

Ref: FOI2020 /09569

14 September 2020

Dear Mr

Thank you for your email of 23 August 2020 to the Ministry of Defence (MOD), requesting information about the Accumulated Campaign Service Medal (ACSM).

*“1. Did the Honour and Decorations Committee authorise the changes to the ACSM qualifying criteria i.e. the deduction of all Initial Qualifying Time (IQT) from a service persons accumulated campaign service total?”*

*2. (a) How are the MOD going to ‘invite’ service or ex-service personnel to make a new application for the ACSM 2011 following the current review if the review finds that IQT was deducted without authority from the HD Committee and /or approval of the Queen.*

*(b) How many applications for the ACSM 94 /11 have been rejected (see 2a) because IQT was deducted from service persons accumulated total?*

*(c) Out of those rejected (see 2b), how many of those rejected applied after 20 October 2014?*

*3. When (date) will the review of the ACSM qualifying criteria be concluded?”*

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

A search for the information has now been completed within the Ministry of Defence and I can confirm that some of the information in scope of your request is held. However, I have to advise you that we would not be able to answer your questions without exceeding the appropriate limit.

Section 12(1) of the FOI 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, locating it, retrieving it and extracting it.

In order to answer Question 2(b), this would involve the manual interrogation of each case that might be in scope of your request to determine if they fall under the scope of your request. It is estimated that one person would be required to spend a minimum of 27 minutes per file on approximately 11,814 rejected ACSM applications/cases since December 2009 (date used in

accordance with ACSM policy within JSP 761 Version 3 published December 2009). This would equate to 5,316 hours at the rate of £25 per hour costing approximately £132,900 of effort, thus far exceeding the appropriate cost limit.

Section 12(1) applies to the entirety of your request, Where one part of a request exceeds the cost limit, it follows that the entire request, if processed in full, would also exceed the cost limit for processing information under the Act.

However, under Section 16 (Advice and Assistance), the Department may be able to provide some information in the scope of your request if you were to refine your request to questions 1, 2(a) and 3. Although it is not guaranteed that your refined request may fall within the cost limit, we would be happy to look at it again.

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). 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

Defence Business Services Secretariat