



Ministry
of Defence



DE&S Secretariat (LD & SE)

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Thank you for your email dated 31 August 2017. You asked:

I have several questions regarding the disposal of Tornado GR4 airframes:

- 1). Are all airframes that undergo the RTP (reduced to produce - i.e. stripped for parts and scrapped) process at RAF Leeming disposed of through the MOD's Disposal Services Authority (DSA)? By that I mean, when all useful spare parts have been removed and an airframe hulk dumped for scrap, is that hulk then put out to tender to scrap merchants, or is bidding open to all?***
- 2). Do all Tornado GR4s that have been sent to RAF Leeming undergo the RTP process, or are some stored for possible future use? If so, how many are currently in storage and will those airframes (unless returned to flight) remain in storage until the Tornado out of service date in 2019?***
- 3). Will any Tornado GR4 airframes be made available for museum acquisition or purchase by private individuals, either before the type's out of service date, or when the last Tornados are withdrawn from use in 2019?***
- 4). Have any Tornado GR4 airframes been identified as candidates for preservation? If so, have any been set aside to fill this role in the future?***
- 5). I am interested in two specific airframes that have (I understand) made their final flights to RAF Leeming. Both are significant airframes with distinguished histories in the 1991 Gulf War. These are ZD790/099 and ZA400/011 (aka "Scud Hunter"). Have these airframes now undergone the RTP process? If so, has there remains been disposed of for scrap? If so, to whom? If not, what is their current status?***

I am treating your email as a request for information in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA). A search for the information has now been completed within the Ministry of Defence (MOD), and I can confirm that information in scope of your request is held.

It might be helpful if I first explained that any surplus Defence equipment has potentially significant intrinsic value, and the first priority for both the MOD and HM Treasury will be to ensure that the department achieves the best return to the taxpayer. The Defence Equipment Sales Authority (DESA), (formerly DSA), disposes of Defence equipment that is surplus to requirement and this includes fixed-wing and rotary-wing aircraft.

Most surplus equipment is sold through a series of competitively awarded marketing agreements with specialist contractors. These marketing agreements are structured to not only encourage the commercial partner to achieve the highest possible level of return from sale but to provide a cost free disposal service to the Department, with costs and profit only being recoverable on completion of sale.

A list of the current specialist contractors can be found on the DESA website using the following internet link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/groups/disposal-services-authority#commercial-disposals-team>

To answer you specific questions:

Q1: No. Some airframes may be retained in MOD ownership, for example, as gate guardians or training aids. However, once all re-usable parts have been removed most airframes will be declared surplus to requirement and transferred to DESA for disposal. Dependent on the condition of the airframe a decision will be made as to which specialist contractor will sell the item. Not all airframes are recycled for scrap metal.

Q2: All Tornado aircraft sent to RAF Leeming enter the RTP programme although spares recovery may not commence immediately. In such cases, aircraft are maintained in an airworthy condition to maintain the integrity (airworthiness) of those spares. During this period, it is possible to recover the aircraft back to RAF Marham, the location of the Main Operating Base for operational use, but this has only occurred once in November 2014. No Tornado aircraft are stored at RAF Leeming.

Q3 and Q4: No decisions have yet been made. However, MOD gifting policy recognises that surplus equipment can have a heritage value and that is why gifting is permitted to National museums sponsored by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport which includes the Imperial War Museum; the principal MOD-sponsored museums which are the National Museum of the Royal Navy, the National Army Museum and the Royal Air Force Museum; Regimental and Corps Museums and Public authorities who have an affiliation with the Services or the MOD.

Any Tornado airframes that are declared surplus to requirement, and are not gifted under the above policy, will be sold through the DESA specialist contractors and any private museums, charities or private individuals will have the opportunity to purchase these items. I would add that DESA is mandated to obtain the best possible return to the UK taxpayer and for that reason, the sale price of surplus assets is determined by the market place.

Q5: ZA400 and ZD790 were previously part of the RTP programme and were disposed of via the DESA approved waste management agent – ‘Metal & Waste Recycling Ltd’ on 5 December 2016 and 26 January 2017 respectively.

If you have any queries regarding the content of this letter, please contact this office in the first instance.

If you wish to complain about the handling of your request, or the content of this response, you can request an independent internal review by contacting the Information Rights Compliance team, Ground Floor, MOD Main Building, Whitehall, SW1A 2HB (e-mail CIO-FOI-IR@mod.uk). Please note that any request for an internal review should be made within 40 working days of the date of this response.

If you remain dissatisfied following an internal review, you may raise your complaint directly to the Information Commissioner under the provisions of Section 50 of the Freedom of Information Act. Please note that the Information Commissioner will not normally investigate your case until the MOD internal review process has been completed. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at: Information Commissioner’s Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF. Further details of the role and powers of the Information Commissioner can be found on the Commissioner’s website at <https://ico.org.uk/>.

Yours Sincerely,


DE&S Secretariat