



Ministry of Defence

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Dear [REDACTED],

Thank you for your email of 13 February 2017 requesting the following information:

Please tell me, how many UK personnel sustained lower limb amputations as a result of injuries in Afghanistan - 1 January 2006 to 31 December 2014.

Please break this down in:

- *digit*
- *loss of foot*
- *loss of leg above foot or below the knee*
- *loss of leg through the knee*
- *loss of leg above the knee*

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

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. Section 40(2) has been applied to some of the information in order to protect personal information as governed by the Data Protection Act 1998. This is in line with JSP 200 (March 2016), in which numbers fewer than five are suppressed in order to reduce the possible inadvertent disclosure of individual identities.

Defence Statistics have interpreted your question as Afghanistan which includes data from 1 January 2006 to 31 December 2014.

Between 1 January 2006 and 31 December 2014 there were **248** surviving¹ UK Service personnel from Afghanistan whose injuries included a minimum of one traumatic or surgical amputation² to the lower limb. The 248 UK Service personnel sustained **355** lower limb amputations.

- Some personnel sustained more than one amputation within the sub groups listed. For example, a Service person may have sustained an amputation to both legs above the knee.
- Some personnel sustained an amputation in more than one of the sub groups listed. For example, a Service person may have sustained an amputation to one leg above the knee and also the loss of the foot on the other leg.

Table 1 presents a further breakdown of the types of amputations sustained.

¹ A casualty that has survived their injuries whilst in service.

² Includes partial or complete amputations for either upper or lower limbs and can range from the loss of part of a finger or toe up to the loss of entire limbs.

**Table 1: Partial or complete lower limb amputations sustained as a result of injuries in Afghanistan by UK Service personnel¹, Numbers^{2 3 4 5}
1 January 2006 to 31 December 2014^{6 7 8}**

Lower limb amputation	Number of lower limb amputations ³	Number of UK Service personnel with a lower limb amputation in each sub category ⁴
All	355	-
Digit	7	7
Loss of foot	9	~
Loss of leg above foot or below the knee	160	147
Loss of leg through the knee	67	57
Loss of leg above the knee	112	81

Source: Research paper - Dharm-datta, S; Etherington, J.; Mistlin A. & Clasper J, 2011, Outcome of amputees in relation to military Service, Journal of Bone and Joint Surgery - British Volume, Vol 93-B, Issue SUPP_I, 52, Complex Trauma database, Prosthetics database, Defence Patient Tracking System, Joint Theatre Trauma Register.

1. Includes Naval Service personnel, Army personnel including those from the Gibraltar Regiment, RAF personnel and Reservist personnel. Civilians and other Nations Service personnel have been excluded.
2. Data presented as “~” has been suppressed in accordance with Defence Statistics rounding policy. See background notes.
3. If a UK Service person suffered a lower limb amputation at or above the ankle on more than one lower limb each amputation has been counted.
4. If a UK Service person suffered more than one lower limb amputation in the same category e.g. ‘Loss of leg through the knee’ to both legs only one amputation has been counted.
5. If a UK Service person suffered the loss of more than one digit to the lower limb **only one** amputation has been counted.
6. Op VERITAS commenced 7 October 2001 and ended March 2006.
7. Op HERRICK commenced 1 April 2006 and ended 30 November 2014.
8. Op TORAL commenced 1 December 2014.

Background notes

In line with JSP 200 (April 2016), the suppression methodology has been applied to ensure individuals are not inadvertently identified dependent on the risk of disclosure. Numbers fewer than five have been suppressed and presented as ‘~’. Where there was only one number in a row or column that was fewer than five, the next smallest number has also been suppressed so that numbers cannot simply be derived from totals.

A live UK Service personnel is defined as an amputee if they have an injury coded in the UK Joint Theatre Trauma Registry (JTTR) as Amputation (traumatic), partial or complete, for either upper or lower limbs using the Abbreviated Injury Scale (AIS) Dictionary 2005 (Military Edition), or who had a surgical amputation performed either at the field hospital or at a UK hospital (the majority of these will be at the Royal Centre for Defence Medicine). A traumatic or surgical amputation can range from the loss of part of a finger or toe up to the loss of entire limbs.

The amputation data is compiled from five separate sources:

- UK Service personnel who have sustained a partial or complete limb amputation as a result of injuries on Op VERITAS, Op HERRICK and Op TELIC prior 1 April 2006 have been identified from the dataset used to compile the following research paper: Dharm-datta, S; Etherington, J.; Mistlin A. & Clasper J, 2011, Outcome of amputees in relation to military Service, Journal of Bone and Joint Surgery - British Volume, Vol 93-B, Issue SUPP_I, 52.

From 1 April 2006, the amputations data is compiled from four sources;

- The Complex Trauma database managed by the Defence Medical Rehabilitation Centre, Headley Court which commenced in June 2008 to record information on patients receiving in-patient care on the complex trauma ward

- The Prosthetics database managed by the Defence Medical Rehabilitation Centre, Headley Court which commenced in June 2006 to record information on patients fitted with a prosthetic limb(s).
- The Defence Patient Tracking System (DPTS) which commenced on 8 October 2007. The DPTS was set up to enable the capture of tracking data for aeromedically evacuated patients at the place where healthcare is being delivered along the care pathway.
- The Joint Theatre Trauma Register (JTTR) which commenced during 2003 to improve the care of the seriously injured patient from the point of injury to the point of discharge from hospital treatment.

All data sources are cross-checked against each other and records that don't appear in all datasets are followed up to ensure that an individual is definitely an amputee. Further validation steps are then taken to ensure a unique count of amputees is taken from the four datasets.

This response does not include UK Service personnel who have had an amputation since leaving the Armed Forces.

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, 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, <https://ico.org.uk>.

I hope this is helpful.

Yours sincerely

Defence Statistics (Health) Head (B1)