

Ref : FOI2024-030

[REDACTED]

11<sup>th</sup> June 2024

Dear [REDACTED]

Further to our previous correspondence regarding your request for the following information:

*PHOTOGRAPHS OF UK-NORWAY INITIATIVE AND LETTERPRESS EXERCISES 2009 AND 2017*

*I participated in both of these exercises and I'm now looking for a handful of photographs that I could use in my forthcoming book entitled 'Britain and WMD Verification'. This will be published by Pen and Sword with my manuscript and any accompanying photos due on 22 June 2024. The manuscript was cleared by the FCDO Senior Sensitivity Reviewer back in January this year in consultation with AWE and the MOD. Anything that you would be able to release would be greatly appreciated. A few photos were published at the time as part of the MOD's publicity campaigns.*

Your request has been handled as a request for information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (the Act).

We can confirm that the Atomic Weapons Establishment (AWE) holds some of the information requested; and that AWE does not hold any photographs relating to the UK-Norway Initiative.

However, we are withholding the photographic images held on AWE systems of the Letterpress Exercise under Sections 40(2) and 27(1) of the FOI Act. AWE are obliged to comply with the Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR and as such are prohibited from disclosing personal data to third parties, where doing so would breach the data protection principles set out in the UK GDPR. Section 40(2) is an absolute exemption and as such does not require a Public Interest Test (PIT) to be carried out.

Section 27(1) provides that information can be withheld where disclosure would or would be likely to harm UK interests which are set out in the exemption. Section 27(1) is a qualified exemption and so is subject to the PIT. The PIT has been conducted and has fallen in favour of applying the exemption, and as such, withholding the information in full.

We will now set out arguments for and against disclosure in terms of the public interest, along with the reasons for our conclusion.

Whilst the Act contains a presumption in favour of disclosure and releasing some images from the exercises would demonstrate AWE's appetite for promoting openness and transparency Section 27(1) has been applied because the photographs in question were taken by Norwegian officials during the course of an exercise run in collaboration with Norway; with copies being sent to AWE. AWE would be risking prejudicing

relations between the UK and Norway if the photographs were to be released under the Act as there is an expectation of confidentiality of communications between governments and their departments. The balance of the PIT concluded that whilst release would increase public understanding and confidence in the relations the United Kingdom has with other international states in its assistance with operations, the balance of the public interest lay in withholding the information you requested.

Under Section 16, advice and assistance, it might be helpful to note permission for these photographs will need to be sought from MOD (Ministry of Defence) via [DIPR-Copyright@mod.gov.uk](mailto:DIPR-Copyright@mod.gov.uk).

Please remember to quote the reference number above in any future communications. If you have any queries regarding the content of this letter, please contact this office in the first instance.

If you are unhappy with the way your request has been handled you have a right to request an internal review within 40 days of receiving this letter, by writing to [information.requests@awe.co.uk](mailto:information.requests@awe.co.uk) or our postal address: Information Requests Team, AWE Aldermaston, Reading, RG7 4PR. If you are still unhappy after an internal review has been completed, under the provisions of Section 50 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 you have the right to take your complaint to the Information Commissioner's Office. Please note the Commissioner will generally not consider a complaint until you have exhausted AWE's internal complaints process.

Yours sincerely,

AWE Information Requests Team