



Mr Richard John
science | innovation | technology
MINISTRY OF DEFENCE
Level 1, Zone K, Main Building,
Whitehall
London SW1A 2HB

Telephone 0207 218 9000

Mr Charlie Burton

Your Reference:
27-02-2009-164324-018

E-mail:
request-853xxxxxxxxx@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx

26 March 2009

Dear Mr Burton,

1. Your correspondence dated 27th February has been considered to be a request for information in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000. You asked if the Ministry of Defence (MOD) could provide you with a list of its scientific advisory councils and committees, or ad hoc groups that you have convened or consulted for scientific advice, since 1997. For each of these could MOD please provide details of when they met, who was present, and the topic of discussion.

2. However, it has been assessed that the costs for which we are permitted to charge in providing this information will exceed the appropriate limit. This appropriate limit is specified in regulations and for central government is set at £600. This represents the estimated cost of one person spending three and a half working days in determining whether the Department holds the information, and locating, retrieving and extracting the information. Science and Technology Corporate Support has estimated that in order to retrieve the documents that you have requested would cost in excess of the £600 limit. Under the terms of Section 12 of the FOI Act, this means that we are not obliged to comply with your request.

3. The MOD gets a wide range of independent external scientific advice for ministers and officials for evidence based decision making through several NDPBs for which information is available free of charge to the greatest extent possible. Internal scientific advice is also provided often on issues where disclosure would, or would be likely to prejudice the capability, effectiveness or security of the armed forces. Information on NDPBs is usually accessible via the main MOD website (<http://www.mod.uk>), detailed in <http://www.mod.uk/DefenceInternet/AboutDefence/CorporatePublications/AnnualReports/MODAnnualReports0708/SupplementaryDocuments200708.htm> (copy attached) or in the MOD Publication Scheme and Disclosure Log.

4. MOD sponsors the following scientific advisory NDPBs:

Advisory Group on Medical Countermeasures (AGMC)¹

The AGMC provides specialist advice to the MOD, as required, on the medical aspects of defence against chemical, biological and radiological threats.

Advisory Group on Military Medicine (AGOMM)²

The AGOMM provides independent specialist advice to MOD on all aspects of military medicine. Point of Contact is the Executive Secretary currently provided by Assistant Head Medical Force Protection Staff in Surgeon General's Department on 0207 807 0449.

Animal Welfare Advisory Committee (AWAC)

The AWAC ensures the maintenance of the highest standards of animal welfare for animals used for defence research purposes and to provide independent oversight. The majority of animals used in defence research will be in the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (Dstl) establishments.

Defence Nuclear Safety Committee (DNSC)³

The DNSC is responsible for advising the Secretary of State for Defence (and other Ministers) on all public safety matters associated with the construction, operation and maintenance of nuclear powered warships and the design, manufacture, transport, storage, handling and operational training related to nuclear weapon systems.

Defence Scientific Advisory Council (DSAC)

The DSAC provides independent advice to the Secretary of State for Defence on matters of concern to the Ministry of Defence in the fields of science, engineering & technology.

Nuclear Research Advisory Council (NRAC)⁴

The NRAC is charged with reviewing the Atomic Weapons Establishment (AWE) nuclear warhead research and capability maintenance programme, including the requirement for above ground experiments and other facilities and techniques necessary to develop and maintain a UK nuclear weapon capability in the absence of underground testing. The NRAC also examines AWE's programme of international collaboration.

Science Advisory Committee on the Medical Implications of Less Than Lethal Weapons (SACMILL)

The SACMILL provides valuable, authoritative and independent advice to MOD and Other Government Departments (OGDs) on medical aspects of the use of less lethal weapons such as water cannon, impact rounds and the Taser stun gun.

5. If you are not satisfied with this response or you 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 Head of Corporate Information, 6th Floor, MOD Main Building, Whitehall, SW1A 2HB (e-mail CIO-XD@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.

6. 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 investigate your case until the MOD internal review process has been completed. Further details of the role and powers of the Information Commissioner can be found on the Commissioner's website, <http://www.ico.gov.uk>.

Yours sincerely,

R John