



Ministry
of Defence

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[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Dear [REDACTED],

Thank you for your e-mail of 13 August 2019 requesting the following information:

"Can the MoD provide a copy of the risk and rigour statement that accompanied the MoD's recommendation to the Cabinet Office HD Committee for the creation of an Operational Service Medal for the Democratic Republic of Congo."

Your correspondence has been treated as a request for information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA).

A search of the information has now been completed within the MOD. Please find below the risk and rigour extract from MoD's recommendation for the creation of an Operational Service Medal for the Democratic Republic of Congo.

"RISK AND RIGOUR

The danger to life and risk and rigour faced by the service personnel deployed are outlined below.

a. *General. The unstable and dynamic political situation combined with the perceived failure of the UN MONUC force personnel to maintain stability resulted in several engagements between warring factions and considerable loss of civilian life. UK personnel were deployed into this volatile environment at short notice (in many cases a few days) with little opportunity for ensuring their personal*

arrangements during their absence from home and their families. The fragmentary intelligence available created considerable uncertainty for those deploying, as insurgent violence was unpredictable and had resulted in the abduction and murder of UN Military Observers.

b. The Enemy. The estimated number of irregular militia/paramilitary forces that made up the armed opposition to the Force's presence in Ituri province was 4-5000. Such was the breakdown of civil authority, each armed faction presented a real threat to UK forces. The militias adopted unconventional tactics in clear breach of the International Law of Armed Conflict, massacring civilians and launching co-ordinated attacks on pre-planned targets as well as mounting ambushes on vehicles and lines of communication. These dispersed irregular forces were unrestrained by any military codes of conduct. The employment of children as soldiers and the mutilation and murder of opposition groups characterised forces that were prepared to undertake any act, thus promoting terror and destruction throughout the JOA. In such an atmosphere of uncertainty and chaos, UK personnel faced continuous exposure to the risk of death or injury, even whilst operating within the confines of areas, which were not designated as 'militia held'. Personnel were routinely restricted to the confines of their tented camp or nominated buildings, carried loaded personal weapons and travelled only in convoy."

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,

PJHQ J9 FOI Secretariat