



Ministry
of Defence

Ministry of Defence
Main Building
Whitehall
London SW1A 2HB
United Kingdom

Telephone: +44(0)20 7218 9000

E-mail: [DNO-
SecretariatTeam@mod.gov.uk](mailto:DNO-SecretariatTeam@mod.gov.uk)

Our Ref: FOI2019/02461

Via email: [REDACTED]

17 July 2019

Dear [REDACTED],

Thank you for your email received on 13 February 2019 requesting the following information:

“How many tests of Trident missiles have been considered successful, partially successful and unsuccessful.”

and for your subsequent email received on 19 February 2019 clarifying that you would like information on all Trident missile tests, i.e. those conducted by the United Kingdom (UK) and the United States of America (US).

We have treated your correspondence as a request for information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (‘the Act’).

A search for the information has been conducted within the Ministry of Defence (MOD) and I can confirm that MOD holds some information relating to UK Trident missile tests. However, the information falls within the scope of the qualified exemptions provided for at sections 24 (National Security), 26 (Defence), and 27 (International Relations) of the Act and has been withheld.

Sections 24, 26 and 27 are qualified exemptions and are subject to public interest testing which means that the information requested can only be withheld if the public interest in doing so outweighs the public interest in disclosure.

Section 24(1) of the Act provides that information is exempt from disclosure if exemption is required for the purposes of safeguarding national security. The nuclear deterrent exists to deter the most extreme threats to our national security, which cannot be deterred by other means. Release of information would demonstrate the Department’s commitment to transparency and openness on defence nuclear matters. However, information relating to Trident missile tests may be of use to potential adversaries, and the balance of public interest was found to be in favour of withholding the information.

Section 26(1)(b) of the Act provides that information is exempt if its disclosure would or would be likely to prejudice the capability, effectiveness or security of the Armed Forces. Release of information would demonstrate the Department’s commitment to transparency and openness on defence nuclear matters. However, information relating to Trident missile tests may be of use to potential adversaries, and the balance of public interest was found to be in favour of withholding the information as disclosure would prejudice the capability and effectiveness of the Armed Forces.

Section 27(1) provides that information is exempt if its disclosure would or would be likely to prejudice relations between the UK and any other state or international organisation. Release of information would demonstrate the Department’s commitment to transparency and openness on defence nuclear matters. However, information relating to Trident missile tests may be of use to

potential adversaries and so would be likely to prejudice our relationships with our allies, and the balance of public interest was found to be in favour of withholding the information.

Under Section 16(1) of the Act whereby public authorities have a duty to provide advice and assistance to requestors, you may find it helpful to note the following:

While it is UK policy not to comment on the details of our submarine operations, and while the information you requested has been withheld, some information on UK Demonstration and Shakedown Operations, which culminate in the test firing of a Trident missile from a submarine, has already been released into the public domain and is available at the following links:

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2017-01-23/61258>

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2017-01-23/debates/F1A6B273-AC23-4408-9B0C-81FE88B081F2/TridentTestFiring>

If you have queries regarding the content of this letter, please contact this office in the first instance.

If you wish to complain about any aspect of 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.gov.uk). Please note that any request for an internal review must 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: 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 <http://www.ico.org.uk/>.

Yours sincerely,

Defence Nuclear Organisation Secretariat