



Ministry
of Defence

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Mr David Whyte

Via: request-179050-448f8f6c@whatdotheyknow.com

Our Reference:
FOI2013/00019
(previously 30-09-2013-
155226-003)

Date: 30 July 2014

Dear Mr Whyte,

Request for Information under the Freedom of Information (FOI) Act

Further to my letter of 11 July 2014, I am writing to provide you with an update on your Freedom of Information request in which you ask for the following information:

'I refer to your reply to my FOI 11-03-2013-114455-007 dated 3 May 2013.

In the 'Bunker' located at ground Zero, or 'Steel Cubes' as they appear to be referred to, could you please inform me as to the purpose of the instruments located within this structure.

I counted at least five or six instruments prior to detonation of the devices detonated during 'Grapple Z' but more may have been added after cessation of my duties within this structure.

- 1. Could you please advise me on the total number of instruments located within the afore mentioned structure on detonation for both Pennant and Burgee atomic detonations?*
- 2. Could you please advise me as to the information being monitored, and recorded, by each of these instruments during both Pennant and Burgee detonations?'*

Please note that this request has been given a new reference number as shown above as we have introduced a new FOI computer system.

A search for information has now been completed and I can confirm that the Ministry of Defence does not hold any information that falls within the scope of your first question.

However, under section 16(1) of the FOI Act, we have a duty to provide advice and assistance, where possible, with your request. You may find it helpful to know that the document 'Grapple Z Scientific Plan' describes the tasks required to be undertaken by the various groups involved during the Pennant and Burgee detonations. It can be ordered from The National Archives (TNA) with the reference ES 1/603.

The TNA website can be accessed via: <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk>

Alternatively, you may wish to contact TNA by telephone on (+44) 20 8876 3444 or write to: The National Archives, Kew, Richmond, Surrey, UK, TW9 4DU.

With regards to your second question, I can confirm that the Ministry of Defence holds information in scope of your request. This comprises four documents which are attached to this email and entitled;

- OPERATION GRAPPLE Z (Interim Report) – Part 5, Electronic Measurements (Christmas Island).
- OPERATION GRAPPLE Z (Interim Report) – Part 7, Nuclear Transients.
- OPERATION GRAPPLE Z (Interim Report) – Part 17, Weapon Instrumentation Group: Part 18, Weapons Measurements Group.
- TPC Visit Report – Discussion of Grapple and Radio flash measurements.

I must inform you that some of the information has been withheld under FOIA exemptions and redacted accordingly. These redactions fall entirely within the absolute exemption section 40(2) (Personal Data), qualified exemption section 24(1) (National Security) and qualified exemption 27(1)&(2) (International Relations).

Section 40(2) has been applied to some of the information in order to protect personal information as governed by the Data Protection Act 1998. Section 40 is an absolute exemption and there is no requirement to consider the public interest in making a decision to withhold the information.

As explained in previous correspondence, section 24(1) (National Security) 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.

For section 24(1), it is recognised that there is a public interest in releasing information about the UK's nuclear deterrent; that the UK's nuclear weapon activities, past and present, are a matter of significant public interest and the release of information would demonstrate the MOD's commitment to transparency and openness on defence nuclear matters.

In this particular case, it has been assessed that the balance of public interest lies in withholding certain information about specific details relating to the calibration and testing of thermonuclear weapons. This is because the release of such information would allow deductions to be made about current activities and the nuclear weapons programme that would likely result in harm to national security. Its release would also be a breach of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty by allowing public access to, and therefore encouraging the spread of, nuclear weapons technology.

Some of the information in scope of your request is also covered by qualified exemption section 27(1)&(2). It is recognised that there is a public interest in releasing information about the way that the UK works with other nations as part of the UK's nuclear deterrent.

A public interest test has been conducted and found that the release of this information would prejudice working relationships with other nations.

I very much regret the time taken to provide a substantive reply to your request. In your email dated 11 July you requested an internal review for this FOI request and, having now received a substantive response, if you still wish an internal review to be undertaken please let me or the Information Rights Compliance team know, at 1st Floor, MOD Main building, Whitehall, SW1A 2HB (email 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.gov.uk>.

Yours sincerely,

Defence Equipment & Support Policy Secretariat