



Ministry
of Defence

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Dear

Thank you for your correspondence dated 7 January which requested the following information:-

“Please can you provide me with each individual investigation into British drone (RPAS) strikes where non-combatant casualties were suspected or confirmed from 2011 up until the time this request is answered”; and

“Please can you provide all available figures for suspected combatant and non combatant casualties arising from British drone (RPAS) strikes from 2011 up until the time this request is answered”.

Following our letter of 16 January, you reduced the scope of this request on 19 January 2015 as follows:

“Please can you reduce the timeframe of my request to only include the years 2011 and 2014?”

Your correspondence has been treated as a request for information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA).

In our letter of 16 February we informed you that the MOD holds information related to your request, but that we believed that some of this information fell within the scope of a number of the Act's qualified exemptions. As such it has been necessary for us to decide whether, in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosure. As explained in our letter of 24 April, this has taken longer to determine than had been expected, and for which we apologise once again.

We can confirm that the MOD holds one document within scope of the first part of your request for *‘each individual investigation into British drone strikes where non-combatant casualties were suspected or confirmed in 2011 and 2014’*. This document is entitled *‘Joint Incident Assessment Team Report: CIVCAS Incident near Now Zad District, Helmand Province, Regional Command South West’* and it was produced by the team within the Headquarters of NATO's International Security Assistance Force which had responsibility for investigating allegations of civilian casualties resulting from the activities of forces operating in support of the NATO mission. Section 26(1)(b) has been applied to the information in this document because it contains details which are operationally sensitive, which contribute to the operation of Reaper and would prejudice the capability and effectiveness of our Armed Forces. The balance of the public interest is best served

in not releasing any details of this operation as to do so would prejudice the security of UK personnel serving abroad and which would provide tactical advantage to our enemies. For these reasons we have set the level of prejudice against release of the information at the higher level of 'would' rather than 'would likely to'.

Turning to the second part of your request in which you asked for all '*available figures for suspected combatant and non combatant casualties arising from British drone (RPAS) strikes in 2011 and 2014*' we can confirm that with the exception of the incident near Now Zad District, Helmand Province in 2011, to which we refer above and in which four civilians were killed and three were injured, the MOD holds no information on suspected or confirmed non-combatant casualties as a result of UK Reaper strikes in 2011 and 2014.

The following table provides information on estimated combatant fatalities and casualties resulting from UK Reaper strikes in 2011 and 2014. For the avoidance of doubt these figures relate to individuals confirmed through a comprehensive targeting process to have been enemy combatants but whose death and / or injury following targeting by Reaper strikes cannot be confirmed.

Year	Estimated no. of combatants killed	Estimated no. of combatants wounded
2011	128	26
2014	102	25

Please be aware that the figures in the above table cannot be corroborated. They have been compiled from the mission reports submitted by Reaper pilots which contain an estimate of fatality and / or casualty numbers based on the numbers of enemy forces targeted during each mission. To verify such information would be extremely difficult and the risks involved would outweigh any benefit from obtaining the information. There is also no reliable method of calculating the number of insurgents killed as UK forces may need to vacate an area before an accurate assessment of the numbers of fatalities and casualties could be made and in some cases the dead and/or injured are removed before investigations could feasibly take place (Islam, for example, directs that bodies must be buried within 24 hours). Therefore military reporting is incomplete and cannot provide a basis for definitive combatant death estimates.

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.gov.uk>.

Yours sincerely,

PJHQ J8 Secretariat