



Ministry
of Defence

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Dear [REDACTED],

Thank you for your email of 23 July 2022 in which you requested the following information:

1. "Between the timeframe of 1984 - 2020, has there been more British Army soldiers who have committed suicide while serving in the British Army than being killed in combat.

Please can you provide the statistics of the above and provide a statistical breakdown of the following:

2. Has there been more British Army soldiers who have committed suicide while serving in the British Army than being killed in combat in Afghanistan
3. Has there been more British Army soldiers who have committed suicide while serving in the British Army than being killed in combat in Iraq"

I am treating your correspondence as a request for information under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) 2000. Section 1 of the Freedom of Information Act gives an applicant the right to access recorded information held by public authorities at the time the request is made and does not require public authorities to answer questions, provide explanations or give opinions, unless this is recorded information held. A search for the information has now been completed within the Ministry of Defence, and I can confirm that the information in scope of your request is held and is below in Annex A. All information has been sourced from Defence Statistics Health.

If you have any queries regarding the content of this letter, please contact this office in the first instance. Following this, 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.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,

[REDACTED]

Army Policy & Secretariat

Annex A

Table 1: Hostile action¹ and suicide² deaths among UK army soldiers³, number

Period	Hostile Action	Suicide & Open verdicts
1 Jan 1984 to 31 Dec 2020	570	529

Source: Defence Statistics Health

1. For Hostile Action definition, refer to background note points 1 and 10
2. For suicide definition, refer to background note point 8
3. Soldiers were identified as NATO other ranks OR1-9

Table 2: Hostile action¹ and suicide² deaths among UK soldiers³, number

Period	Hostile Action Afghanistan	Suicide & Open verdicts
11 Sep 2001 to 28 Aug 2021	307	185

Source: Defence Statistics Health

1. For Hostile Action definition, refer to paragraph 10
2. For suicide definition, refer to paragraph 8
3. Soldiers were identified as NATO other ranks OR1-9
4. For Afghanistan operations, refer to paragraph 1

Table 3: Hostile action¹ and suicide² deaths among UK soldiers³, number

Period	Hostile Action Iraq	Suicide & Open verdicts
20 Jan 2003 to 22 May 2011	88	78

Source: Defence Statistics Health

1. For Hostile Action definition, refer to paragraph 10
2. For suicide definition, refer to paragraph 8
3. Soldiers were identified as NATO other ranks OR1-9
4. For Iraq operations, refer to paragraph 2

Background notes

1. Table 1 presents hostile action deaths that occurred as a result of Operation VERITAS, Operation HERRICK, Operation TORAL, Operation GRANBY, Operation TELIC, Operation SHADER, Operation BANNER, Operations in Sierra Leone, and Operations in the Balkans.
2. Afghanistan includes deaths that occurred as a result of Operation VERITAS, Operation HERRICK or Operation TORAL.
3. Iraq includes deaths that occurred as a result of Operation TELIC.
4. Defence Statistics Health compiles the Department's authoritative deaths database for all UK Armed Forces personnel who died whilst in Service going back to 1984. Information is compiled from several internal and external sources from which we release several internal analyses and external National Statistics Notices.

5. The information on deaths presented are for UK regular Army ranks (soldiers) and only those Army ranks (soldiers) reserves who have died whilst on deployment as Defence Statistics Health do not routinely receive notification of all reserve deaths.
6. Defence Statistics receive weekly notifications of all regular armed forces deaths from the Joint Casualty and Compassionate Cell (formerly the single service casualty cells). Defence Statistics also receive cause of death information from military medical sources in the single services. At the end of each calendar year, Defence Statistics cross-reference the medical information it holds against publicly available death certificate information available from NHS Digital and The General Registrar's Office Scotland.
7. When providing statistics on suicides, Defence Statistics Health rely exclusively on the information provided by coroners in England and Wales and in Northern Ireland, and the Procurator Fiscal in Scotland. This ensures the Department's objectivity, as all accidental deaths and those resulting from violent action have to be referred to these officials for investigation. For sake of brevity these sources of information have been labelled collectively as "coroner's verdicts". There is an obligation for all accidental deaths, and those resulting from violent action, to be referred to these officials. Inquests are usually held within a few months of the death, but occasionally a few years may elapse, therefore some recent deaths may not have clearly defined causal information. In these cases, deaths are identified as waiting verdicts and classified as "Other Accident" whilst awaiting a Coroner's verdict.
8. The information presented includes coroner-confirmed suicides in line with the definition used by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) in the publication of National Statistics. The National Statistics definition of suicide includes deaths given an underlying cause of intentional self-harm or an injury/poisoning of undetermined intent. In England and Wales, it has been customary to assume that most injuries and poisonings of undetermined intent are cases where the harm was self-inflicted, but there was insufficient evidence to prove that the deceased deliberately intended to kill themselves and thus given an open or narrative verdict by the coroner.
9. All deaths are coded to the International Classification of Diseases 10th edition (ICD-10) which is produced by the World Health Organisation (WHO). Information held in death certificates is analysed and assigned the appropriate ICD code to ensure that deaths included are only those which meet the National Statistics definition of Suicide and these may be a suicide, open verdict or narrative verdict conclusion from the Coroner. The ICD-10 codes are what define suicides and are: ICD-10 codes: X60-X84: intentional self-harm; Y10-Y34: injury or poisoning of undetermined intent; Y87.0 and Y87.2: sequelae of intentional self-harm, injury or poisoning of undetermined intent.
10. Hostile Action (HA) includes deaths categorised as Killed in Action or Died of Wounds:
 - **Killed in Action (KIA)** - A battle casualty who is killed outright or who dies as a result of wounds or other injuries before reaching a medical treatment facility.
 - **Died of Wounds (DOW)** - A battle casualty who dies of wounds or other injuries received in action, after having reached a medical treatment facility. This only includes those who have died of wounds whilst under the care of Defence Medical Services.
11. For this response, "killed in combat" has been defined as deaths as a result of hostile action.