

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')

Military Search and Rescue (SAR) Monthly Statistics

This is a National Statistic.

Link to publication:

<http://www.dasa.mod.uk/applications/newWeb/www/index.php?page=67&pubType=1&thiscontent=430&date=2013-03-28>

Name of Producer Organisation

Ministry of Defence

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 26 April 2013.

2. Circumstances of breach

Relevant Principle/Protocol and Practice

Protocol 2: Release Practices; Practice 8 (Public Disclosure)

Date of occurrence

The breach was discovered on Tuesday 23 April 2013.

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

The Royal Navy's HMS Gannet Search and Rescue (SAR) unit has been releasing its own monthly number of callouts in their Monthly Mission Summaries posted on the Royal Navy website approximately one month before the release of the National Statistics monthly report.

The data currently on the website suggests that this has been happening since around August 2011. HMS Gannet could not give an exact date for when these figures were first released, but confirmed that it was around summer 2011. Prior to that date some details of incidents had been released, but no numbers.

HMS Gannet has also been publishing a full list of individual incidents each month. These lists could be used to work out the number of incidents even if the number was not published.

The SAR unit had not been given access to the final statistics, but was using its own version of the data. This meant there were also discrepancies between what was released and the final published figures. There is currently no pre-release access to the SAR statistics in their final form.

We are not aware of any other SAR units that are doing this.

Reasons for breach

HMS Gannet has been releasing these figures for some time and was not aware that this was a breach of the Code of Practice. Since being made aware of the breach the unit has responded promptly and has removed the statistics from its website. It has also agreed a new process for future months, which will ensure that there are no further breaches of the Code.

The statisticians in MOD do not have a separate Service Level Agreement (SLA) with HMS Gannet or with other individual SAR units. The SLA between Defence Economics Price Indices branch and the RAF Search and Rescue Force Commander does make explicit reference to the National Statistics Code of Practice and includes the following clause regarding release practices:

"AOC 2 Gp agrees not to publish statistics that would conflict with published National Statistics, without the agreement of DASA"

It is the responsibility of the RAF Search & Rescue Force Commander to ensure that this guidance is followed by RAF SAR units, but not the Royal Navy units such as HMS Gannet. This breach has highlighted the need for an equivalent SLA between Defence Economics and the Royal Navy Search and Rescue Force Commander.

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

HMS Gannet was informed on 23 April that a breach had occurred. We are not aware that any wider use has been made of the figures e.g. by the media.

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

The Head of Profession was informed there had been a breach on 23 April 2013. Action was taken immediately to review the contents of the Monthly Mission Summaries posted on the Royal Navy website and check for any further breaches.

Contact was made with the UK Statistics Authority on 23 April 2013 and again on 25 April 2013 giving the broad outline of the breach.

The Head of Profession for Statistics takes responsibility for the following action:

- The Code of Practice for Official Statistics will be re-emphasised to the Regional Forces – Naval Command Media Centre and the Search & Rescue Regional Commander to prevent a further breach of MOD Search & Rescue figures.
- Regional Forces – Naval Command Media Centre and the source of the figures will be made aware of which Management Information figures that they have access to fall under National Statistics protocols. In future, HMS Gannet has agreed not to publish a monthly figure or a full list of incidents before the official statistics are released. Instead, examples of incidents for that month will be published (but no numbers) and a link provided to the official statistics
- Those who see Management Information early that involves National Statistics will need to sign a document stating that they will not release the figures more widely.
- HMS Gannet has promptly removed the March 2013 figure (and the list of incidents) from its website, as this figure is not due to be released until 2 May.
- For previous months back to August 2011, where the National Statistics have already been published, HMS Gannet is amending the wording on the website and adding a link to the National Statistics. These changes will be completed within the next week.
- The Defence Economics Price Indices team, who are responsible for the SAR statistics, will write to all SAR units to ensure that they are aware of the Code of Practice, in order to prevent any further breach. Defence Economics will also put in place a Service Level Agreement with the Royal Navy SAR Force Commander.

5. Links to published statements about this breach

When the breach report is published on the UK Statistics Authority website we will link to it from our website <http://www.dasa.mod.uk>