



Ministry
of Defence

Our Ref: FOI2021/10217

Ministry of Defence
Main Building
Whitehall
London SW1A 2HB
United Kingdom

Telephone [MOD]: 020 7218 9000

E-mail: DDC-
SecretariatParliamentary@mod.gov
.uk

E-mail: [REDACTED]

01 October 2021

Dear [REDACTED]

Thank you for your e-mail of 9 September 2021 in which you have requested the following information:

“Dear Sir or Madam,

I hope this email finds you well. It was recently reported that a serving soldier posted classified documents on the forum for the video game War Thunder in order to win an argument that they were having with another user. Please could you provide me with the following information:

1) All correspondence between employees of Gaijin Entertainment and MOD staff relating to this matter, and any correspondence between MOD staff contacted by Gaijin Entertainment and other MOD staff relating to this matter (naturally with the classified information in question removed!) To aid in your search, I believe a forum moderator said that the company had been in contact with someone at MOD Filton Abbey Wood.

2) All correspondence between departmental press officers, and between departmental press officers and other MOD staff, which discuss the department's response in the case of any media inquiries.

3) A copy of all requests for comment received by the department from members of the press via email, and the responses to these requests by departmental press officers. Where personal information such as email addresses has been redacted, please could you indicate where possible which publication submitted each request for comment.

Please let me know if you have any questions or clarifications regarding my request, I look forward to your response.”

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

A search for the information you requested has been carried out and I can confirm that the Ministry of Defence does hold information within the scope of your request. Please see attached the information requested.

Some of the information requested falls entirely within the scope of the absolute exemption provided for at section 40 (Personal Data) of the FOIA and has been withheld. Section 40(2) has been applied to the information in order to protect personal information as governed by the Data Protection Act 1998. Section 40 is an absolute exemption and there is therefore no requirement to consider the public interest in making a decision to withhold the information.

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 me in the first instance. 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 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 the Commissioner's website www.ico.org.uk

Yours sincerely,

DDC Secretariat Parliamentary

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 19 July 2021 16:30
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: RE: UK Defence Journal Article - Leaked Challenger 2 Specs

[REDACTED]

Thanks for the below, that's reassuring. I'll be sure to get in touch if we're approached directly.

Kind regards,

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
The Royal Tank Regiment, [REDACTED] Tidworth, Wiltshire, SP9 7BB
[Skype](#) | [REDACTED] | **Email:** [REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 19 July 2021 09:39
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: RE: UK Defence Journal Article - Leaked Challenger 2 Specs

[REDACTED]

My colleague [REDACTED] has passed on your email, we were aware of this as media picked it up on Friday afternoon and the story was also picked up by mainstream media over the weekend. A story ran in The Times this morning. We issued a statement in conjunction with DDC on Friday which has already been carried in some outlets.

With regard to actions, if you should receive any media enquiries on this, please direct them to us here at the Army Newsdesk and we will deal with them accordingly.

I have copied in the Army Comms Media Officers for your region for awareness, they can always assist and provide you with the relevant advice on these matters.

Regards,

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Directorate of Engagement & Communications
Army Headquarters | Marlborough Lines | Monxton Road | Andover | SP11 8HJ
Skype: [REDACTED] | Mobile: [REDACTED]

News Desk: [REDACTED]
Duty Officer: [REDACTED]

Please note I am currently working remotely.

From: [REDACTED]

Sent: 19 July 2021 09:24

To: [REDACTED]

Subject: RE: UK Defence Journal Article - Leaked Challenger 2 Specs

Morning [REDACTED]

This story was covered by DDC in London over the weekend and a response was issued. Regarding next steps, if the story does continue to garner interest I've looped in our news team who can advise you on how to manage any further enquires.

Kind regards,

From: [REDACTED]

Sent: 16 July 2021 19:28

To: [REDACTED]

Subject: UK Defence Journal Article - Leaked Challenger 2 Specs

Good evening,

I'm the [REDACTED] for the Royal Tank Regiment. It's come to my attention this evening that an article has been published in UK Defence Journal [here](#), which states a serving tank commander has released restricted material onto a gaming forum. This story has been picked up on Twitter by a number of journalists with larger circulation including the Economist.

I wanted to make you aware and get some initial guidance on whether we should be publishing a holding line or not and the next steps.

Kind regards,

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
The Royal Tank Regiment, [REDACTED] Tidworth, Wiltshire, SP9 7BB
[Skype](#) | Tel: [REDACTED] | Email: [REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]

Sent: 16 July 2021 17:26

To: [REDACTED]

Cc: [REDACTED]

Subject: RE: Challenger story for comment

Thanks all, it's on the tracker so we'll keep an eye on it over the weekend and see what else comes in.

Regards,

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Army Communications | Directorate of Engagement & Communications
Army Headquarters | Marlborough Lines | Monxton Road | Andover | SP11 8HJ

Skype: [REDACTED] Mobile: [REDACTED]

News Desk: [REDACTED]

Duty Officer: [REDACTED]

Please note I am currently working remotely.

From: [REDACTED]

Sent: 16 July 2021 17:08

To: [REDACTED]

Cc: [REDACTED]

Subject: RE: Challenger story for comment

All
If you need anything further call me on [REDACTED]

Regards

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]

Sent: 16 July 2021 17:06

To: [Redacted]

Cc: [Redacted]

Subject: RE: Challenger story for comment

Works for me

[Redacted] Army Policy & Secretariat

Mob: [Redacted] Skype: [Redacted]

Email: [Redacted]

[Find me on communicator](#)

Unless otherwise stated, please treat this email as routine and action in accordance with your normal working hours.

From: [Redacted]

Sent: 16 July 2021 17:04

To: [Redacted]

Cc: [Redacted]

Subject: RE: Challenger story for comment

I've been wading through the detritus of geekery on the forum for this site – he has removed them.

I think we go with the lines proposed and chase this down next week.

We don't want to over-react as we are still not entirely certain what he posted.

Anyone got any issues with:

A Defence Spokesperson said:

"We take all unauthorised disclosures of information extremely seriously. This incident will be reviewed and if appropriate, an investigation will be launched, and mitigations put in place to prevent reoccurrences.

“We do not comment on leaked documents.”

[Redacted]

[Redacted] Directorate
of Defence Communications | **Ground Floor Zone B** | Ministry of Defence |
Whitehall | London SW1A 2HB | Email: [Redacted]
[Redacted] Tel: [Redacted] Mil: [Redacted] Mobile: [Redacted]

[Skype Call](#)

Skype for Business: [Redacted]

From: [Redacted]
Sent: 16 July 2021 17:00
To: [Redacted]
[Redacted]
[Redacted]
[Redacted]
[Redacted]
[Redacted]
[Redacted]
Cc: [Redacted]
Subject: RE: Challenger story for comment

Sorry I haven't been able to comment sooner.

All AESPs are available freely to anyone on MODNET via the TDOL viewer; no log I required. They tend to be at Official or in this case Restricted (due to their age).

I see no issues with the below standard line, but also don't see how we would be able to identify who has published this noting the very broad access and availability of these documents.

[Redacted]

Sent with BlackBerry Work
(www.blackberry.com)

From: [Redacted]
Date: Friday, 16 Jul 2021, 4:53 pm
To: [Redacted]
[Redacted]
[Redacted]
[Redacted]

[REDACTED]

Cc: [REDACTED]

Subject: RE: Challenger story for comment

Hi

I've had a look at the comments board and people are calling the poster and verifying person something that rhymes with " ick "

I've gone out the team and will come back re the classification but that won't come back today as most people are offline.

I think the response below is appropriate for now but we continue to track and then pick it up again next week.

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]

Sent: 16 July 2021 16:50

To: [REDACTED]

Cc: [REDACTED]

Subject: RE: Challenger story for comment

Dear all,

Noting the time and lack of progress at this stage I propose the following (see below). We will need to monitor over the weekend and look to initiate an investigation (if required) into what was released and whether any further action is required.

[REDACTED] – can you look into the security classification of the CR2 AESPs please and what release governance there is on these?

Anyone get access to this gaming site to see what is on the comments board? Would be helpful – if there is anything still there.

As follows:

Outlet/Journalist: BFBS/[REDACTED], Overt Defence/[REDACTED]

Deadline: ASP

Story: An online UK Defence Journal article and associated Twitter commentary (re-tweeted by Shashank Joshi), covers what appears to be a serving Royal Tank Regiment officer/soldier who has released extracts from an Army Equipment Support Publication (AESP) online on a tank gaming site called 'War Thunder' (Russian owned/registered). The individual appears to be trying to get the gaming site to improve its representation of the CR2. A site chatroom moderator has called him out and referred to what appears to be a statement/comment from DE&S which is interpreted as MOD comment. Both journalists have asked for Defence comment based on this article.

Handling: The initial request was received after 1430 hrs and it has proven difficult to track down anyone for comment in Army or DE&S (the latter owns AESPs). With so little to go on it is difficult to offer any more at this stage than the standard lines on leaks as follows:

A Defence Spokesperson said:

"We take all unauthorised disclosures of information extremely seriously. This incident will be reviewed and if appropriate, an investigation will be launched, and mitigations put in place to prevent reoccurrences.

"We do not comment on leaked documents."

Many thanks.

Yours,

[Redacted]

[Redacted] Directorate
of Defence Communications | [Ground Floor Zone B](#) | Ministry of Defence |
[Whitehall](#) | London SW1A 2HB | Email: [Redacted]
[Redacted] Tel: [Redacted] Mil: [Redacted] | Mobile: [Redacted]

[Skype Call](#)
[Skype for Business:](#) [Redacted]

From: [Redacted]

Sent: 16 July 2021 16:14

To: [Redacted]

Cc: [REDACTED]

Subject: RE: Challenger story for comment

Thanks [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] is chasing.

I will (with [REDACTED] help!!) get the standard messaging off [REDACTED] and prep something for clearance.

[REDACTED] Directorate
of Defence Communications | **Ground Floor Zone B** | Ministry of Defence |
Whitehall | London SW1A 2HB | Email: [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] Tel: [REDACTED] Mil: [REDACTED] Mobile: [REDACTED]

[Skype Call](#)

Skype for Business: [REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]

Sent: 16 July 2021 16:12

To: [REDACTED]

Cc: [REDACTED]

Subject: RE: Challenger story for comment

DES own the AESPs so they will be best placed to comment on this story. I guess we don't comment on leaks though....

[REDACTED] Army Policy & Secretariat

Mob: [REDACTED]

Skype: [REDACTED]

Email: [REDACTED]

[Find me on communicator](#)

Unless otherwise stated, please treat this email as routine and action in accordance with your normal working hours.

From: [REDACTED]

Sent: 16 July 2021 15:48

To: [REDACTED]

Cc: [REDACTED]

Subject: RE: Challenger story for comment

This is the article (sorry for all the emails)

A user has posted a classified document online relating to the Challenger 2 in order to improve the accuracy of the design of the tank in combat game 'War Thunder'.

A gamer identifying as Challenger 2 commander has posted a classified document online in order to improve the accuracy of the design of the tank in the game 'War Thunder'.

War Thunder is a vehicular combat multiplayer video game developed and published by Gaijin Entertainment. Despite the fact that Gaijin Entertainment lists itself as a Cyprus-based studio, it was originally founded in Moscow, Russia, where it still has offices today.

It also has branches in Germany, Hungary, and Latvia, [you can read more on the studio here](#).

So, what happened?

A user identifying as a Challenger 2 commander posted specific excerpts from a Challenger 2 AESP (Army Equipment Support Publication, sort of like a user manual) to show game developers that they "didn't model it correctly".

The user identifies as a make in Tidworth with a history of "*Tanks & AFV's, CR2 Tank Commander, AFV Instr, D&M Instr, Gunnery Instr, Former ATDU*". It should

be noted that Tidworth is home to the Royal Tank Regiment who operate Challenger 2 tanks.

Anyway, it is understood that the excerpts from the document had their 'UK RESTRICTED' label crossed out and a stamp of 'UNCLASSIFIED' added, as well as having various parts fully blanked. One forum user remarked that *"the cover for instance had basically everything except CHALLENGER 2 blacked out"*.

The forum user posted the following alongside the now removed AESP in an effort to have an issue with the in-game design of the vehicle rectified.

"Linking those screenshots with the following edited image from the AESP's which is meant to show the relationship of the various components. The image isn't exactly to scale as its only meant to show the position of components relative to each other but it works for the point I'm trying to make here. The trunnion's sit centrally of the rotor. The trunnions support the rotor in the turret structure and the GCE sub components as previously stated are all mounted to the rotor."

Templar_
Master of British Bias
●●●●●

Posted 17 hours ago Report post

On 14/07/2021 at 23:28, [_Fear_Naught_](#) said:

Linking those screenshots with the following edited image from the AESP's which is meant to show the relationship of the various components.

From DE&S (Defence Equipment and Support), MoD Abbey Wood:

Quote

I can confirm that it does appear to be a genuine extract... It certainly has not been released under FOI previously by DE&S or considered for redacting. We also do not recognise the "Unclassified" stamp as something that has been used in DE&S.

We have written confirmation from MoD that this document remains classified. By continuing to disseminate it you are in violation of the Official Secrets Act as stated by the warning on the cover of the document, an offence which can carry up to a 14 year prison sentence if prosecuted. Of this you are already aware, as a service person you have signed a declaration that you understand the act and what actions it compels you to take. Every time you post this you place us (International representatives of Gaijin), especially any UK citizens, in hot water as the warning so helpfully states that unauthorised retention of a protected document is an offence.

5 3 1

Gaijin refused to deal with the apparently still classified documents. Saying through through their community manager:

"Before any discussion, handling or bug reports are even made, proof of this documents declassification will be required as well as where it was sourced from. If it is declassified, it should be available to the public. Last time such a document was shared that was claimed to be "unclassified" it was in fact still classified and was

confirmed that it should never have been shared. We make it very clear that we will not handle any source material unless it is publically available and fully declassified with the rights to prove that.”

Additionally, a forum moderator posted:

“We have written confirmation from MoD that this document remains classified. By continuing to disseminate it you are in violation of the Official Secrets Act as stated by the warning on the cover of the document, an offence which can carry up to a 14 year prison sentence if prosecuted. Of this you are already aware, as a service person you have signed a declaration that you understand the act and what actions it compels you to take. Every time you post this you place us (International representatives of Gaijin), especially any UK citizens, in hot water as the warning so helpfully states that unauthorised retention of a protected document is an offence.”

It’s not yet clear what happened – was the clearance faked or was it given by the wrong people? We’ll update htis article when we know more.

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 16 July 2021 15:45
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: RE: Challenger story for comment

It has been retweeted by Shashank Joshi (The Economist)

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 16 July 2021 15:42
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: [REDACTED]

[Redacted]

Subject: RE: Challenger story for comment

It is on Twitter now.. just FYI

From: [Redacted]

Sent: 16 July 2021 15:36

To: [Redacted]

Subject: RE: Challenger story for comment

Anyone got anything on this?

Timing isn't great.

Aside from "we don't comment on leaked documents" and without knowing the exact detail of the content leaked, we can't really say anything.

Can someone track down a POC at RTR for a call please?

[Redacted]

[Redacted] Directorate
of Defence Communications | [Ground Floor Zone B](#) | Ministry of Defence |
[Whitehall](#) | London SW1A 2HB | Email: [Redacted]

[Redacted] Tel: [Redacted] Mil: [Redacted] Mobile: [Redacted]

[Skype Call](#)

[Skype for Business:](#) [Redacted]

From: [Redacted]

Sent: 16 July 2021 15:25

To: [Redacted]

Cc: [Redacted]

[REDACTED]

Subject: RE: Challenger story for comment

There are now two enquiries on this. BFBS and Overt Defence.

Adding [REDACTED] (who I think may be OOO).

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Directorate
of Defence Communications | **Ground Floor Zone B** | Ministry of Defence |
Whitehall | London SW1A 2HB | Email: [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] Tel: [REDACTED] Mil: 9 [REDACTED] Mobile: [REDACTED]

[Skype Call](#)

Skype for Business: + [REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]

Sent: 16 July 2021 15:14

To: [REDACTED]

Cc: [REDACTED]

Subject: RE: Challenger story for comment

He's definitely RTR.

Cc'ing [REDACTED] into this.

It appears that the MOD has already commented according to a 'forum moderator'.

Deadline has been requested for 1700 today.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] | Directorate
of Defence Communications | **Ground Floor Zone B** | Ministry of Defence |
Whitehall | London SW1A 2HB | Email: [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] Tel: [REDACTED] Mil: [REDACTED] Mobile: [REDACTED]

[Skype Call](#)

Skype for Business: [REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]

Sent: 16 July 2021 15:12

To: [REDACTED]

Cc: [REDACTED]

Subject: RE: Challenger story for comment

I've found the website – www.forum.warthunder.com and the initial poster, who goes by the handle of Fear Naught, says he is based in Tidworth and is former ATDU.

Not that it helps much, but pulling in [REDACTED] to see if they can add any context to this or have relevant contacts in the region.

Regards,

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Directorate of Engagement & Communications

Army Headquarters | Marlborough Lines | Monxton Road | Andover | SP11 8HJ

Skype: [REDACTED]

| Mobile: [REDACTED]

News Desk: [REDACTED]

Duty Officer: [REDACTED]

Please note I am currently working remotely.

From: [REDACTED]

Sent: 16 July 2021 14:39

To: [REDACTED]

Cc: [REDACTED]

Subject: FW: Challenger story for comment

Team – can you take a look into this please?

Getting late on a Friday, but we might be able to squeeze a line out of somewhere.

Possible POCs are the AFV School at Bovington/Lulworth, or HQ DRAC at Bovington.

[REDACTED] may have some ideas too for POCs in Army HQ – D Cap?

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] Directorate
of Defence Communications | **Ground Floor Zone B** | Ministry of Defence |
Whitehall | London SW1A 2HB | Email: [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] Tel: [REDACTED] Mil: [REDACTED] Mobile: [REDACTED]

[Skype Call](#)

Skype for Business: [REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 16 July 2021 14:31
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: FW: Challenger story for comment

[REDACTED]
Query below from [REDACTED] at BFBS following an article released by the UK Defence Journal which he has attached. He is asking for a comment on this.

All the best,



[REDACTED] | Directorate of Defence Communication
Ministry of Defence | Main Building | Whitehall | London | SW1A 2HB
Mob: + [REDACTED]
Standalone: [REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 16 July 2021 14:27
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: Challenger story for comment

<https://twitter.com/UKDefJournal/status/1416019385353920513>



[UK Defence Journal on Twitter](#)

"A gamer identifying as Challenger 2 commander has posted a classified document online in order to improve the accuracy of the in-game design of the tank in the videogame 'War Thunder'. |

@geoallison for

@UKDefJournal <https://t.co/kKKbW3AbDq>"

twitter.com



[REDACTED]
Deputy News Editor, **Forces News**



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