



Ministry
of Defence

Navy Command FOI Section
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16 March 2016

Dear [REDACTED]

Release of Information

Thank you for your correspondence dated 2 March 2016 requesting the following information:

'I am puzzled as to why recently decommissioned ships are sent to the breakers with undue haste after decommissioning. HMS Ocean would be a case in point.

Although she is decommissioning she has been relatively recently refitted and is the last flattop in RN service until the Queen Elizabeth class come into service.

It seems highly imprudent to not place her into reserve for at least 5 years until we have a fully worked up replacement.

Other nations and in particular the US Navy keep ships in reserve many years before scrapping.

The Russians do likewise.

I think the current MOD policy is folly and I suggest keeping her and indeed all warships for 5 years in reserve as this is the minimum time before a similar ship could be built to replace her/them.

With scrap metal at an all time low level, now is the obvious time to reconsider.

Why don't we adopt this as standard procedure?'

Your enquiry has been considered to be a request for information in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

I can confirm that the Department holds some information within the scope of your request:

- Surplus Defence equipment can have potentially significant residual value, and the first priority for both the Ministry of Defence (MOD) and HM Treasury will be to ensure that any disposal achieves the best return for the taxpayer.
- The Disposal Services Authority (DSA), part of MOD, disposes of defence equipment that is surplus to requirements. This includes anything from large equipments such as warships, tanks and aircraft to smaller assets such as vehicles, clothing and textiles, military spares, scrap metal and office/IT equipment.
- For functioning and viable large capital assets such as ships or aircraft, the first option that is usually considered is the possibility of selling to friendly countries for continued use in a military capacity. This has the benefit of strengthening international relationships and can also provide UK industry with opportunities to undertake some of the regeneration work and after sales support as well as the provision of training.
- When a government-to-government sale is not possible, the equipment is offered for commercial sale, either for continued use in a non-military capacity or for recycling.
- The UK Ship Recycling Strategy is the established policy for the disposal of all government-owned ships. The MOD, as the Government's largest ship owner, is a key stakeholder and the DSA is fully compliant with this policy.

For HMS Ocean specifically I can confirm that options for retention in service beyond the planned date of decommissioning in 2018 are currently under active consideration within the MOD and no final decision has yet been made. In more recent years the government policy has been not to bear the cost of keeping decommissioned warships in reserve for a number of years, but rather to realise the residual value from disposing of them promptly for the benefit of the public purse.

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.org.uk>.

Yours sincerely

Navy Command Secretariat – FOI Section