



Ministry of Defence

Air Command Secretariat
Spitfire Block
Headquarters Air Command
Royal Air Force
High Wycombe
Buckinghamshire
HP14 4UE

Our Ref: FOI2017/05300

5 June 2017

Dear [REDACTED],

Thank you for your email of the 7 May 2017 about the Ministry of Defence's commitment to all air shows.

You requested:

Dear Ministry of Defence,

As per an article in produced by the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) and published on their website, dated 9 July 2014 (https://urldefense.proofpoint.com/v2/url?u=http-3A_www.bbc.co.uk_news_uk-2Dengland-2D28226410&d=CwICaQ&c=axaOw2qHyp7zEDNbTjpgYA&r=338_LDuXi2CRJzQpHh2t-w&m=ofTj_4xlOepihD7CNL49DLVzc8aMRSuKO02JzBwrggY&s=6q2l0RL8ZBfLCOFlxhHDgrUGr3Fp5_wof-1dWbhqs4w&e=) the Ministry of Defence (MOD) was to commission a "full review of the Ministry of Defence's commitment to all shows".

It is now 7 May 2017, some three years after this article, and no such report appears to have been made public - I have performed a search of the Royal Air Force, Royal Navy, Army, and Army Air Corps websites, as well the MOD pages on the GOV.UK platform, and no reports are available.

I am led to believe that such as review would have been commissioned by the Air Force Board Standing Committee, during 2014/2015.

In this FOI request, I am requesting a copy of the findings of the review, as well as any recommendations or other outcomes from it.

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

I am writing to confirm that the MOD holds the information on the subject you have requested. However, some of the information you have requested falls within the scope of the following qualified exemptions, Section 26 (1) a & b and Section 43 (2) of the FOI Act.

Both Section 26 (1) a & b and Section 43 (2) are qualified exemptions and are subject to a public interest test, which means that the information requested can only be withheld if the public interest in doing so outweighs the public interest in disclosure. Section 26 (1) a & b provides that Information is exempt information if its disclosure under the FOI Act would, or would be likely to, prejudice the defence of the British Islands or of any colony, or the capability, effectiveness or security of any relevant forces. Section 43 (2) Commercial interest has been applied to some of the information

because the information, if disclosed, would or would be likely to, prejudice the commercial interests of any person (including the public authority holding it). A public interest test has been conducted and it has been found against release. To provide all of the information held would give the public a greater understanding of the practical factors and issues surrounding the MOD involvement in air shows and flying events and also an understanding of the financial and commercial implications for the MOD. By withholding some of the information, under Section 26 (1) a & b, the security of personnel and units stationed at RAF stations remains intact. Under Section 43 (2) to withhold some of the information enables the MOD to have the ability to engage with commercial partners in confidence enabling good commercial outcomes.

Please find attached a redacted copy of the information held by the MOD.

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, <http://www.ico.gov.uk>.

Yours sincerely

A black rectangular redaction box covering the signature of the sender.

Air Secretariat
Air Command

6 Mar 15

AFBSC(15)08

AIR FORCE BOARD STANDING COMMITTEE

A REVIEW OF RAF AIR SHOW AND EVENT COMMITMENTS

(A paper by ACAS)

(Approved by the AFBSC on 11 Mar 15)

Issue

1. The AFBSC directed a review of its sponsored air show and events commitments in order to decide on its longer-term approach.

Recommendations

2. The AFBSC is invited to **note** that:

- a. **RIAT provides important engagement benefits and continues to represent value for money for Defence and the RAF.**

- b. [REDACTED]

- c. **The nature of operations conducted from RAF Waddington, its associated site status, and the current security threat argue strongly against future air shows being held there.**

- d. **The RAF has increased its support to other audience-centric regional events through a more sophisticated planning process.**

- e. **RAF CTE has examined the feasibility of extending its partnership with the RAF to organise and run other RAF air shows, and has proposed an alternative East of England air show at RAF Scampton.**

- f. **Any decision to hold an air show at RAF Waddington in 2016 would need to be taken before the end of Jun 15.**

- g. [REDACTED]

- h. **Ministers and No 10 Downing Street have made clear that they need to be consulted before any decision on the long-term future of the RAF Waddington Air Show is announced.**

and to agree to:

- i. **The continuation of the RAF's participation in RIAT.**

- j. **The continuation of the RAF Cosford Air Show for [REDACTED]**

and to **decide** whether to:

- k. Allow RAF CTE to examine the feasibility of holding an air show at RAF Scampton in more detail.

Background

3. Following discussions of the future of its sponsored events¹, the AFBSC directed a review of AFBSC-sponsored air show commitments. This review has included detailed consideration of the implications of hosting any future RAF Waddington Air Shows, as well as considering potential options for the future. The review conducted an analysis of the security and resource considerations at RAF Waddington, as well as the financial viability and engagement benefits of the RAF Cosford Air Show.

RIAT

4. RIAT Fairford is a major national and international engagement event supporting Defence and RAF core business objectives. [REDACTED] This [REDACTED] and provides the necessary manpower, aircraft participation and other support. It is recommended that the RAF's participation in RIAT continues. Discussions with RAF CTE have highlighted an opportunity for this successful RIAT model to be franchised across other locations.

RAF Cosford

5. The RAF Cosford Air Show in its current form is now in its 25th year of operation. It is the largest single aviation event in the West Midlands and attracts 55,000 visitors over the single day it is held. The event showcases the RAF with both indoor and outdoor displays and a flying programme.

6. The total Force Generation (FG) UK² liability for the event is 120 man-days. The remaining manpower bill is met from station personnel including the large on-station trainee population. Although the total manpower commitment is therefore clearly much higher than the FGUK liability alone, the Station uses the event as a training vehicle for the student cohort on the Unit. It is the only working weekend for the Station with core outputs maintained over the period of the Show. AOC 22 Gp's considered view is that the hosting of the Air Show represents a valuable training opportunity and does not compromise the Station's outputs.

7. RAF CTE currently provides a Project Manager to work under the direction of the Air Show Chairman (an SO1 additional duty), who in turn is responsible to the Stn Cdr. RAF CTE also provides the Flying Display Director. [REDACTED]

8. Given the engagement benefit to the RAF of holding an Air Show in the West Midlands, the training benefit offered to RAF Cosford's trainee population, [REDACTED] it is recommended that the AFBSC agrees that the RAF Cosford Air Show should continue to

¹ The Future of AFBSC-Sponsored Open/At Home days dated 13 Nov 13 by AMO and the Future of Cosford and Waddington Air Shows dated 6 Jun 14 by ACAS.

² Formerly known as the Command Manning Liaison Office.

run [REDACTED]

RAF Waddington

9. The RAF Waddington Air Show hosts over 140,000 visitors from a geographically diverse area over the July weekend. The Show generates: a significant engagement and recruitment opportunity; an economic boost⁵ to the local region; and revenue for the RAF Charities which benefit from the disbursement of up to £250K.

10. The Air Show requires up to 1,540 of the Station's personnel on any single day of the Show to ensure the successful delivery of the event. There is a leave ban in place for the week before and after the show with FOD plods and preparation curtailing the core flying mission on the days immediately before and after the Air Show weekend. FG UK is required to identify up to 389 additional 'man-days' of activity from the wider Service to support the event. Additional staff capacity is required to manage the regulatory oversight with RAF Duty Holders responsible for the wider safety implications of hosting a major Air Show. The overall manpower requirement to stage the Air Show in 2014 was 6,055 days of personnel effort.

11. Over recent years, the RAF has increasingly focussed its ISTAR mission at the RAF Waddington site. In 2012, 13 Sqn began operating Reaper aircraft there, joined in 2014 by 51 Sqn operating the RC-135W Rivet Joint. Other missions include Sentry (8 Sqn), Sentinel (5 Sqn) and Shadow (14 Sqn). The Base also supports multi-national and NATO operations, [REDACTED]

12. RAF Waddington is already designated as a [REDACTED]. Recent examples include the establishment of a Peace Camp at the Station in 2012 and 2 anti-RPAS protestor incursions on the airfield, the most recent being in Jan 15. It is the stated intent of anti-RPAS protestors to attempt further incursions in order to highlight UK RPAS operations and where possible to disrupt activity. Given the sensitive nature of operations at RAF Waddington, security requirements related to the assets themselves, and the current security threat, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] HQ Air Principal Security Advisor advice is that the hosting of a major public event at RAF Waddington would not be compatible with [REDACTED].

Regional Events

13. The AFBSO has discussed previously the merits of 'taking the show to the crowd'⁶ – leveraging extant event activity for its engagement benefit rather than generating its own events. In 2015 the RAF will take its show to events with over 50,000 people; these include the Royal Cornwall Show, the Isle of Man TT, the Cholmondley Pageant of Power, Weston Air Days and the Lincolnshire Military Air Display.

14. Further improvements to regional engagement plans have led to the RAF to now participate in events in Northern Ireland (Portrush and Tall Ships Race in Belfast), Scotland (the Scottish 'Ayr' Show and East Fortune) and Wales (the Rhyll Air Show). Participation in other key regional events includes: the Morecambe Carnival; the Royal Norfolk Show; the Weymouth Carnival; the Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo; and the 150th Anniversary of Stornoway Port event. It is assessed that

⁵ Lincolnshire County Council estimates that the RAF Waddington Show is worth £11M to local business.

⁶ The Future of AFBSO-Sponsored Open/At Home days dated 13 Nov 13 by AMO.

the improved model is fit for purpose and will allow the RAF to take its show to the public in a measurable and effective manner. Ways to coordinate the delivery of ground engagement effects at venues where the RAF will be undertaking air displays is the subject of ongoing work across the Single Air Staff.

East of England Engagement

15. 'Taking the show to the crowd' and improving the allocation and prioritisation process of RAF display assets has ensured that the RAF will achieve greater overall engagement effect. However, it is unlikely that the full engagement benefit of the RAF Waddington Air Show could be replicated through this model in the East of England. The Lincolnshire region hosts a number of events including agricultural shows and air shows at Skegness and Cleethorpes, but aircraft cannot participate in the agricultural shows and the longer-term viability of the air shows is uncertain; Skegness will not be held this year due to financial issues whilst the longer-term viability of Cleethorpes is unclear.

16. Therefore it is not judged that this style of engagement in the Lincolnshire region would be an effective way of mitigating the loss of RAF Waddington. Although the AFBSC may be content to accept reduced engagement activity in the region, it may wish to consider RAF CTE's proposal for an alternative East of England air show at RAF Scampton.

The RAF CTE Proposal

17. **Background.** RAF CTE [REDACTED] to conduct a feasibility study, using the RIAT model, of an alternative air show in the East of England. The Review Team conducted an exhaustive survey of the region and found that, while there is a large number of airfields, very few would be commercially or operationally viable as air show locations. However, it determined that hosting a show at RAF Scampton would be feasible. Scampton holds a Families' Day in September which could form the basis for the expanded event and is the current home of RAFAT.

18. **RAF Scampton** [REDACTED]. RAF CTE could be appointed to deliver air shows at RAF Scampton based on a transition to the RIAT model. This would need a volunteer workforce with an RAF manpower requirement of 2,000 man days overall (pre, during and post show), which is significantly fewer than the historic RAF Waddington model, which needs 6,055 days of effort.

[REDACTED] The estimated peak daily CMLO requirement of approximately 400 personnel over the weekend in year one is in line with the old RAF Leuchars requirement and the plan is reduce this to below 350 by year 2.⁷ A detailed manpower plan would be undertaken in the next phase of the study.

19. **Implications.** The level of RAF support required to support an air show at RAF Scampton would remain considerable. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Whilst initially the total manpower requirement would be similar to that of RAF Waddington, the FG UK liability and diversity of trades would be much higher given the smaller permanent establishment at RAF Scampton⁸. RAF Waddington might be seen as a natural provider of support to the Air Show but it is unlikely that the Station could or should be relied on to provide the bulk of the manpower given the nature of their delivery on operations.

20. **Summary.** Whilst there are undoubted advantages to holding a military air show in Lincolnshire [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] However, should the Board agree this proposal further a 'phase 3' study would begin to generate the detail needed to develop a Business Case. It

⁷ RAF CTE have committed to reducing the required manpower by 66% over the first 3 years of the event through greater use of volunteers.

⁸ The 2013/14 permanent establishment at Scampton is 418 vice 3524 at Waddington.

is envisaged that a long-term strategic partnership with RAF CTE could be developed, transferring the organisational responsibility for military themed air shows to RAF CTE. This may result in a RIAT South (Fairford) a RAF CTE supported West (RAF Cosford) and East (RAF Scampton). There is also the possibility of expanding the model further to take in NI (Portrush) and Scotland (East Fortune).

Presentational Considerations

21. There has been significant ministerial, local authority and public interest in the future of the RAF Waddington Air Show. Both the Secretary of State for Defence (Sof S) and Minister for the Armed Forces (Min AF) have expressed their public support for the continuation of the RAF Waddington Air Show, including in Parliament, despite being advised to limit their comments to the existence of an ongoing Air Show Review. The local MP, Karl McCartney has lobbied both RAF Waddington staff and Ministers outlining his view of the value to the community in engagement and economic terms of the RAF Waddington Air Show. There is also evidence that local public support for the event is strong with an e-petition running on the gov.uk site amassing some 5,000 signatures in support of the event.

22. There has also been speculation on the possibility of holding the Air Show in an alternative venue to mitigate the loss of RAF Waddington. Only RAF Scampton provided a viable option in Lincolnshire. [REDACTED] is keen to host an Air Show with RIAT support but it was found to be encircled by housing developments [REDACTED]. Should the AFBSC choose not to pursue an alternative air show, any communication should robustly defend the RAF's manpower constraints and the resource implications of supporting an air show at RAF Scampton.

23. The offices of SofS and Min AF have made clear that their Ministers and No 10 should be consulted before any decision on the future of the RAF Waddington Air Show is announced. Both offices have confirmed to ACAS that there is no pressure to provide advice before Purdah or the election. In practical terms, a decision to hold an RAF Waddington Air Show in 2016 does not need to be made until Jun 15. It will not be possible to provide advice on the feasibility of using RAF Scampton until further work is carried out by RAF CTE. To keep open the option of holding an air show at RAF Scampton [REDACTED] RAF CTE have advised [REDACTED] [REDACTED] which reduces the risk of speculation in the local area, and should be complete by the end of May 15. Should RAF CTE be prepared to [REDACTED] [REDACTED] then advice on the RAF's preferred way forward and the feasibility of holding an air show at RAF Scampton could be provided to Ministers in early Jun 15.

ACAS