



Ministry
of Defence

Ref: FOI2024/10262

Defence Business Services

Secretariat
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22 July 2024

Dear [REDACTED]

Thank you for your further email of 10 June 2024 to the Ministry of Defence (MOD) requesting the following information:

- "1) In the last two years, how many civil servants at the department have been suspended from work with full pay?*
- 2) Of those suspended on full pay in the last two years, what is the longest period of time for which a civil servant has been suspended on full pay?*
- 3) Of those suspended on full pay in the last two years, what is the average period of time for which those civil servants have been suspended on full pay?*
- 4) In the last two years, how many civil servants at the department have had their security clearance to work at the department revoked?*
- 5) Of those who had their security clearance revoked in the last two years, how long on average did they remain on full pay before they were formally dismissed.*
- 6) In relation to cases in the last two years where a civil servant appealed against their suspension and/or the decision to revoke their security clearance, on average how long did the appeals take to be decided.*
- 7) In relation to cases in the last two years where a civil servant appealed against their suspension and/or the decision to revoke their security clearance, how many remained on full pay pending the outcome of the appeal decision."*

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 within the MOD and I can confirm that some of the information in scope of your request is held. However, the information you have requested for questions 4, 5, 6 and 7 falls entirely within the scope of a qualified exemption under Section 24 (safeguarding national security) of the FOIA.

In response to questions 1 - 3, the following data provided covers the MOD core workforce, (including Defence Equipment and Support (DES) and Submarine Delivery Agency (SDA)) for the period from 1 June 2022 to 31 May 2024. Data has been collated from MyHR, using the

'absence type' 'suspension' recording. This is a unique count, so any individuals who may have been suspended more than once in this time period are only counted once.

For this period, 85 civil servants have been suspended from the department with full pay. Of those suspended on full pay in the last two years, the longest period of time for which a civil servant has been suspended on full pay is 731 calendar days.

The average length of time that civil servants remained suspended on full pay in the last two years was 114 calendar days.

Section 24 has been applied to the remaining questions 4, 5, 6 and 7. This is because the strong public interest in safeguarding national security overrides the need for openness in respect of this type of information. Section 24 is a qualified exemption and subject to public interest testing, which means that the information requested can only be withheld if the public interest in doing so outweighs the public interest in disclosure.

In line with the terms of Section 24, the MOD has considered whether it would be in the public interest for us to provide you with the information, despite the exemptions being applicable. It has been identified that there is a general public interest in disclosure of information, particularly in being able to understand matters related to national security. Openness in government may also increase public trust in and engagement with government.

However, there is also a strong public interest in safeguarding national security. Releasing the information requested would reveal details about the management of vetting that would provide the opportunity to attempt to identify and/or exploit perceived vulnerabilities in the UK's security vetting procedures. The release of information about vetting could be cumulative, with each piece of information contributing to a picture that could undermine the sensitive nature of vetting.

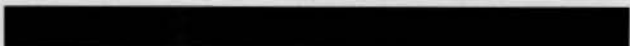
In this case, it has been concluded that the strong public interest in safeguarding national security overrides the need for openness and therefore favours withholding the information.

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 CIO-FOI-IR@mod.gov.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


Defence Business Services Secretariat