



Ministry
of Defence

Navy Command FOI Section
Navy Command Headquarters
MP 1-4, Leach Building
Whale Island
PORTSMOUTH
PO2 8BY

Ref: FOI2019/11158

E-mail: navysef-foimailbox@mod.gov.uk

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

23 October 2019

Dear [REDACTED]

Release of Information

Thank you for your correspondence of 30 September 2019 in which you requested the following information:

‘Can you please check all occasions when Royal Navy ships have been activated to escort or shadow Russian vessels approaching UK waters in the last 5 years?’

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

A search has been completed within the Ministry of Defence and I can confirm that information in scope of your request is held. However, the Department has considered the information and has determined that some of the information will fall within the scope of the exemptions at Section 24(1) (National Security) and Section 26(1)(a) (Defence) of the FOI Act.

Under S24(1), information is exempt from disclosure under the Act if the exemption is required for the purpose of safeguarding national security. Under s26(1)(a), information is exempt if its disclosure would, or would be likely to, prejudice the defence of the British Islands. As these are qualified exemptions, the decision to withhold the requested information is subject to a Public Interest Test. These have 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, divulging sensitive information relating to the security of UK territory and the operational effectiveness of our deterrent capability could provide potential adversaries with knowledge about our military effectiveness, potential weaknesses and level of response, thereby compromising our ability to maintain a credible national defence. It has been concluded that

the public interest balance favours the detailed information being withheld under these exemptions.

Under Section 16 of the FOI Act – Duty to provide Advice and Assistance – I can provide the number of occasions on which Royal Navy surface vessels have been activated in response to Russian military surface vessels 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. This information is set out in the tables below:

Year	Number of Occasions that Royal Navy Ships were Activated in response to Russian Navy ships approaching UK territorial waters
2013	12
2014	11
2015	14
2016	20
2017	33
2018	31
2019*	15

*To 30 September 2019

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