



Strategic Command
Headquarters Defence Medical Services

**Headquarters Defence Medical
Services Secretariat**

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Date: 26 November 2020

Dear Anika ,

Thank you for your enquiries dated 12,16 and 20 November 2020 to the Ministry of Defence (MOD), in which you asked the following:

"Snakebite envenomation (SBE) is considered a neglected tropical disease affecting mostly the impoverished in many tropical and subtropical countries. Around 5.4 million people are affected each year, resulting in 1.8-2.7 million cases of envenoming, 140,000 deaths and triple the amount of amputations and permanent disabilities. Most of these affect poor rural communities in low and middle-income countries across Africa, Asia, and Latin America.

Many studies have been done by researchers in other countries on the impact of snakebite on their armed forces and training. There is currently no information available on the scale of this amongst the British Armed forces that are currently deployed in areas of snake bite endemic regions such as Nigeria, South Sudan, Iraq, Brunei, Sierra Leone, Iraq. etc. etc.

We seek to better understand the impact of snakebite on British military personnel as well as the treatment regimens employed to treat personnel to assess the extent of the impact. Our aims for the are to review current statistics, treatment protocols and how we can improve them to save lives as well as to design better educational tools to aid healthcare professionals working within the armed forces as well as soldiers alike."

Your enquiries are being treated as a request for information under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) 2000. The MOD can confirm that it holds information within the scope of your enquiries. The enclosed, co-authored by Armed Forces medical experts, most succinctly explains our position on snakebites.

If you have any queries regarding the content of this letter, please contact this office.

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). 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 FOIA. 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,

HQ Defence Medical Services