



Ministry  
of Defence

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Reference: **FOI 2020/01876**

Date: **6 March 2020**

Dear [REDACTED],

Thank you for your email of 7 February 2020 requesting the following information:

“In the time frame 1.1.2019 to 31.12.19 how many UK Armed Forces UAV Personnel received an initial assessment of PTSD by MoD Mental Health Services?

In the same time frame how many UK Armed Forces UAV Personnel received a payment as compensation for PTSD from the MoD via the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme or any other route? What was the total value of all of these payouts?”

I am treating your correspondence as a request for information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

We have interpreted this request for information to be an update of your previous request submitted on 2 January 2018 (FOI 2018/00101), which asked for the numbers of unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) personnel with an initial assessment of, and compensation awarded for, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) between 1 January 2011 and 31 December 2017.

This response presents the number of UK armed forces personnel identified as UAV personnel between 1 January 2011 and 31 December 2019, who:

- Had an initial assessment for PTSD at MOD Specialist Mental Health Services between 1 January 2019 and 31 December 2019,
- Were awarded compensation for PTSD between 1 January 2019 and 31 December 2019, plus the amount of compensation awarded.

A search for the information has now been completed within the Ministry of Defence, and I can confirm that information in scope of your request is held. Some of the information falls entirely within the scope of the absolute exemptions provided for at section 40 (Personal Data) of the FOIA and has been withheld.

Section 40(2) has been applied to the information in order to protect personal information as governed by the Data Protection Act 2018. This is also in line with JSP200 Statistics Disclosure Guidelines. Numbers fewer than five have been suppressed in order to reduce the possible inadvertent disclosure of individual identities. Section 40 is an absolute exemption and there is therefore no requirement to consider the public interest in making a decision to withhold the information.

Between 1 January 2019 and 31 December 2019, **fewer than five** UK armed forces UAV personnel had an initial assessment for PTSD at MOD Specialist Mental Health Services.

Between 1 January 2019 and 31 March 2019 (latest available data), **fewer than five** PTSD claims were awarded under the Mental Disorder tariff of injury table under the AFCS to UK armed forces UAV personnel, with £22,660 compensation paid out in lump sum awards.

Please note that it is not necessarily the same individuals who have had an initial assessment for PTSD and were awarded compensation for PTSD under the AFCS.

Between 1 January 2019 and 31 December 2019, there were no UK armed forces UAV personnel that had damages settled for common law claims for PTSD.

Under section 16 of the Act (Advice and Assistance), you may find it useful to note the following:

#### Personnel Data

UAV personnel serving from 1 January 2011 to 31 December 2019 have been identified. Data have been sourced from the Joint Personnel Administration (JPA) system. JPA is the most accurate source for demographic information on UK Armed Forces personnel.

##### Naval Service

Naval Service UAV personnel have been identified as those who had the word 'Reaper', '700X' or '800X' in their posted unit.

##### Army

Army UAV personnel have been identified as those personnel who were serving in the Royal Artillery and had a main trade for pay of:

- Royal Artillery SME Gunner – Tactical Unmanned Aerial vehicle Operator-RA
- Gunner Command Systems- General Support- Tactical Unmanned Air Vehicle- RA
- RA UAS
- RA TUAS

Those in a UAS trade would be involved with the platform on a day to day basis and thus these figures should be treated as a minimum.

Only those who were Trained, Regular Other Ranks soldiers have been included in this data. During the time period, personnel would not have had a trade until they were trained. In the same way, Officers do not have a trade recorded on JPA and are therefore not included in the analysis.

When comparing Tri-Service UAS use, the Army, unlike other Services, do not use weaponised UAS. This means the UAS pilots in the Army do not pull any kind of trigger to kinetically engage hostiles. Therefore, the role that they perform and the impact of 'piloting' the platform may not be directly comparable.

##### RAF

RAF UAV personnel have been identified as those with a sub-badge of UAV or RPAS and/or had a posted unit of 39 Squadron or XIII Squadron. Please note: personnel with a sub-badge of UAV or RPAS would have mainly been Pilots and Weapon Support Officers. In addition the personnel identified as having a posted unit of 39 Squadron or XIII Squadron would have included Service personnel who were 'Personnel Support' for these squadrons.

#### Mental Health Data

UK Armed Forces personnel have access to Specialist Mental Health Services, by referrals made by their GP, provided through MOD DCMH or MOD In-patient providers. DCMH are specialised psychiatric services based on community mental health teams closely located with primary care services at MOD sites in the UK and abroad. All UK based and aero-medically evacuated Service personnel based overseas requiring in-patient admission are treated by one of eight NHS trusts in the UK which are part of a consortium headed by the South Staffordshire and Shropshire NHS Foundation trust (SSSFT). UK based Service personnel from British Forces Germany (BFG) were treated at Guys and St Thomas

Hospital in the UK up until April 2013 and from this date, at Gilead IV hospital, Bielefeld, under a contract with Soldiers, Sailors and Airmen Family Association (SSAFA) through the Limited Liability Partnership.

This response only captures the patients that were referred to a MOD DCMH or admitted to a MOD In-patient provider and does not represent the totality of mental health problems in the Armed Forces as some patients can be treated wholly within the primary care setting by their GP or medical officer.

DCMH staff record the initial mental health assessment during a patient's first appointment, based on presenting complaints. The information is provisional and final diagnoses may differ as some patients do not present the full range of symptoms, signs or clinical history during their first appointment. The mental health assessment of condition data were categorised according to the World Health Organisation's International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Health-Related Disorders 10th edition (ICD-10).

MOD DCMH data is as recorded on the Defence Medical Information Capability Programme (DMICP). DMICP is the source of electronic, integrated healthcare records for primary healthcare and some MOD specialist care providers. SSSFT and BFG data is provided directly from the providers.

All initial assessments of PTSD were after the personnel had enrolled on a UAV programme.

#### Armed Forces Compensation Scheme Data

The Armed Forces and Reserve Forces Compensation Scheme (AFCS) came into force on 6 April 2005 to pay compensation for injury, illness or death attributable to Service that occurred on or after that date. It replaced the previous compensation arrangements provided by the War Pensions Scheme (WPS) and the attributable elements of the Armed Forces and Reserve Forces Pensions Scheme.

AFCS data is sourced from the Compensation and Pension System (CAPS) which is administrated and managed by DBS Veterans UK.

Data were extracted from the CAPS as at 31 March 2019 to inform the latest published National Statistics, as published on the Gov.uk website on 27 June 2019:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/armed-forces-compensation-scheme-statistics-index>

The data within the latest publication includes the time period 1 April 2005 to 31 March 2019, broken down by financial year. The upcoming publication (due to be released in June 2020) will detail activity as at 31 March 2020, including the 2019/20 financial year and the remainder of the 2019 calendar year.

Claimants' injuries/illnesses considered to be Service-attributable are awarded under the AFCS in line with one of nine tariff of injury tables, which each cover the legislation surrounding the payment of compensation: Table 1 - Burns; Table 2 - Injury, Wounds and Scarring; Table 3 - Mental Disorders; Table 4 - Physical Disorders; Table 5 - Amputations; Table 6 - Neurological Disorders; Table 7 - Senses; Table 8 - Fractures and Dislocations; and Table 9 - Musculoskeletal Disorders. The information supplied in this response concerns awards made under Table 3 – Mental Disorders.

Please note that whilst it is possible to determine AFCS awards for mental disorders from the electronic information, it is not possible to reliably determine awards for PTSD specifically. PTSD awards have been identified based on a free text search of the condition claimed for using the following terms: 'PTSD', 'post traumatic stress' and 'post-traumatic stress'. The condition claimed for is based on information supplied by the claimant and does not necessarily reflect a diagnosis of PTSD. Therefore, awards made under the mental disorders table to those that claimed for PTSD may have been awarded for a different type of mental illness. Therefore, these figures should be treated with caution.

Tax-free lump sum awards are paid to all service personnel and veterans as compensation for pain and suffering for an injury or illness that is predominantly caused or made worse by service. Lump sum awards can be made whilst the claimant is still in service. Where a lump sum award has been made at tariff levels 1-11 (reflecting a more serious injury/illness), the claimant will also be awarded a tax-free index-linked income stream known as a Guaranteed Income Payment (GIP). A GIP will be paid from

service termination for life to recognise long-term loss of earnings. None of the claims made by UAV UK armed forces personnel were severe enough to warrant a GIP.

This response presents AFCS claims that were cleared between 1 January 2019 and 31 March 2019 (the latest available date). The figures provided includes awards made as a result of an initial claim or following a later review, reconsideration or appeal.

#### Common Law Claims Data

Common law claims are dealt with by the Claims Unit within the department's Directorate of Judicial Engagement Policy (DJEP), by contractors operating in accordance with instructions provided by the Claims Unit, or by delegated authorities. When compensation claims are received, they are considered on the basis of whether or not the MOD has a legal liability to pay compensation. Where there is a proven legal liability, compensation is paid.

Data regarding common law claims has been collated from DJEP and MODs contracted claims handlers and covers claims of a clinical negligence nature, i.e. the failure to diagnose and treat PTSD, as well as Service personal injury claims where PTSD was considered to be the incident injury. PTSD claims have been picked up by searching for PTSD in the free text claims description field.

The MOD publish statistics on claims brought against the MOD for compensation at common law:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/mod-compensation-claims-statistics>

The latest update covering the period 2018/19 was published on 13 December 2019.

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.gov.uk](mailto:CIO-FOI-IR@mod.gov.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/>.

I hope this is helpful.

Yours sincerely

Defence Statistics Health