



Ministry
of Defence

Navy Command FOI Section
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FOI 2018/00676

E-mail: navysef-foimailbox@mod.uk

Via [REDACTED]

3 May 2018

Dear [REDACTED]

Release of Information

Further to our letter of 13 April 2018, I am now in a position to respond in full to your request for the following information:

1. Details of Quick Reaction Alert launches to monitor Russian aircraft in each year since 2010
2. Details of Royal Navy vessels escorting Russian military vessels in UK territorial waters in each year since 2010

Your enquiry has been considered to be a request for information in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (the Act).

In our previous correspondence, we provided confirmation that a search had been conducted within the Ministry of Defence and information in scope of your request is held. However, the Department has also determined that to provide some of the information in the format and detail you have requested will fall within the scope of the exemption at Section 26(1)(a) and (b) (Defence) of the Act. After careful consideration, and for the reasons set out below, it is concluded that the Department has no obligation under the Act to disclose this information and it is therefore being withheld in its entirety.

Under Section 26(1)(a) and (b), information is exempt if its disclosure would or would be likely to prejudice (a) the defence of the British Islands or (b) the capability, effectiveness or security of any relevant Armed Forces. As this is a qualified exemption, the decision to disclose the requested material is subject to a public interest test. A public interest test has been conducted and it may assist you to understand our decision if I outline the factors that were considered.

While it is recognised that there is a high level of interest in activities of this nature, it is considered that release of the full details of such incidents has the potential to compromise the current and future operational effectiveness of our Armed Forces' deterrent capability. It

has been concluded that the public interest balance favours the detailed information being withheld under this exemption.

Under Section 16 of the FOI Act (Duty to Provide Advice and Assistance), I can provide information regarding the number of days on which aircraft from the Royal Air Force's Quick Reaction Alert (QRA) were launched in response to Russian Military aircraft. Similarly, I can provide the number of occasions on which Royal Navy (RN) ships have been activated in response to Russian military ships approaching UK territorial waters. It may be helpful if I explain that, in certain areas around the UK, Article 17 (right of innocent passage) of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea comes into force whereby ships of all states are permitted to pass through the territorial waters of another state, subject to certain restrictions.

Year	Number of Days QRA was launched in response to Russian military aircraft	Number of Occasions that RN Ships were Activated in response to Russian Navy ships approaching UK territorial waters
2010	7	1
2011	10	4
2012	9	8
2013	8	12
2014	8	11
2015	8	14
2016	5	20
2017	3	33

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

Navy Command Secretariat – FOI Section