



Ministry of Defence

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

Air-DResSec-ParliBusiness@mod.gov.uk

Ref: 2018/07745

[REDACTED]

18 July 2018

Dear [REDACTED]

Thank you for your further correspondence of 3 July 2018 seeking clarification of information provided to you on 29 June under the terms of the Freedom of Information (FOI) Act, which I am handling as informal resolution. In your letter, you queried:

"Your reply said that the MOD did hold information that I sought (a current Air Force List) and that it was available on the RAF website. If it is, it appears to be well-hidden. The link that you provided led to periodic appointments of officers ranked as group captains and above with a further page listing 174 air officers (1-stars and above). I was previously aware of these extracts, but they do not, of course, constitute the Air Force List – and I was unable to find one."

and,

"While I imagine that the on-line List is constantly updated, to reflect promotions, changes of Branch and the progressive accrual of decorations, awards and post-nominal annotations, is it being periodically (annually?) 'frozen' and are these 'snapshots' being preserved to create a permanent record?"

Under Section 16 of the FOI Act, the duty to provide advice and assistance, it may be helpful if I explain that the Armed Forces List, which includes details of RAF officers, is published proactively on the Gov.uk and RAF websites as part of the Ministry of Defence's wider transparency agenda. The level of detail provided within this list is at the discretion of the Department.

MOD policy on the publication of the Armed Forces List (incorporating the Air Force List) changed in 2015 and information below the rank of Air Commodore, and equivalent, will not be published. If requested, details of individuals below this rank will be withheld under section 40(2) of the FOI Act (relating to third party personal information). As this is an absolute exemption there is no requirement to carry out a public interest test.

The Air Force List is a 'live' document with no requirement to periodically archive data. Please note that existing policy and practices for the publication of personal information in The Gazette, Court and Social pages of broadsheet newspapers are unaffected by the policy change in 2015.

Please see attached, at Annex A, the Armed Forces Service Lists Disclosure Policy.

I note your comment that the method by which you received my 29 June letter made it difficult to follow up. However, please be advised that, as you submitted your request via the public website www.whatdotheyknow.com (WDTK), the Ministry of Defence (MOD) is obligated to respond via the same route using the website's generated return e-mail address. It is possible for requesters to reply to data providers using their WDTK account.

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,

Air Command Secretariat

Enclosure:

Annex A Defence Instructions and Notices – 2015DIN01-214, released
November 2015.

Defence Instructions and Notices (Not to be communicated to anyone outside HM Service without authority)	
Title:	Armed Forces Service Lists: Disclosure Policy
Audience:	All Service and Civilian Personnel
Applies:	Immediately
Expires:	When rescinded or replaced
Replaces:	N/A
Reference:	2015DIN01-214
Status:	Current
Released:	November 2015
Channel:	01 Personnel
Content:	Disclosure policy on the publication of The Navy List, The Army List and The Air Force List
Sponsor:	ISS Des-CMI-IR
Contact:	XX
Keywords:	Information Policy and Services; Personnel administration and management; Data management
Local Keywords:	Disclosure of Information, Armed Forces Lists, The Navy List, The Army List, The Air Force List, Transparency, Freedom of Information, Data Protection Act
Supplements: (Please click on the links to access >>>>)	N/A
Related Info:	The Navy List: http://defenceintranet.diif.r.mil.uk/libraries/4/Docs7/20140906.1/navylist.pdf The Air Force List: http://defenceintranet.diif.r.mil.uk/Organisations/Orgs/RAF/Organisations/Orgs/Manning/Pages/ManningAirForceList.aspx Armed Forces Lists (External Link) https://data.gov.uk/dataset/armed-forces-list-2013
Classification:	OFFICIAL

Background

1. Each of the Services has a long history of publishing a nominal roll of serving officers, in the form of the "The Navy List", "The Army List" and the "The Air Force List" generically known as the "The Armed Forces Lists".
2. In recent years the single Services' policies for the publication of their Lists have diverged, resulting in an inconsistent approach to publication. This has been difficult to defend in the face of requests for unpublished information made under the Freedom of Information (FOI) Act. In addition, the information age and universal use of the World Wide Web introduces potential information and personnel security risks to Service personnel and their families which did not exist when the concept of publishing the Service Lists was first

introduced. Against this background the disclosure policy for Service List information has been reviewed. The revised policy, set out below, has been agreed with the three Services.

Publication

3. With immediate effect, external publication of the Armed Forces Lists will be limited to the details of those at one star rank (Commodore and equivalent) and above, except in respect of the Royal Navy where the details of those commanding a warship will be published through publication of a suitable version of the 'Fleet Bridge Card'. This policy will bring the Services into line with the policy adopted for MOD Civil Servants where information relating to personnel below the rank of Senior Civil Servant level 1 (one star equivalent) is not routinely published. The data to be published annually will include: name and initials; post nominals; rank; unit/branch/appointment; specialisation and seniority date.

4. The Armed Forces Lists containing information about all officers may continue to be produced for internal use and made available on the Defence Intranet. These lists should be provided outside of the Department only to those who have a legitimate official requirement such as military museums. Any release in these circumstances should be on an explicit confidential and conditional basis and the information marked accordingly.

Accuracy

5. Officers who consider their data to be inaccurate are to contact their unit JPA administrator or the career manager to correct the JPA data.

Freedom of Information Requests

6. Requests for information relating to officers below one star rank should be refused citing section 40(2)(personal data) of the FOI Act. Following publication of the revised policy there will no longer be an expectation among Officers below one star level that their details will be included in externally published Service Lists. Disclosure of such information should therefore no longer be regarded as fair and lawful processing under the First Data Protection Principle in the Data Protection Act 1998.

7. Existing policy and practices for the publication of personal information in the London Gazette, Court and Social pages of broadsheet newspapers and Officer Academy Graduation lists are unaffected by this policy change.

Contact

8. ISS is responsible for the information policy relating to the publication of the Armed Forces Lists. Contact: [REDACTED]