



Army Policy and Secretariat
Army Headquarters
IDL 24 Blenheim Building
Marlborough Lines
Andover
Hampshire, SP11 8HJ
United Kingdom

E-mail: armysec-group@mod.gov.uk
Website: www.army.mod.uk

Ref:ArmyPolSec/D/N/FOI2024/23966

13 January 2025

Dear [REDACTED]

Thank you for your email of 5 December 2024 in which you requested the following information:

1/ The number of confirmed coroner suicides by any personnel on all garrison grounds (e.g. Catterick etc) including any off grounds by personnel who are based/registered at the individual garrison grounds, for each full year since and inclusive 2020, including 2024. Please break down by year per garrison.

2/ The number of suicides - where the mechanism of injury suggests suicide but a coroner's inquest is awaited - by any personnel on all garrison grounds (e.g. Catterick etc) including any off grounds by personnel who are based/registered at the individual garrison grounds, for each full year since and inclusive 2020, including 2024. Please break down by year per garrison.

A Public Interest Test has now been completed within the Ministry of Defence, and I can confirm that information in scope of your request is held and has been provided at Annex A below. Some of what you have requested at part two of your request is exempt from release under section 38 (Health and safety) of the Freedom of Information Act and is therefore being withheld.

Section 38 (1)(a) exempts information that, if disclosed, would, or would be likely to, endanger the physical or mental health of any individual. This is a qualified exemption which requires a public interest test to establish the balance on releasing or withholding information.

Each request for such information is considered on its own merits and, in the case of this request, the arguments for release include public interest in Armed Forces deaths, including suicides. Arguments to withhold information include that family members of those who passed away may suffer a negative impact on their mental health. MoD has a residual duty of care for the next of kin of those Service personnel

who die whilst in-Service. It may have a negative impact on grieving families if information is released that could identify individuals whose death suggests suicide, before a Coroner's Inquest is completed. Careful consideration has been given to the risks associated with releasing this level of detail and it has been decided that, on balance, the breakdown of information by year and Garrison should be withheld as release would be likely to endanger the physical or mental health of any individual.

Under Section 16 of the Act (Advice and Assistance) you may find it helpful to note that in any given year, there are a number of deaths where the mechanism of injury suggests suicide, but the Coroner returns a narrative or misadventure verdict, so we cannot assume that the Coroner will return a suicide verdict in each of these cases.

Defence Statistics Health produce an annual National Statistic on Suicide in the UK Armed Forces which is released at the end of March every year and available at the link below.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/uk-armed-forces-suicide-and-open-verdict-deaths-index>

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

Personnel Leader B

Army Policy and Secretariat

Annex A

1. In the period 1 January 2020 to 15 December 2024 (latest information available), there were 21 coroner confirmed suicides among UK Armed Forces regular personnel who were based at a garrison at the time of their death or the death occurred on garrison grounds. Table 1 provides a breakdown of the numbers by year and garrison.

Table 1: Coroner confirmed suicides among UK Armed Forces regular personnel based at or upon garrison grounds, year.

1 January 2020 – 15 December 2024

	All	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024 ²
Total	21	5	8	6	1	1
Aldershot Garrison	2	0	0	1	0	1
Catterick Garrison	7	2	2	3	0	0
London Central Garrison	0	0	0	0	0	0
Larkhill Garrison	2	0	0	2	0	0
Tidworth Netheravon and Bulford (TNB) Garrison	10	3	6	0	1	0
Warminster Garrison	0	0	0	0	0	0

Source: Defence Statistics Health

2. In the period 1 January 2020 to 15 December 2024 (latest information available), there were seven deaths among UK regular Armed Forces personnel who were based at a garrison at the time of their death or the death occurred on garrison grounds where the mechanism of injury suggests suicide but are awaiting a Coroner's inquest. It is the Coroner's role to determine cause of death.

Background notes

Suicide Data

3. Defence Statistics Health compiles the Department's authoritative deaths database for all UK Armed Forces personnel who died whilst in Service going back to 1984. Information is compiled from several internal and external sources from which we release a number of internal analyses and external National Statistics Notices. The information presented has been compiled from data held by Defence Statistics on 15 December 2024.
4. The information on deaths presented are for UK Armed Forces regular personnel and only those UK Armed Forces reservists who died whilst deployed on operations as Defence Statistics Health do not routinely receive notification of all reserve deaths.
5. When providing statistics on suicides, Defence Statistics Health rely exclusively on the information provided by coroners in England and Wales and in Northern Ireland, and the Procurator Fiscal in Scotland. This ensures the Department's objectivity, as all accidental deaths and those resulting from violent action must be referred to these officials for investigation. For sake of brevity these sources of information have been labelled collectively as "coroner's verdicts". There is an obligation for all

accidental deaths, and those resulting from violent action, to be referred to these officials. Inquests are usually held within a few months of the death, but occasionally a few years may elapse, therefore some recent deaths may not have clearly defined causal information.

6. The information presented includes coroner-confirmed suicides in line with the definition used by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) in the publication of National Statistics. The National Statistics definition of suicide includes deaths given an underlying cause of intentional self-harm or an injury/poisoning of undetermined intent. In England and Wales, it has been customary to assume that most injuries and poisonings of undetermined intent are cases where the harm was self-inflicted, but there was insufficient evidence to prove that the deceased deliberately intended to kill themselves and thus given an open or narrative verdict by the coroner. The convention of including both suicide and open verdicts has been adopted across the UK. In accordance with ONS practice, throughout, the term 'suicide' should be understood to include all suicide and open verdict deaths.

Personnel Data

7. Joint Personnel Administration (JPA) system is the most accurate source for demographic information on UK Armed Forces personnel.
8. A service person's base location was identified using the 'location unit' field in JPA. Anyone with 'Aldershot', 'Bulford', 'Catterick', 'London', 'Larkhill', 'Tidworth', and 'Warminster' as a location in a garrison barrack has been used in this analysis. A list of barracks at each garrison were provided to Analysis Health to search for the data. This analysis includes personnel where JPA identified them as being based at any of the above Garrisons on the first day of the month even if their date of death occurred later within that same month.
9. A free text search was conducted upon 'Incident Location' and 'Location of Death' data fields within the Department's deaths database to identify any personnel who were not posted to a garrison unit, but died whilst on garrison grounds by suicide or where the mechanism of injury suggests suicide but are awaiting a Coroner's Inquest.