



Ministry of Defence

Ministry of Defence
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Ref: FOI2018-07432

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[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Dear [REDACTED],

Thank you for your email of 5 June requesting the following information:

1. How many UK military personnel have set foot on the territory of the Syrian Arab Republic since 2011?
2. How long did these personnel enter Syria for? What was the nature of their activities during their presence inside Syria? Were they operating under sole UK national control or as part of US-led coalition operations?
3. Are any UK military on the ground in the Syrian Arab Republic at the moment and what are they doing?
4. How many UK military personnel have received gallantry awards for service while on the ground in the territory of the Syrian Arab Republic?
5. How many UK military personnel have been killed in action, wound in action or injured on the ground in the territory of the Syrian Arab Republic?
6. How many UK military fixed wing aircraft and helicopters have landed inside the territory of the Syrian Arab Republic since 2011? Why did these aircraft and helicopters have to land within the territory of the Syrian Arab Republic? When did the first landing take place?
7. When did the UK government decide to deploy UK personnel on the territory of the Syrian Arab Republic?
8. What is the legal justification of the deployment of UK personnel on the territory of the Syrian Arab Republic?

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

However, the information held is subject to the following exemption: Section 21 - Information reasonably accessible to the applicant by other means. For ease of reference, this information is provided below:

Information about the UK's diplomatic presence in Syria (including military personnel) until March 2012:

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2012-03-01/debates/12030140000013/DiplomaticSecurityInSyria>

Information concerning the death of a UK soldier in Syria:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/fatalities/sergeant-matt-tonroe-has-been-killed-in-action-in-the-middle-east>

Information about legal basis for operations against Daesh in Iraq and Syria:

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2018-04-24/HL7216/>

Information concerning military presence in Syria in response to two Parliamentary Questions:

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2017-11-15/113160/> .

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-03-21/133652/>

Under section 23(5) (Information supplied by, or relating to, bodies dealing with security matters) the MOD neither confirms nor denies whether it holds any additional information in scope of your request, which if held would be exempt under section 23. Section 23 is an absolute exemption and not subject to a public interest test.

In addition, under section 24(2) (National Security) and 26(3) (Defence), the MOD neither confirms nor denies whether it holds any additional information in scope of your request, which if held would be exempt under section 24 and 26. Section 24 and 26 is a qualified exemption and is subject to a public interest test. A public interest test has been conducted, and the balance of public interest lay in neither confirming nor denying whether the MOD held any information in scope of your request. This should not be used as an indication that such information is or is not held.

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,

**OPERATIONS DIRECTORATE
MINISTRY OF DEFENCE**