



Ministry of Defence

Ministry of Defence
Main Building
Whitehall
London
SW1A 2HB

Reference: FOI2018/05406

[REDACTED]

Reply to: [REDACTED]

15 May 2018

Dear [REDACTED]

Thank you for your email of 18 April 2018 in which you have requested the following information:

“How many service personnel were dealt with administratively for using anabolic steroids in 2017? Please break down the figure by service branch.”

I am treating your correspondence as a request for information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA). I can confirm that the Ministry of Defence (MOD) holds information within the scope of your request.

Section 40(2) has been applied to the information to protect personal information as governed by the Data Protection Act 1998 and to reduce the possible inadvertent disclosure of individual identities. This is also in line with Joint Service Publication 200 (JSP 200) Statistics Disclosure Guidelines. Section 40 is an absolute exemption and there is therefore no requirement to consider the public interest in deciding to withhold the information.

The figures provided in this response have been rounded to the nearest 10, where “-” denotes zero, “~” denotes a number less than or equal to five. When rounding up to the nearest 10, numbers ending in a “5” have been rounded to the nearest multiple of 20 to prevent the systematic bias caused by always rounding numbers upwards. For example; a value of ‘25’ would be rounded down to ‘20’ and a value of ‘15’ would be rounded up to ‘20’.

The table below displays the number of service personnel who were dealt with administratively for using anabolic steroids in 2017.

Royal Navy/Royal Marines	~
Army	20
Royal Air	10

Under Section 16 of the FOI Act I can advise you that to assure ourselves that Service Personnel remain drug free we provide education and conduct comprehensive Compulsory Drug Testing (CDT). Drugs misuse is incompatible with Service; it goes against the standards that we expect of our Service personnel and degrades operational effectiveness. Personnel caught taking drugs can expect to be discharged. In exceptional circumstances where an uncharacteristic mistake is made by a young individual, retention may be considered.

The power to authorise retention under exceptional circumstances has always existed within the JSP. Exceptionally, in some cases of drug misuse involving young Service personnel the CO may consider that the offender need not be discharged from the Service. Tri-Service policy allows Commanding Officers to recommend the retention of personnel where it is a first-time offence, the individual concerned is under 25, below the rank of leading hand or corporal and the prospect for reforming the individual is considered good, they are considered in all other respects a promising Serviceman/Servicewoman whose retention would be in the interests of the Service.

All exceptional retention cases, regardless of reason for retention, are compulsorily re-tested for a period of five years and any subsequent failure will result in automatic discharge.

Although it is recognised that a small minority of Service personnel take drugs, it should be stressed that drugs misuse is not widespread and is contained by the deterrent effect of compulsory testing as well as a vigorous drug education programme. For example; positive rates in the Army, less than 1%, are low when compared with the 3-7% in civilian workplace drug testing programmes in the UK. These statistics demonstrate that drug misuse is significantly less prevalent among Army personnel than in corresponding civilian demographic groups.

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, Ground Floor, Zone D, MOD Main Building, Whitehall, SW1A 2HB (e-mail CIO-FOI-IR@mod.gov.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 FOI 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.org.uk>.

Yours sincerely

Defence People Secretariat