



Ministry of Defence

Air Command Secretariat
Spitfire Block
Headquarters Air Command
Royal Air Force
High Wycombe
Buckinghamshire
HP14 4UE

Ref. 2019/13302

[REDACTED]

5 December 2019

Dear [REDACTED]

Thank you for your email of 2 December 2019 asking for Quick Reaction Alert (QRA) statistics. You requested the following information:

"Please may I request a list of all QRA responses from RAF Lossiemouth during 2019.

Please also include the date and the type of aircraft responsible for the alert, if any."

I am treating your correspondence as a request for information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA). We have now completed a search of our paper and electronic records for the information you requested and I can confirm that information within the scope of your request is held. The number of days on which QRA aircraft were launched for between 1 January and 1 December 2019 inclusive below:

Year	No. of days QRA was launched	In response to Russian military aircraft	In response to others
2019 ¹	14	8	6

1. 1 Jan-1 Dec inclusive

QRA launches were to determine the identification of any aircraft approaching, or in, NATO monitored or national airspace without prior approval or not having identified themselves and which could not be identified by any other means.

We do hold recorded information on the number and nature of Quick Reaction (QRA) incidents. Section 26(1)a of the FOI Act provides that we should withhold information which would be likely to prejudice the defence of the British Isles or any Colony. Section 26(1) b of the Act provides that we should withhold information which would be likely to prejudice the capability, effectiveness or security of relevant forces. Section 24(1) of the FOI provides that we should withhold information for the purposes of safeguarding national security. The Act requires that we have to carry out a public interest test (PIT) in this respect to show that the reasons for withholding the information outweigh the reasons for releasing the information.

Because deterrence is a principal function of QRA and QRA is in turn an integral part of the air defence of the UK, the disclosure of information that might compromise the QRA deterrent capability, which is an ongoing armed operational capability, would also be a disclosure prejudicial to the defence of the UK and national security. This would include the station our aircraft were launched from. A limited disclosure of the requirement to launch QRA would provide a reasonable level of overall understanding of the level of QRA activity. As a limited amount of information has been released for some incidents as examples of how the RAF is able to respond to this kind of incident, the public interest in further disclosure of detailed incident details is therefore limited. There remains a very strong public interest in preserving the RAF's ability to defend the UK through the effectiveness of its air defences and to maintain its full deterrence value.

I conclude that the balance of the public interest for providing full details of the number of QRA launches and the nature of the missions including the location QRA aircraft were launched from is firmly in favour of maintaining the exemptions under S.26(1)(a)&(b) and 24(1) and thus of withholding the information.

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

Yours sincerely


Secretariat 3a1
Air Command