

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 if relevant)

UK Armed Forces Quarterly Manpower Statistics Report: DASA Quarterly Manning Report

Name of Producer Organisation

Defence Analytical Services and Advice

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

Ian Gouldbourne, Ministry of Defence Head of Profession for Statistics: breach template completed on 18th December 2009, pursuant to the letter sent to the National Statistician on 27th November 2009.

2 Circumstances of Breach

Relevant Principle/Protocol and Practice

Pre-Release Access: information was released before the official release date.

Date of occurrence

17.00 on Wednesday 25 November 2009

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

The breach occurred when one of the Ministry of Defence officials on the pre-release list forwarded the final version of the report and associated briefing papers to a number of Defence Ministers and senior officials, who are not granted pre-release access, at 17.00 on Wednesday rather than waiting until 09.30 on Thursday.

Reasons for breach

There is no reason to believe that this was anything other than an honest mistake by the official concerned.

3 Reactions and Impact

When my Deputy in DASA, who was on the copy list, spotted the breach, he immediately spoke to the official concerned who recalled the e-mail. We are not aware that the breach resulted in any comment or action by officials who should not have received the report prior to its release which prejudiced the publication the following morning. To our knowledge, no-one outside the department received any advance information of what the report contained.

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

The official concerned has apologised for his error. In being reminded of his responsibilities, he has undertaken to operate fully within them in future. I will write to all the department's officials who are on DASA's pre-release lists to remind them of their responsibilities, that I am obliged to report any breach of pre-release to the National Statistician, and to warn them that they can be removed from pre-release access lists if they breach the arrangements.

5 Any other relevant supporting material (including link to published statements about this breach)

The list of Defence officials who received premature access to this report is:

- PS/Min (DES)
- PS/Min (AF)
- PS/Min (IDS)
- PS/PUS
- DPSO/CDS
- MA/DCDS (Pers)
- EA/2SL
- MA/AG
- D SP Pol