



Ministry
of Defence

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Our Ref: FOI2020/04742

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Via email: [REDACTED]

23 October 2020

Dear [REDACTED],

Thank you for your email on 21 April requesting the following information:

I am looking please for unclassified (or declassified) documents and film on the loading and arming of Blue Danube and Yellow Sun devices...

...However, the reason I am asking AWE for assistance is because in English Heritage's book Cold War: Building for Nuclear Confrontation 1946-1989, there is a photograph entitled "Still from a 1950s cine film showing loading trials with the atomic bomb Blue Danube" which is credited 'Crown copyright. Photo courtesy of AWE'. There is no sign of a ramp but the Valiant's tail does seem elevated.

Is it possible please to view that film?

As confirmed on 23 April, we have treated your correspondence as a request for information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (the Act) and can confirm that the Ministry of Defence (MOD) holds some information in scope of your request. This information is exempt under Section 21 of the Act because it is reasonably accessible to you by other means.

Under Section 16(1) of the Act, public authorities have a duty to provide advice and assistance to requestors, so it may be helpful to explain how the information may be accessed.

Our searches found the following unclassified papers that provide information in scope of your request. It is important to note that although we hold this information, the papers do not originate from MOD and cannot therefore endorsed by the Department, but are nevertheless publicly available.

- Jonathan Aylen, "First Waltz – Development and Deployment of Blue Danube – Britain's Post-War Atomic Bomb", International Journal of the History of Engineering and Technology – Vol 85 No.1 Jan 2015, - <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1179/1758120614Z.00000000054?needAccess=true#aHR0cHM6Ly93d3cudGFuZGZvbmxpbmUuY29tL2RvaS9wZGYvMTAuMTE3OS8xNzU4MTIwNjE0Wi4wMDAwMDAwMDA1ND9uZWVvKQWNjZXNzPXRydWVAQEAW.>

- Royal Air Force Historical Society – Journal 26, 2001, - <https://www.rafmuseum.org.uk/documents/research/RAF-Historical-Society-Journals/Journal-26-Seminar-the-RAF-and-Nuclear-Weapons-1960-98.pdf>.
- Dr Richard Moore, “A Pedantic Glossary of British Nuclear Weapons” Mountbatten Centre for International Studies, UK Nuclear History Working Paper No 1, - http://nuclear-weapons.info/Working_Paper_No_1.pdf.

While the Act precludes authorities from making assumptions, we consider it reasonable to assume, in this case, the film you reference to be “Operation Grapple – Event 3 Bomb loaded into Aircraft Christmas Island Airfield”. This film has been transferred to the Imperial War Museum and details of the record can be found on the Imperial War Museums website - <https://film.iwmcollections.org.uk/record/1181>.

It may be helpful to provide some information on the approach to the declassification of records. You mentioned in your email that as the information you are interested in gaining access to is over 60 years old it will have been declassified. This is not the case. Records are reviewed by subject matter experts periodically and carefully considered for declassification and, if appropriate, for onward release to The National Archives. Therefore, although the information you have indicated is of interest would likely be over 60 years old, many of the records concerned relating to defence nuclear matters will not have been declassified for national security reasons.

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). 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, <https://ico.org.uk>.

Yours sincerely,

Defence Nuclear Organisation Secretariat