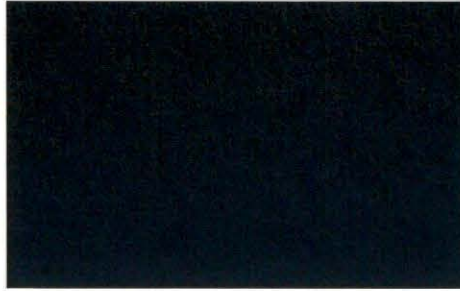




Ministry
of Defence



FOI2021/06049

E-mail: NavyStratPol-SECFOI@mod.gov.uk



23 June 2021

Dear [REDACTED],

Release of Information

Thank you for your correspondence of 8 June 2021 in which you requested the following information:

'I request the foillowing information please:

The annual amount in actual days earned voyage leave permitted to the merchant navy ratings of all grades in any given year?

The annual amount in actual days earned voyage leave permitted to all merchant navy officer grades in any given year?

Any additional types of leave awarded and days allocated for such?

The crew of a RFA vessel work from 56 to 60 hours on average each week at sea.

Is there any overtime compensation for additional hours worked at sea?

Do RFA Personnel get tax concessions for being at sea more than 6 months of the year like other British Merchant Mariners?

Civilians working in the UK public services are given from 22 to 40 plus days annual leave plus public holidays. Most recieve 104 days off for weekends so the majority recieve between 126 and 144 days off each year with the average being 142 in total. I wish to discover if the personnel of the RFA are disadvantaged in any way regarding earned voyage leave and the number of hours worked.'

Your enquiry has been considered to be a request for information in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act (the Act) 2000.

A search for the information has been completed within the Ministry of Defence (MOD) and I can confirm that some information in scope of your request is held.

In response to your questions concerning the Merchant Navy, no recorded information is held by the MOD to satisfy this part of your request. Under section 16 (Duty to Provide Advice and Assistance) of the Act, it may help if I explain that the Merchant Navy is the collective term for commercial shipping and includes a variety of vessels from cruise ships to tankers and cargo ships and does not form part of the MOD. Merchant Navy vessels are regulated by the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) so you may wish to contact them for further assistance with this part of your request. The MCA contact details are as follows:

mca_publication_scheme@mcga.gov.uk

In response to your questions concerning the Royal Fleet Auxiliary (RFA), information to answer these questions can be found at Annex A to this letter.

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). 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
Navy Command Secretariat – FOI Section

Q1. The crew of a RFA vessel work from 56 to 60 hours on average each week at sea.

The schedule of normal working hours for the RFA complies with the requirements of Merchant Shipping Notice (MSN) 1767(M) in respect of suitable rest periods. MSN 1767(M) implements the regulations on Hours of Rest. However, the unique role of the RFA has been recognised by the MCA in MSN 1767(M) para 2.4.1. and this provides the organisation with an exemption from these regulations, which can be used to meet operational requirements.

Q2. Is there any overtime compensation for additional hours worked at sea?

There are no overtime payments to RFA employees as they are paid consolidated salaries, based on a 7-day sea going working week.

Q3. Do RFA Personnel get tax concessions for being at sea more than 6 months of the year like other British Merchant Mariners?

Yes.

Civilians working in the UK public services are given from 22 to 40 plus days annual leave plus public holidays. Most receive 104 days off for weekends so the majority receive between 126 and 144 days off each year with the average being 142 in total.

Q4. I wish to discover if the personnel of the RFA are disadvantaged in any way regarding earned voyage leave and the number of hours worked.

The normal period of appointment to an RFA ship is four months, although this can vary depending on the operational requirements. Earned Voyage Leave (EVL) entitlement for RFA employees starts to accrue from the date on which they depart from, and return to, their home addresses (or normal place of residence) in the United Kingdom. There is no differential for EVL between Officers and Ratings in the RFA.

In respect of EVL, if an RFA seafarer were to spend 216 days appointed to RFA ships throughout the year, they will earn 149 days leave. However, the amount of leave earned, and time spent at their home address will vary, depending on their appointments to ships, time spent training ashore and the periods awaiting appointments.

Notwithstanding operational requirements, the RFA also recognises public holidays.

