



MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

DE&S Policy Secretariat Submarines



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Mr J Pasquini

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Our Reference:
22-11-2011-102954-002

Date: 19 December 2011

Dear Mr Pasquini,

Request for Information – Release of Information under the Freedom of Information (FOI) Act 2000

Further to our email of 30 November 2011, I am writing to provide you with a substantive answer to your FOI request in which you asked:

On April 28, 1958, the British Government detonated the most powerful Hydrogen Bomb built by the UK. It was detonated at a height of 8,000 feet off the Southern tip of Christmas island, located 2 degrees above the Equator and 156 degrees West.

After the detonation, a number of aircraft flying in the vicinity of Christmas island became contaminated with Radio Active particles. On landing they were ordered to the Decontamination Pans located adjacent to the Airfield,. Where they were washed down and decontaminated of external radioactive particles.

I would like to get a schedule of all the aircraft decontaminated at Christmas Island on 28 April, 1958. To included: Aircraft Number, Type, Crew, level of Contamination for each aircraft cleaned and the amount of water needed to clean each aircraft.

This data should be well documented and stored in AWE archives, and should be readily accessible.

I confirm that the Department holds some information that falls within the scope of your request.

The following aircraft were on active operation at Christmas Island on 28 April 1958:

- Valiant aircraft from 49 Squadron RAF were responsible for dropping the device.
- Canberra PR7 aircraft from 58 Squadron RAF, carried out high altitude operations.
- Canberra B6 aircraft from 76 Squadron RAF, conducted sampling from the resulting nuclear cloud.
- Shackleton aircraft from 240 Squadron RAF carried out low level operations.

Despite an extensive search of our paper and electronic records I can confirm that the Department does not hold any information which specifically refers to decontaminated aircraft or the cleaning process carried out on them. However, information relating to the above mentioned may be recorded in the relevant Operational Record Books, which have been transferred to the National Archives. This information, therefore, is exempt under Section 21 of the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), as it is already in the public domain. Details of how to access information in the National Archives can be viewed at the following address; <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/>

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, 2nd 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.gov.uk>.

Yours sincerely,

Policy Secretariat Submarines