



Ministry  
of Defence

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

Ref: FOI2022/10825 and 11088

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

28 October 2022

Dear [REDACTED],

Thank you for your letter received, on 20 September 2022, and e-mail of 22 September 2022 requesting the following information:

*"The RAF's requirement in 2018 and estimates for the year 2025 for;*

*Fast-jet pilots  
Multi-engine pilots  
Rotary-wing pilots*

*The actual average productive service for 2018 and the estimated productive service for 2025 (namely the time after reaching an operational squadron to time of leaving the RAF) given by the above."*

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.

Information relating to the forecast requirement for pilots by the three streams falls entirely within scope of the qualified exemption section 26 (security) of the FOIA.

A Public Interest Test has been conducted against this exemption to determine whether, in all circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweigh the public interest in disclosure. I have found that, under S.26(1)(b), the balance lies in favour of withholding the information broken down by pilot stream, as releasing it could provide an indication of the Royal Air Force's (RAF) operational capability, by way of the mosaic effect, which may provide tactical advantage to our enemies causing operational and personnel security risks. Consequently, this information has been withheld.

With regard to average productive service, please note that we are unable to calculate an average on a future event. Therefore, please see below table of average return of service based on pilots who left the RAF between 1 January 2018 and 31 December 2018

Fast-jet pilots	20 years 2 months
Multi-engine pilots	19 years 9 months
Rotary-wing pilots	20 years 11 months
Total	20 years 3 months

Return of service has been calculated from date of entry to the RAF.

Under Section 16 of FOIA (advice and assistance), it may be useful for you to know that the total number for forecast requirement for pilots for Financial Years (FY) 2018/2019 and 2025/2026 is as follows:

	FY18/19 (OF1-9)	FY25/26 (OF1-9)
Total	1971	1843

Please note that forecast data, by its very nature, is subject to change.

I apologise for the lateness of this response.

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

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 me 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](mailto: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