



Ministry
of Defence

[REDACTED]

FOI2019/13479

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

[REDACTED]

9 March 2020

Dear [REDACTED],

Release of Information

Thank you for your correspondence of 10 December 2019 in which you requested the following information:

'a copy of the QEC F35B Standard Operating Procedures. I understand that this document may still be in draft format, if so, please provide me with the latest version of the draft at the date of this request'

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

A search has now been completed within the Ministry of Defence and I can confirm that information in scope of your request is held. However, it is considered that the information you require falls within the scope of the exemptions at Section 26 (Defence) and Section 27 (International Relations) of the FOI Act. Under s26(1)(b) information is exempt if its disclosure under the Act would, or would be likely to, prejudice the capability, effectiveness or security of any relevant forces. Under S27(1)(a), information is exempt if its disclosure under the Act would, or would be likely to, prejudice relations between the United Kingdom and any other State.

As these are qualified exemptions, it has been necessary to decide whether, in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemptions outweigh the public interest in disclosure. The public interest tests have now been completed and it has been concluded that, on balance, this information should be withheld in entirety. 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 public interest in the operational capabilities of our Armed Forces, it is considered that divulging detailed information on the operational procedures of the F35B aircraft, other than what is already available in the

public domain, has the potential to impact on the delivery of Defence capabilities and commitments, thereby compromising current and future maritime operations. It is also considered that release of this information would put at risk our relationships with allied states that operate the F35B aircraft who would more than likely consider their own operational capabilities compromised if such information was to be released.

On balance, it is considered that the public interest lies in withholding this information, in the interests of maintaining the safety and/or effectiveness of our Armed Forces, and that of our international allies engaged in Defence activities.

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