



Ministry
of Defence

Headquarters Surgeon General Secretariat
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Ref: FOI2016/00850

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Mr Jonathan Mantle

15 February 2016

Dear Mr Mantle

Thank you for your requests of 20 January 2016 in which you asked the following:

"Please could I have all information that the army has for the preparation for dealing with viral outbreaks within the UK (Deliberate or not)

Please could I have all information that the air force has for the preparation for dealing with viral outbreaks within the UK (Deliberate or not)

Please could I have all information that the Navy has for the preparation for dealing with viral outbreaks within the UK (Deliberate or not)

Please could I have all information that the marines has for the preparation for dealing with viral outbreaks within the UK (Deliberate or not)

Dear Special Air Service (Reserve), Please could I request how your service would deal with a viral outbreak within the UK (Deliberate or not)

Dear Special Boat Service, Please could I request how your organisation would deal with a viral outbreak within the UK (deliberate or not)"

The Ministry of Defence (MOD) can confirm that it is treating these as requests for information under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) 2000. The MOD can also confirm that it holds information within the scope of your requests.

Under the Appropriate Limit and Fees Regulations public authorities are able to aggregate two or more requests where they relate to any extent, to the same or similar information. provided certain conditions are met. Section 12(4) of the FOIA states these are where requests:

- are made by one person, or by different persons who appear to the public authority to be acting in concert or in pursuance of a campaign;
- are received within any period of 60 consecutive working days; and

Under Section 12(4) of the FOIA, provided these conditions are met, the Department is permitted to regard the estimated cost of complying with any of the requests to be the estimated total cost of complying with all of them for the purpose of considering whether complying with the request would exceed the appropriate limit. The MOD is therefore applying exemption 12(4) to all of your requests for information submitted on 20 January 2016 about how the Services would deal with viral outbreaks.

It has been estimated that the cost of complying with your requests aggregated under the Fees Regulations as explained above would exceed the appropriate limit and therefore under the terms of Section 12 of the Act, we are not obliged to comply.. The appropriate limit is specified in regulations and for central government this 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, locating, retrieving and extracting it.

The MOD may be able to provide information requested if you reduce or refine your request to bring the cost of compliance under the limit. To assist, the MOD can advise you that it holds Joint Service Publication 950 Leaflet 7-2-2 – Communicable disease control in the Armed Forces – which sets out the Defence medical policy on dealing with viral outbreaks. Please contact the Headquarters of the Surgeon General if you would like to refine your request or require further advice in doing so.

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 the Headquarters of the Surgeon General 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 Information Rights Compliance team, 1st Floor, MOD Main Building, Whitehall, SW1A 2HB (e-mail CIO-FOI-IR@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.

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.org.uk>.

Yours sincerely,

Headquarters of the Surgeon General