

Ref: FOI2025-070

10 December 2025

Dear [REDACTED],

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

Original request:

- 1) How many documents containing or tagged with the word 'blood' are on the Archive Database
- 2) How many documents containing or tagged with the word 'urine' are on the Archive Database
- 3) The security classification of the Archive Database
- 4) How many times, and on what dates, the database has been searched in the past four years"

Clarification Sought:

To assist in processing your request, we asked for clarification regarding:

- A description of the database referred to
- Any alternative names or identifiers

Clarification Received:

You clarified that your request was based on information provided in FOI2023-026, where AWE referred to the "Archive Database" as the largest archive of nuclear test information held at AWE. You further asked whether this term referred to the Merlin database, and requested details of any other archives containing nuclear test veteran information, aside from Archive A38.1 and Archive A6.

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

We can advise that whilst AWE may hold some information in scope of the subjects you have requested, we will not be able to answer your request without exceeding the appropriate limit set out at Section 12 of the Act.

Section 12 of the Act allows public authorities to refuse a request for information if the estimated cost of compliance exceeds the appropriate limit. For central government departments, this limit is set at £600; for other public authorities, including ours, it is £450. This equates to 18 hours of staff time, calculated at a rate of £25 per hour, and includes activities such as determining whether the information is held, locating, retrieving, and extracting it.

In this case, The term "archive database" used in our previous response referred to the Merlin database and identifying how many documents contain the words "blood" or "urine" would require a manual review of over 28,000 documents. We estimate this task would take approximately 4,600 hours to complete, at a cost exceeding £110,000. As such, the request far exceeds the cost limit set out under Section 12.

We have previously addressed your questions regarding how many documents are tagged with the words "blood" or "urine" in the Merlin database, which can be found [here](#).

In relation to part 4 of your request, we can confirm we have not been able to locate any information.

Under Section 16 of the Act, we have a duty to provide advice and assistance to help you refine your request. We can advise that each document within the database carries its own individual security classification.

Although we are unable to fulfil your current request, you are of course welcome to submit a new request if you believe there is a more targeted or specific way to frame your query. Please note, however, that we cannot guarantee a refined request will fall within the cost limit or that other exemptions will not apply.

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 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