

BREACH OF THE CODE OF PRACTICE FOR OFFICIAL STATISTICS

This document reports a breach of the Code of Practice for Official Statistics, or the relevant Pre-release Access to Official Statistics Orders, to which the Code applies as if it included these orders.

1. Background information

Name of Statistical Output (including weblink to the relevant output or 'landing page')

British Casualties – Afghanistan – 7 October 2001 – 31 March 2013. These are found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/op-herrick-casualty-and-fatality-tables> or <http://www.dasa.mod.uk/applications/newWeb/www/index.php?page=48&thiscontent=1360&date=2013-04-18&pubType=0&PublishTime=08:30:00&from=home&tabOption=1>

This is not a National Statistic.

The publication was scheduled for release at 09:30 on 18 April 2013.

Name of Producer Organisation

Ministry of Defence (MoD)

Name and contact details of the statistical Head of Profession (Lead Official in an Arm's Length Body) submitting this report, and date of report

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Breach report completed on 22 April 2013.

2. Circumstances of breach

Relevant Principle/Protocol and Practice

Protocol 2: Release Practices

Practice 8: "Ensure that no indication of the substance of a statistical report is made public, or given to the media or any other party not recorded as eligible for access before publication. Report to the National Statistician immediately any accidental or wrongful release, and investigate the circumstances."

Date of occurrence

17 April 2013

Nature of breach (including links with previous breaches, if any)

Defence Statistics sent the British Casualties in Afghanistan Official Statistics to the MOD's Permanent Joint Headquarters (PJHQ) on 17 April 2013 at 09:30 on the agreed pre-release date. PJHQ are then responsible for sending out the publication and Ministerial Submission to the agreed distribution list, which includes the Defence Media and Communications (DMC) Internet team. The DMC Internet team are responsible for publishing the statistic on the Government website (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/op-herrick-casualty-and-fatality-tables>). The DMC Internet team incorrectly published the statistics on the pre-release date rather than setting it to be uploaded on the website for 09:30 on 18 April 2013.

The breach was discovered by the Defence Statistics production team at 09:00 on 18 April.

Reasons for breach

Defence Statistics staff contacted the DMC Internet team on 18 April, who admitted their error and highlighted that the e-mail they had received from PJHQ didn't contain the usual text about the publication being embargoed and instructions for when it should be published. As such, a member of the Internet team went ahead and published the statistic straight away on 17 April.

3. Reactions and impact (both within the producer body and outside)

At this stage, there has been no adverse impact of the early publication.

4. Corrective actions taken to prevent reoccurrence of such a breach (include short-term actions, and long-term changes made to procedures)

Defence Statistics staff realised that the statistics were on gov.uk at 09:00 on 18 April. They made the decision not to remove the publication from gov.uk, as this was unlikely to have been completed before 09:30, the scheduled publication time.

They informed and sought advice from the Head of Branch on 19 April (she and her deputy were not in office on 18 April), who advised that a breach had taken place. The MOD HoP was informed at 11:35 on 22 April and confirmed that the early release was a breach. Defence Statistics contacted the DMC Internet team and PJHQ to inform them that their actions had caused a breach to occur and that review was now needed on the process for how the statistics are distributed ahead of pre-release.

Defence Statistics have spoken to the relevant teams responsible for distribution of the Statistic to remind them of the rules on Official Statistics. PJHQ has stated that it will make

sure that a note is included on the pre-release e-mail, explicitly stating that the publication is embargoed until 09:30 the following day. It has also agreed to send a separate e-mail to the Internet team, detailing the publishing instructions for the statistic, and clearly setting out the Official Statistics rules and responsibilities.

The Defence Statistics staff that released the information have been reminded to ensure the correct release dates of future official statistics in order to meet the Code of Practice and to check on the status of publications on pre-release and release day.

Defence Statistics are developing a new breach reporting policy to clarify the roles and responsibility of staff when potential breaches of the Code are discovered. This policy will be distributed to all staff responsible for producing or publishing statistics in order to prevent delays in reporting breaches to the HoP and National Statistician's Office.

5. Links to published statements about this breach

A statement notifying users of the breach was published on the Defence Statistics website on 23 April 2013 (www.dasa.mod.uk).