



Ministry  
of Defence

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FOI2019/10872

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Mr G Allison  
request-605835-ec4fa742@whatdotheyknow.com

14 November 2019

Dear Mr Allison,

Release of Information

Further to our letter of 18 October 2019, I am now able to respond in full to your request for the following information:

'I am looking for information, including any provisional planning, on the number and type of vessels, aircraft, personnel and other assets that are hoped to be deployed for the 2021 Carrier Strike Group (CSG21) operational deployment of HMS Queen Elizabeth.

I understand that there may be no solid numbers, If that is the case then I would welcome information on planning aspirations for the above.

In addition, information on whether the CSG21 deployment will head to the Pacific is'

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

As explained in our initial response, a search was completed within the Ministry of Defence and it was confirmed that some information in scope of your request that is held may fall within the scope of the qualified exemption under Section 26(1)(b) (Defence) of the FOI Act. Since then, it has been determined that Section 24(1) (National Security) and Section 27 (International Relations) of the Act also applies to this information.

Under Section 24(1) (National Security), information is exempt for the purpose of safeguarding national security. Under section 26(1)(b) (Defence), information is exempt if its disclosure would, or would be likely to prejudice the capability, effectiveness or security of any relevant forces. Under Section 27(1)(a), information is exempt if its disclosure under the Act would, or would be likely to, prejudice relations between the United Kingdom and any other State. As these are qualified exemptions, the decision to withhold the requested

information is subject to a Public Interest Test. These have been conducted and it may assist you to understand our decision if I outline the factors that were considered.

While it is recognised that there is a high level of interest in of the future capabilities of the Royal Navy (RN) and the collaborative arrangements between the UK and other states which would in turn, provide assurance to the public of the preparedness of the RN, releasing the detailed information that you require risks prejudicing the vital relationship between the countries and risking the national and international security benefits that result from those relationships. In addition, the provision of this information could undermine the UK mission by compromising its intended effects. This would have implications on national security, both at home and abroad and would impact on the effectiveness of the UK's Defence capability. As a consequence, the information you have requested is being withheld in its entirety.

Under section 16 (Advice and Assistance) of the FOI Act, I can tell you that the then Secretary of State for Defence announced earlier this year Carrier Strike Group 2021 will deploy through the Mediterranean, Middle East and to the Pacific Region during 2021. The make-up of the Task Group will depend on the likely threats and missions that will be encountered but will include UK Type 23 Frigates, Type 45 Destroyers as well as support shipping of the Royal Fleet Auxiliary and Royal Marine detachments. Aircraft taking part will include: F35B; Merlin Mk2 ASW and Crows Nest; Wildcat Mk2; Merlin Mk4. It is likely the Task Group will also be joined by Partner Nations during the deployment.

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.uk](mailto: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

Navy Command Secretariat - FOI Section