



Ministry of Defence

Air Command Secretariat
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Royal Air Force
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Our Ref: FOI2015/04988

Mrs. V.C.K Metcalfe
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Email: luanam@btinternet.com

3 July 2015

Dear Mrs Metcalfe

Thank you for your email of 8 June 2015 requesting the following information:

"I am hoping that the M.O.D will not claim that industrial wind turbines are not a risk at 'kill assessment' because they can be spotted by aircraft - as this really begs the question. Clearly being 'spotted' depends on a number of factors – not least bad weather/foggy conditions.

As wind turbines near airports are a risk to multiple lives, please provide examples of any radar mitigation software which has been proven to work.

Should there be any currently in existence and use, does the vendor of the software involved guarantee that no lives will be at risk by the reliance placed upon it?

Should the answer to both questions be that no such technology exists, may I have a written undertaking that when it comes to risk to multiple lives, decisions will be precautionary in that should such a technology be adopted, the software will have to be guaranteed by the vendor that no lives will be put at risk?"

I am treating your correspondence as a request for information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA).

A search for the information has now been completed within the Ministry of Defence, and I can confirm that no information in scope of your request is held. We hold no information in relation to windfarms and 'radar mitigation software'.

Under Section 16 (advice and guidance) it may help you to understand the following. MOD aerodromes alongside major civil aerodromes have stringent safeguarding criteria in relation to windfarms near to aerodromes. Further details of the safeguarding process can be found here. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/safeguarding-aerodromes-technical-sites-and-military-explosives-storage-areas>

Consequently, MOD continues to assess every wind turbine application on a case by case basis and on its own merits. Our clear responsibility to ensure that military operations are safe and that radars of various types are not affected by developments.

In addition No.1 Aeronautical Information Distribution Unit produce 1:250,000 scale helicopter charts and 1:500,000 scale low flying charts for all aircrew. These charts contain extensive topographical information, powerline information and depict all obstructions over 150ft above ground level in general airspace and obstructions over 80ft above ground level in Tactical Training Areas. This enables low flying pilots in clear weather conditions to know the exact locations of wind turbines, alongside other obstructions like church spires or TV masts, in order to see and avoid the obstruction.

In poor weather pilots will follow rules called instrument flight rules, where they rely on their aircraft instruments to ensure safety of flight. In this case there are stringent regulations to ensure avoidance of all obstructions. This is achieved by setting area Terrain Safe Levels. This is set out in the following regulation

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/398146/RA3231_Initial_Issue.pdf

As detailed in the above link, for these flights the pilots will fly at levels which are no lower than 1,000ft above the tallest fixed obstruction within 30 nautical miles of their aircraft. As an example if the tallest hill in the area is 850ft high and on the top of the hill is a 150ft tall wind turbine. In poor weather, pilots will fly no lower than 2,000 foot within 30 nautical miles of that hill to ensure a full 1,000ft separation is always maintained from the top of the wind turbine.

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 Information Rights Compliance team, 1st 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, <https://ico.org.uk/>.

Yours sincerely

[Original Signed]

Mr Ian Mathias
Secretariat 3a
Air Command