



Ministry of Defence

Our Ref: FOI2021/02313

Ministry of Defence
Main Building (01/D/06)
Whitehall
London SW1A 2HB
United Kingdom

Telephone [MOD]: +44(0)20 7218 9000

E-mail: [DNO-
SecretariatTeam@mod.gov.uk](mailto:DNO-SecretariatTeam@mod.gov.uk)

Via email: [REDACTED]

30 May 2022

Dear [REDACTED],

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

- 1. Please conduct a search of the 'main' AWE archive database (by which I mean the single largest archive of video information held by AWE, or the archive judged by subject matter experts as most likely to contain information of the type requested). Please advise me of the name under which this database is usually referred within AWE.*
- 2. Please conduct a search for the following terms, as appropriate depending on the keywords available and categorisation of this index:
a) 'TCHD' if the index allows searches to be conducted by this term, or 'Transport' if this term is not used. b) 'Trident' or, if this term is not used, 'Holbrook' if searches are required to be conducted on weapon types. Please conduct the search for both terms simultaneously.*
- 3. Please commence the search from the most recently available record, and continue back in time until the cost limit is reached.*
- 4. Please provide me with the titles and dates of each entry selected by this search method, regardless of whether they may be 'false positives' which do not meet the terms of the search. If any of the titles cannot be revealed because they are considered to be covered by an exemption of the FOI Act, please provide a redacted entry.*
- 5. I would prefer to receive this information in the form of a list showing the title and production date of each item identified, and would suggest that this is the simplest and most cost-effective way for AWE / MoD to prepare this information. MoD has been able to provide me with lists in response to previous requests for information, but if you believe you are prevented from providing me with a list then please provide me with a copy of each database entry, if necessary as a screenshot, in pdf document format. Please ensure that the screenshots are legible.*
- 6. Please advise me on the approach taken to abstract the requested information as part of your response to this request.'*

We must apologise for the time it has taken for us to provide you with a substantive response, and we are grateful for your patience. We have treated your correspondence as a request for information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (the Act).

A search for the information requested has now been completed within the Ministry of Defence (MOD) and we can confirm that information in scope of your request is held. Please see Annex A which contains the results of a search performed on the Media Group Archive database, which was deemed to be the largest archive of video information at the Atomic Weapons Establishment, using the search terms 'TCHD' and 'Trident' concurrently.

Some of the information, however, falls under the exemptions provided for at sections 24 (National Security) and 26 (Defence) of the Act. These are qualified exemptions and are subject to a Public Interest Test (PIT) which means that the information requested can only be withheld if the public interest in doing so outweighs the public interest in disclosure. We can confirm that PITs have been conducted and the outcomes are summarised below.

Section 24(1) states that information is exempt information if exemption is required for the purpose of safeguarding national security. It applies to some of the information in scope, which concerns materials, components, locations and operational details. In favour of release, it was recognised that there is a wider public interest in the nuclear deterrent and release of this information would provide greater openness and transparency in relation to the United Kingdom's (UK's) nuclear programme. However, releasing this information would allow potential adversaries to build up a picture of operations involving defence nuclear materials which would put future operations at risk of disruption, therefore prejudicing our ability to maintain Continuous At Sea Deterrence (CASD), with a negative impact on our national security. The balance of the public interest was found to lie in favour of withholding this information for the purpose of safeguarding national security.

Section 26(1) states that information is exempt if its disclosure under the Act would, or would be likely to, prejudice (a) the defence of the British Islands or of any colony, or (b) the capability, effectiveness or security of any relevant forces. These also apply to some of the information in scope, which concerns materials, components, locations and operational details. The arguments in favour of release are similar to for section 24 in that release would provide greater openness and transparency on nuclear transport operations and their safety. However, release would threaten the security of future operations, including the safety and security of the personnel involved, and, should our ability to maintain CASD be disrupted as a result, prejudice the defence of the British Isles and the capability and effectiveness of the Royal Navy. The balance of public interest was found to lie in favour of withholding this information as its release would prejudice the defence of the British Isles and the capability, effectiveness and security of the Armed Forces.

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 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 Nuclear Organisation Secretariat