



Ministry of Defence Police

Freedom of Information Manager

Ministry of Defence Police

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E-mail: MDP-FOI-DP@mod.gov.uk

Our Ref: eCase: FOI2023/10935

RFI: 203/23

Date: 12 October 2023

Dear [REDACTED]

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000: MINISTRY OF DEFENCE POLICE: DRONES NEAR NUCLEAR FACILITIES.

We refer to your email dated 07 September 2023 to the Ministry of Defence, which we acknowledged on the 07 September 2023.

We are treating your email as a request for information in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA 2000).

In your email you requested the following information:

I am writing to request information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 relating to drone sightings over nuclear facilities or objects.

For the years 2021, 2022, and 2023, can you provide a total count of reported drone sightings over nuclear facilities or objects, akin to the aggregate data provided previously for the year 2020?

Please also provide as much information as you can about each reported sighting, even if only a description of the incident.

I understand the importance of withholding specific locations, detailed descriptions, and other sensitive data. My request focuses solely on general counts and categories, mirroring the data shared for the year 2020.

A search for information has now been completed by the Ministry of Defence Police (MDP) and we can confirm that we do hold information in scope of your request. However, in respect of the location and the description of the facility concerning the sighting and any in depth details concerning the sighting, we have completed a Public Interest Test and we need to advise you that this information in scope of your request is being withheld under the following exemptions:

Section 24 (1) National Security
Section 26(1) Defence
Section 31 (1) Law Enforcement

Sections 24, 26 and 31 are prejudice based qualified exemptions and there is a requirement to consider the public interest by conducting a public interest test.

Section 24(1) has been applied because although the public are entitled to know how public funds are spent and how resources are distributed within policing, releasing full information in scope of your request would render national security measures less effective. This would lead to the compromise of ongoing or future operations to protect the security or infrastructure of the UK and increase the risk of harm to the public.

Section 26(1) has been applied because although release of the information would demonstrate commitment to transparency, releasing information allows for the likelihood that this information could prejudice the capability, effectiveness of the Ministry of Defence Police's ability to secure establishments connected to the UK's nuclear deterrent and therefore this would prejudice the defence of the UK.

Section 31(1) has been applied because although releasing this information would lead to better public awareness of operational policing and thereby a potential reduction in crime, releasing information could allow terrorists and individuals intent on carrying out criminal behaviour, to identify areas of the country with increased/reduced drone activity, identify responses to sightings of drones in certain locations, which could hinder the prevention and detection of future crime.

On balance, the public interest favours maintaining the exemptions and withholding the information you have requested as detailed above.

However, we can release the following:

<u>August 2021 – December 2021</u>
Due to a technical issue, we cannot currently search our system before August 2021.
1) Drone alarm activation, pilot located and given words of advice.
2) Notification of drone flight.
3) Report of drone, area search carried out, no trace of drone or pilot.
4) Report of drone over, area search, no trace, alarm not activated.
5) Drone alarm activation, area searched no trace. Crime report submitted.
6) Drone alarm activation, system error.
7) Officer reports seeing a drone, pilot located and spoken to, it was an accident, no footage of site obtained.
8) Drone alarm activation, search carried out, nothing found.
9) Drone reported, area searched, pilot located, authorised flight local Police.
10) Notification of authorised drone flight.

11) Drone alarm activation, area searched, no trace.
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<u>2022</u>

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| 1) | Report of possible drone sighting. Search carried out, nothing found. |
| 2) | Report of drone, search carried out, Officers found out it was a pre-planned event. |
| 3) | Report of drone flying, area search carried out, nothing found. |
| 4) | Drone reported to be flying, Officers carried out area search, no trace. |
| 5) | Report of drone flying. Area search carried out, no trace. |
| 6) | Small drone system activated, showing small drone. Officers attended, no trace. |
| 7) | Report of drone flying, Officers conducted area search, operator located. Spoken to by Officers, who viewed footage from drone, operator voluntarily deleted all footage. |
| 8) | Report from pilot of drone at 20,000 feet. Nothing seen from the ground, area search carried out for operator, no trace. |
| 9) | Report of drone flying, area search carried out by officer, no trace. |

<u>January – August 2023</u>

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| 1) | Drone seen flying. Area search carried out; Pilot not found. |
| 2) | Drone seen flying, area search carried out, no trace. |
| 3) | Drone reported, area search carried out, no trace. |
| 4) | Drone reported, area search carried out, no trace. |
| 5) | Pre planned authorised drone flight. |
| 6) | Drone alarm activated, although alarm activated, drone didn't enter protected area. |

If you are dissatisfied with 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). Internal review requests 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

MDP Secretariat and Freedom of Information Office