



# Ministry of Defence

Our Ref: FOI2020/08106

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Dear [REDACTED]

Thank you for your correspondence of 14th July 2020 requesting the following information:

*“On board a warship to a peace time Foreign Service Commission we were required to wash down our upper works as in ABCD procedure. It failed as we had been hurriedly dispatched to participate in Britain's Nuclear capability as it was feared a Test Bomb Test Treaty was about to be agreed and the UK would be left out as a Worldwide Nuclear Force. All UK participating warships would have been required to protect the health of their crews by carrying out ABCD Washing down of upper works prior to Nuclear Test participation. Can you advise which participating vessels successfully carried out this procedure and which -like ours-failed If you are unaware of these details please forward to AWE or whatever who are.”*

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

I am writing to confirm that the Ministry of Defence (MOD) may hold information within scope of the subject you have requested. However, I have to advise you that we will not be able to answer your request without exceeding the appropriate cost limit. This is because to locate, retrieve and extract information in scope of your request would involve searching over 100 documents, potentially many more. While the titles of these historic records are held on a database, most of the actual documents are not digitised so electronic searches are not possible. In order to identify information to answer your request each record would need to be retrieved from archives and reviewed individually to assess if they contain any information that may be in scope, requiring at least 5.7 man-days of effort, at a cost of approximately £975.

Section 12 of the Act makes provision for public authorities to refuse requests for information where the cost of dealing with them would exceed the appropriate limit, which for central government is set at £600. This represents the estimated cost of one person spending 3.5 working days in determining whether the department holds the information, and locating, retrieving and extracting it. A preliminary search has, however, revealed that to complete a search and provide a response will exceed the Act's appropriate limit.

Under section 16 of the Act it is the duty of a public authority to provide advice and assistance, so far as it would be reasonable to expect the authority to do so. The MOD may be able to provide some information in scope of your request if you reduce or refine your request to bring the cost of compliance under the £600 limit. You could choose to reduce your request by focusing on a single ship or a specific nuclear test. It would also be helpful, under section 1(3) of the Act, if you were to clarify what is meant by 'wash down' in the context of your request, and whether this is referring to a process known as 'pre-wetting', or perhaps a different practice operated at the time. However, we should be clear that should you refine your request, it is possible the MOD will not hold the specific

information you seek, or that we could remain within the £600 appropriate limit for just one area. Following the receipt of your clarified request, we will be pleased to consider that request further.

Please remember to quote the reference number above in any future communications.

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](mailto: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 their website, <http://www.ico.org.uk>

Yours sincerely,

Defence Nuclear Organisation Secretariat