



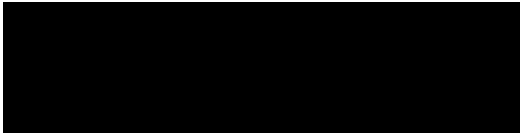
Ministry
of Defence

Our Ref: FOI2021/03626

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30 April 2021

Dear 

Thank you for your email of 1 April 2021 requesting the following information:

“A breakdown of the MOD budget allocation uplift associated with increasing the UK's stockpile of nuclear warheads from 180 to 260 following the announcement of this policy in the UK government's Integrated Review of Foreign, Security, Defence and Development policy. This should cover the sum costs associated with acquiring any new warheads.”

We have treated your correspondence as a request for information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (the Act).

A search for the information has now been completed within the Ministry of Defence (MOD), and we can confirm that no information in scope of your request is held.

Under Section 16 of the Act, whereby public authorities should provide advice and assistance, so far as it is reasonable to do so, you may find it helpful to note the following information.

In 2010 the then Government stated an intent to reduce our overall nuclear warhead stockpile ceiling from not more than 225 to not more than 180 by the mid-2020s. However, as announced in the Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy, published on 16 March 2021, in recognition of the evolving security environment, including the developing range of technological and doctrinal threats, this reduction of the stockpile ceiling is no longer possible, and the UK will move to an overall nuclear weapon stockpile of no more than 260 warheads.

Your request implies that the UK currently has 180 warheads in the stockpile and will increase to 260 warheads in the stockpile. This is not an accurate interpretation of the announcement made in the Integrated Review. We will remain deliberately ambiguous about the number of warheads in our stockpile, in order to avoid simplifying the calculations of our potential adversaries. Stockpile ceilings therefore do not necessarily equate to the actual number of weapons in the stockpile. Rather, they reflect an upper limit on what we consider we may need to maintain the credibility of the nuclear deterrent in light of the changing security environment. They are ceilings, not targets. Further, not more than 180 warheads was a ceiling the UK was working towards and not one which had been announced as having been achieved.

As 180 warheads does not necessarily reflect the current stockpile and 260 warheads does not necessarily reflect the future stockpile, information on the costs associated with increasing the number of warheads from 180 to 260 is not held. We can, however, inform you that the cost

estimates for the wider warhead programme are undergoing consideration as part of Departmental budgeting.

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

Yours sincerely,

Defence Nuclear Organisation Secretariat