

BREACH OF THE CODE OF PRACTICE FOR OFFICIAL STATISTICS

A breach of the Code of Practice for Official Statistics occurs where one or more provisions of the Code were not followed in situations where an exemption or exception had not been approved by the UK Statistics Authority's Head of Assessment, as required in paragraph (xii) of the Code's preamble. Rules on pre-release access to statistics are covered in the relevant Pre-Release Access to Official Statistics Orders; the Code applies as if it includes these orders.

1 Background Information

Name of Statistical Output (including web link)

Military Aid to Civil Authorities

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/military-aid-to-civil-authorities-statistics-index>

Number of vessels boarded by the Royal Navy Fisheries Protection Squadron in FY 2014/15. Due to be published 20th Aug 2015.

This is an Official Statistic.

Name of Producer Organisation

Ministry of Defence

Name and contact details of person submitting this report, and date of report

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Date: 25th August 2015

2 Circumstances of Breach

Relevant Principle/Protocol and Practice(s)

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

Thursday 16th July 2015

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

The breach occurred when information on the number of fishing vessels boarded during 2014-15 was released in the MOD Annual Report and Accounts (ARAC) before the Official Statistics were due to be published on 20th August 2015 in the Military Aid to Civil Authorities bulletin.

The number published in the ARAC (565 vessels boarded) was inconsistent with the Official Statistic (567). The breach was discovered by a MOD statistician on 20th July, when checking the published Annual Report and Accounts that were published on 16 July 2015.

Reasons for breach

The investigation concluded that the inclusion of this information in the ARAC was likely to be due to human error.

The ARAC team were informed that this information should be removed from the draft ARAC prior to publication, however this did not happen and it was subsequently published.

The inconsistency in figures is thought to be due to MI figures from an earlier time-point than the Official Statistic being used.

3 Reactions and Impact

The Ministry of Defence is not aware that any wider use has been made of the figures e.g. by the media, or any internal / external reaction.

4 Corrective Actions Taken (include short-term actions, and long-term changes made to procedures)

The Head of Profession was alerted on the 20th July, shortly after the breach was discovered. The ARAC team responsible have been informed and have been verbally talked through the Code of Practice. This has been followed up in writing.

Following the investigation the following corrective action will take place:

- i) The Code of Practice for Official Statistics will be re-emphasised to the Annual Report and Accounts publication team to prevent any future breaches.*
- ii) The Annual Report and Accounts publication team and the source of the figures will be made aware of which Management Information figures that they have access to fall under Code of Practice. The source of the figures will be required to explain the Code of Practice when they provide these figures in a Management Information capacity.*

More generally, a new policy on the handling of Management Information on subject matters covered by Official Statistics has recently been agreed by the MOD's Permanent Secretary.

This policy, once communicated across MOD, will require that MOD statisticians authorise the release of any Management Information (MI) into the public domain, where the MI is on the same subject matter as official statistics. This should help to protect against similar breaches in future.

5 Link to published statements about this breach

The breach report will be published on the UK Statistics Authority website.

6 Any other relevant supporting material

None.