



Ministry
of Defence

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

Ref: FOI 2023/08211

[REDACTED]

21 July 2023

Dear [REDACTED]

Thank you for your correspondence of 2 July 2023 requesting the following information:

"After the initial media reports of the RAF's recruitment scandal, concerning a number of white men that were discriminated against and the subsequent resignation of a Group Captain, an internal memo/statement was released on the MoD intranet which included a statement/statements by Sir Mike Wigston.

This statement was later deleted, but suggested that the reports were poor quality journalism/incorrect speculation/or made other accusations that the reports were false or inaccurate.

Please provide a copy of this internal memo/statement."

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.

Please find attached at Annex A two statements from Sir Mike Wigston relating to media reporting on Royal Air Force (RAF) recruitment published on the Defence Intranet.

Under Section 16 (Advice and Assistance) you may find it useful to know that messaging released by the RAF on the Defence Intranet is not deleted but is archived to make way for new content. Individuals wishing to view these messages on the internal Defence Intranet can search and retrieve them as required.

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. 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). 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,

[Original signed]

Air Command Secretariat

Enc. Annex A – Internal statements on RAF recruiting issued by Sir Mike Wigston in August 2022.

Statement from the Chief of the Air Staff about RAF Recruitment – posted on 16 August 2022

"You will have seen the inflammatory media stories alleging that the RAF has paused job offers for 'white men' to meet our diversity targets for recruiting women and people from ethnic minority groups.

I can assure you that there is no pause in Royal Air Force recruitment, nor any change to entry standards in favour of particular groups. To do that would be positive discrimination, which is unlawful in the UK.

For the Royal Air Force, there can be no higher priority than ensuring we have the quality of people we need, regular and reserve. Our Service has always been a meritocracy, where individuals are recruited for their talent and potential, regardless of where they come from or what they look like. We offer hugely rewarding opportunities to young people from all backgrounds, but in a highly competitive jobs market we must work hard to improve our ethnic and gender diversity to reach the widest possible pool of talent in the UK workforce.

We have the best recruiting, consistently, of all three Services, and people stay in the Royal Air Force for longer on average than the Royal Navy or Army. We were the first Service to open all our roles to women and we have the highest percentage of women in our ranks.

Despite our success in recruiting across all professions, there is no escaping the fact that women and ethnic minorities are woefully under-represented in the Royal Air Force. That's why I make no apology for our recruitment policy doing everything possible to attract recruits from under-represented groups. As a leadership team, we are unanimous in our support for our recruiters taking positive action to recruit from the widest pool of talent across the UK, and we will continue to do so within the law.

The Royal Air Force has a well-earned reputation for operational excellence in all that we do. While cutting edge aircraft, platforms and systems are fundamental to that reputation and our future success, it is the quality of our people who ultimately make the difference. That is why we will always seek to recruit the best talent available to us."

Chief of the Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal Sir Mike Wigston

Statement from the Chief of the Air Staff – posted on 25 August 2022

"You will be well aware of the ongoing focus on the Royal Air Force in the media and on social media, on a number of topics, over the past weeks. I am acutely conscious that the coverage affects us all – whether regular, reserve, civil servant, or contractor – as well as our families and loved ones; and there are legitimate questions being asked which I am determined we will address as a priority.

I am hugely proud of the passion and commitment I see from you each and every day across all our operational tasks and supporting activity. We have a well-earned reputation for excellence in all that we do to protect the UK, and I, like you, cherish that reputation dearly.

It is right that when issues are raised we take swift action to address them, and we continue to strive for an open and honest reporting culture within the Service. I thank all of you for the part you play in that, our commanders and line managers especially. If you have a concern about an issue or risk that you believe contravenes the values and standards of the Service or the Civil Service Code, or exposes the organisation to significant criticism or harm, I encourage you to raise it through the correct channels, your Chain of Command in the first instance or, if you feel unable to do so for any reason, via the MOD's confidential helpline or the RAF Police.

Recent news coverage has addressed our values and standards, our culture and behaviours, and our determination to meet the MOD's level of ambition for diversity. All of this will be the focus of an Air Force Board meeting on 7 September. As a leadership team, we are clear that unacceptable behaviours have no place in our Service. We also remain committed to increasing our diversity and I can confirm categorically that neither our operational effectiveness, nor the quality of our new entrants has suffered as a result of our attempts to widen our recruiting from across society. We continue to deliver against every operational task asked of us by the Government; the RAF is deployed extensively, operationally active, and is indisputably lethal, and nothing in that regard has been or ever will be compromised by our drive to attract and recruit people from the widest pool of talent in the UK workforce.

We play a critical role in the security and defence of the UK and our allies, and that is where our primary effort must always be. I would ask that commanders and line managers at all levels continue to support your teams, and to ensure nobody feels isolated or marginalised. It is essential now more than ever that

***we pull together and focus on our essential purpose: global air and space power
to protect our nation."***

Chief of the Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal Sir Mike Wigston