



MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

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2 August 2005

Michael Lewis
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Our reference: 18-07-2005-122443-007

Dear Mr Lewis,

Request for Information – incendiary bombs

Thank you for your correspondence dated 16 Jul 2005 in response to our answer to your request for information in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

In your email you ask for clarification over the implication that there is no documentary record of the source and occasion of information provided by the US Military/Government from which questions raised by parliamentarians were raised. You state that it is difficult to see how the information could have been provided in answer to Parliamentary Questions and to Ministers. Perhaps I could explain.

The information on which the earlier assurances given to Parliament that MK 77 Firebombs had not been used was sourced direct from Baghdad. A UK official working in Baghdad contacted the Baghdad Combined Operations Centre asking for clarification of whether MK 77 Firebombs had been used in Iraq. A US Officer working in that centre provided the assurance that they had not. We understand that the assurance was given orally. That information was conveyed back to the UK by telephone conversation.

Occasional difficulties in obtaining timely secure data communications between the US and UK in Baghdad, and from UK personnel in Baghdad back to the UK sometimes mean that telephone conversations are the most efficient means of communicating. The realities of exchanging information within an operational theatre do not always allow us to achieve the degree of confirmation that we would normally hope to achieve for information that is provided to Parliament. Clearly, where this is possible it is preferable to do so.

If you are dissatisfied with this answer or wish to complain about any aspect of the handling of this request, then you should contact the undersigned in the first instance. Should you remain dissatisfied, then you may apply for an internal review by contacting the Director of Information Exploitation, 6th Floor, MOD Main Building, Whitehall, SW1A 2HB.

If you are still unhappy 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.informationcommissioner.gov.uk>.

Yours sincerely,

Susie Myatt