



Defence Business Services
DBS Secretariat
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Ref: FOI2022/03118

DBSRES-Secretariat@mod.gov.uk

24 March 2022

Dear [REDACTED]

Thank you for your email of 25 February 2022, to the Ministry of Defence (MOD), requesting the following information:

"1. Under the FOIA, I want:

- a) An explanation of the purpose of the Stage 3 complaints procedure*
- b) An explanation of the role of the Chief Executive in the Stage 3 complaints procedure*
- c) To know what independent investigations/checks the Chief Executive carried out to confirm the veracity of the content of his letter of 14 February 2022/*
- d) A list of the documents the Chief Executive personally read/reviewed as part of his preparation of his letter of 14 February 2022*
- e) Confirmation that Veterans UK had in its possession a copy of its letter of 4 March 2021, reference CRT 01/03/21, acknowledging receipt of my letter of 3 March 2021, during the preparation of the Chief Executives letter of 14 February 2022*
- f) To know, if not the Chief Executive, the name of the author of the Chief Executives letter of 14 February 2022 and their role/ job title.*
- g) A copy of any briefing/background note produced for the Chief Executive as part of the preparation of his letter of 14 February 2022."*

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 MOD and I can confirm some of the information in scope of your request is held.

In regards to question a, it may be helpful if I explain that the Veterans UK complaints process is a three-stage process, these are broken down as follows:

1. Complaint investigated and response provided by the Customer Resolution Team.
2. Complaint investigated and response provided by the Head of the Customer Resolution Team.
3. Complaint investigated and response provided by the Head of Veterans UK.

Further information can be found at the following link - [Complaints procedure - Veterans UK - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)

Turning now to questions b, c and d, I can confirm that no information is held in the scope of your request. This is because the Chief Executive is not involved in Stage 3 complaints and it has been confirmed that the Chief Executive was not involved in the response provided to you on 14 February 2022.

In regards to question e, I can confirm that Veterans UK had in its possession copies of all correspondence relating to the case. However, I should explain that a letter dated 23 February 2021 was received on 3 March 2021. During an acknowledgement letter from the Customer Resolution Team (CRT), dated 4 March 2021 this letter was mistakenly referred to as the letter dated 3 March 2021. Therefore, the CRT does not have a letter dated 3 March 2021, but a letter dated 23 February 2021.

In regards to question f, I must advise you that Section 40(2) has been applied to this request in order to protect personal information as governed by the Data Protection Act 2018. Section 40 is an absolute exemption and there are no requirements to consider the public interest in making a decision to withhold the information.

Lastly, in regards to question g, I can neither confirm nor deny whether the MOD holds the information that you have requested. We are not obliged to confirm or deny whether we hold the information as if held, this would relate to personal information. Section 40(5) of the FOIA provides that there is no duty to confirm or deny whether we hold the information.

The fact Section 40(5) of the FOIA has been cited should not be taken as an indication that the information you have requested is or is not held by the Department. The terms of this exemption of the FOIA mean that we do not have to consider whether it would be in the public interest for us to reveal whether the information is held.

Under Section 16 (Advice and Assistance) you may wish to know that you do have the right to ask for copies of your personal information which is commonly known as making a Subject Access Request (SAR). As such I have passed your request to the Department's Subject Access Request (SAR) Team who will contact you to take this request forward.

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