



Ministry
of Defence

Air Command Secretariat
Spitfire Block
Headquarters Air Command
Royal Air Force
High Wycombe
Buckinghamshire
HP14 4UE

Ref: 2020/11152

27 November 2020

Dear [REDACTED]

Thank you for your e-mail of the 2 October 2020 requesting the following information:

I am writing to request the following information under the freedom of information act.

- 1) *how many pilots from Saudi Arabia have been trained by the Royal Air Force in each of the last five full calendar years, plus 2020 to date.*
- 2) *how many non-pilot military service people from Saudi Arabia have been trained by the Royal Air Force in each of the last five full calendar years, plus 2020 to date.*
- 3) *how much was the RAF paid for these services in total?*
- 4) *at which locations has the training taken place?*

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 and I can confirm that information in scope of your request is held.

Question 1 and 2

Year	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
No of pilots that started training	10	20	10	0	0	0
Non-pilot military Service persons that started training	160	130	200	70	50	30

In accordance with the Data Protection Act and our obligations in relation to the protection of confidentiality when handling personal data, data has been rounded to the nearest 10 and where "0" denotes zero.

Section 16 (Advice and Assistance) an individual student has been counted in the year they commenced training, as training can take more than a year, students will have continued their training in subsequent years.

Question 3

Information relating payment from Saudi Arabia for the provision of training falls within scope of the qualified exemptions Section 27 (International Relations) and Section 43 (Commercial Interests) of the FOIA.

A public interest test has been conducted and it is considered that the arguments against disclosure outweigh those in favour of release, and so information which relates to how much money the Royal Air Force (RAF) has been paid to train pilots from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia over the last 5 years has been withheld. To release this information would be likely to prevent the Ministry of Defence (MOD) and RAF from participating competitively in a commercial activity, as it would inform potential competitors and ultimately reduce any competitive advantage held by the MOD and RAF. It would also be likely to prejudice the international relationship between the two nations.

There remains a very strong public interest in preserving the MOD and RAF's ability to protect its commercial interests and international relations. I conclude that the balance of the public interest for disclosing the money paid by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to the United Kingdom to train pilots by the RAF is firmly in favour of maintaining the exemption under S.43(2) and S.27 (1a) and therefore I am withholding the information.

Question 4

The locations listed below have been used for training:

RAF Cosford
RAF Cranwell
RAF Linton-on Ouse
RAF Valley
RAF Coningsby
RAF Boulmer
RAF Shawbury
Defence College of Communication and Information Systems Blandford

If you are not satisfied with this response or 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.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 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

Air Command Secretariat