (AO) boundaries and would not have been included without this change.
- TFH formally ceased to exist in early summer 2014 and in order to provide data for UK forces between this date and present, it has been necessary to make this interpretation.

Changes in the method of collection means data is taken from a variety of operational sources which has evolved over time and as a result there is a level of uncertainty in the accuracy and completeness of the data. Data specific to UK forces for the period requested overlaps two reporting systems, with the change in system taking place in April 2009. For consistency only the data from April 2009 onwards has been provided. This is in line with previous FOI responses.

Information on the number of IED incidents experienced by UK forces in Helmand Province, Afghanistan, since 2009 can be found at ANNEX A.

Source notes:

- (i) Data extracted from multiple operational sources.
- (ii) This table does not report the monthly totals of finds or explosions individually.
- (iii) Available figures are specific to IED incidents encountered by UK forces in Helmand Province.
- (iv) This data is based on information that can only be an estimate, not least because of the difficulties in ensuring a consistent interpretation of the basis for collating statistics in a complex, fast-moving, multinational operational environment. It is modified over time as more information becomes available.

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 Deputy Chief Information Officer, 2nd 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 FOI Secretariat

ANNEX A: IED Incidents experienced by UK Forces within Helmand Province, Afghanistan

A total of 6301 IED Incidents were recorded between April 2009 and September 2014, a breakdown by year can be found in the table below.

| | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 |
|-----|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Jan | - | 238 | 171 | 81 | 79 | 16 |
| Feb | - | 219 | 67 | 64 | 53 | 24 |
| Mar | - | 205 | 125 | 65 | 51 | 12 |
| Apr | 72 | 116 | 49 | 107 | 38 | 1 |
| May | 131 | 174 | 85 | 206 | 72 | 5 |
| Jun | 199 | 126 | 69 | 210 | 65 | 7 |
| Jul | 135 | 149 | 70 | 149 | 59 | 17 |
| Aug | 187 | 137 | 106 | 121 | 62 | 5 |
| Sep | 174 | 85 | 58 | 116 | 46 | 0 |
| Oct | 183 | 61 | 55 | 78 | 15 | - |
| Nov | 175 | 102 | 72 | 113 | 11 | - |
| Dec | 246 | 84 | 58 | 144 | 26 | - |