



Joint Forces Command
Northwood Headquarters
NORTHWOOD
Middlesex
HA6 3HP
United Kingdom

Ref: FOI2019/09799

[name redacted]
[details redacted]

29 Oct 19

Dear [name redacted]

You wrote to us on 27 Aug 19 requesting the following information under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA):

"1) Copies of any memos to UK government ministers relating to Zephyr between March 2019 and August 2019

2) Copies of any ministerial memos or papers that describe the intended use of Zephyr, from June 2018 – present day"

We informed you that we believed that some of the information the MOD holds fell within the scope of Section 43 (Commercial Interest) of the FOIA, which is a qualified exemption. As such it was necessary for us to decide whether, in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosure.

Having considered the information, we have determined that all of the information can be released, and Section 43 has not been applied. However, there is some personal information which has been redacted in accordance with Section 40 (Personal Data) of the FOIA. Section 40 is an absolute exemption so a Public Interest Test was not required.

The two enclosures to this letter contain the information that was found in scope of your request. Under Section 16 of the Act (Advice and Assistance), you may find it useful to note that at Enclosure 1, the following statement appears: "*Airbus and MOD are currently evaluating the impact to the programme with expectation to recommence Zephyr flights in Sep/Oct 19.*" This sentence was correct at the time of writing; however, Airbus subsequently altered their plans to undertake a commercial flight unrelated to the MOD.

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 us in the first instance at the address above. 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, 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 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. 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,

Joint Forces Command

Enclosures:

1. Zephyr extract from Royal International Air Tattoo Brief.
2. Email trail from Min Lords' outer office and Airbus dated Jul 18.

High-Altitude Pseudo Satellite (HAPS)

17. The HAPS programme was set up to investigate the operational utility of a HAPS platform as directed in SDSR 2015. It will be a fully competed defence procurement programme. Airbus Zephyr is a potential solution for a future HAPS requirement. Airbus Defence & Space commenced an Operational Concept Demonstrator (OCD) for the MOD in March 19 however the trial ended early due to adverse weather conditions leading to a Non-Statutory Investigation (NSI). The NSI has now concluded with recommendations mainly procedural in nature. Airbus and MOD are currently evaluating the impact to the programme with expectation to recommence Zephyr flights in Sep/Oct 19. While a significant setback, Airbus has stated it is committed to a successful OCD, working with the MOD to achieve this goal.

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 16 July 2018 10:18
To: [REDACTED]@airbus.com
Cc: [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
Subject: RE: Airbus Visit at Farnborough - Zephyr

Dear [REDACTED],

Thank you for your email and the invitation for Earl Howe to view Zephyr at FIAS. Unfortunately we have a very busy programme already and we can't add in extra time to the Airbus visit without taking it from another company visit. That said if we are able to get ahead of ourselves in the visit programme and arrive with you early, we might be able to squeeze it in. If not then perhaps the Minister could be invited to see it another time- I'm sure he would be interested to see it.

Thanks,

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 15 July 2018 23:38
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: FW: Airbus Visit at Farnborough - Zephyr

From: [REDACTED]@airbus.com>
Date: Sunday, 15 Jul 2018, 7:46 am
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: Airbus Visit at Farnborough - Zephyr

Dear [REDACTED],

It was really nice to meet you yesterday at RIAT – I hope you enjoyed the show and the tour of the A400M. We spoke about Rt Hon Earl Howe's visit to Airbus at Farnborough. He is scheduled to briefly visit us between 15:20 - 15:30 on Tuesday 17th at the Airbus Stand in the Innovation Zone.

However, we have the new Zephyr (High Altitude Pseudo Satellite) being displayed which we think would be a good visit for Rt Hon Earl Howe. Zephyr has been procured by MoD to deliver persistence surveillance and its design, development and manufacture is firmly rooted in Airbus UK's operations – It is indeed a 'GREAT BRITISH' product that has scope to be explored all around the world.

Do let us know if your visit programme would allow time for this.

Kind regards, [REDACTED]

About Zephyr

The Airbus Zephyr is a state of the art, British developed, solar powered, ultralight weight High Altitude Pseudo Satellite designed for use in commercial and military applications. Zephyr flies above the weather and above commercial air traffic and has the ability to deliver numerous payload capabilities across two platforms.

1. Zephyr S with its ability to carry payloads, offering voice, data communications both line of sight and beyond the line of sight, and line of sight high resolution optical imagery.
2. Zephyr T carrying larger payloads offers the ability to bring more active payloads to the fore; for example, widespread, persistent internet coverage to remote areas of the globe, and active RADAR.

Together they enable real-time mapping, internet and a number of surveillance opportunities to meet a broad range of requirements.

The concept of Zephyr was conceived in the UK and its design, development and manufacture is firmly rooted in Airbus UK's operations – It is indeed a 'GREAT BRITISH' product that has scope to be explored all around the world.



Airbus Public Affairs - Space

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