



Ministry  
of Defence



# UNITED KINGDOM DEFENCE STATISTICS 2012

## CHAPTER 5

### Military Search and Rescue

---

DASA (WDS) | tel: (020)78078792 | fax: (020)72180969 | mil: 9621 78792  
MOD Main Building, Floor 3 Zone K, Whitehall, London, SW1A 2HB  
email: [DASA-enquiries-mailbox@mod.uk](mailto:DASA-enquiries-mailbox@mod.uk) web: <http://www.dasa.mod.uk>



© Crown copyright 2011. For further information visit the Office of Public Sector Information website at [www.opsi.gov.uk](http://www.opsi.gov.uk)

# CHAPTER 5 – MILITARY SEARCH AND RESCUE

## INTRODUCTION

### The Military Search and Rescue Service

The Military Search and Rescue (SAR) service exists primarily to assist military personnel in difficulty, although a large proportion of its work involves assisting shipping or civilians in distress, both on land and at sea. SAR cover for the United Kingdom and a large area of the surrounding sea is provided 24 hours a day and 365 days a year by the Royal Air Force and the Royal Navy.

The Military SAR force currently consists of RAF and RN SAR Sea King helicopters operating from eight locations around the UK and four RAF Mountain Rescue Teams. The Nimrod fixed-wing aircraft based at RAF Kinloss were withdrawn from service in March 2010. Two RAF SAR helicopter units operate in Cyprus and the Falklands.

Incidents can include long range medical evacuation from ships at sea, assistance to vessels in distress, cliff fallers, swimmers, divers and surfers. On land many callouts are to search for missing persons or to rescue injured climbers, walkers, riders or those involved in road traffic accidents. SAR units are also often called upon to provide hospital-to-hospital transfers. Missions can include the rescue of foreign mariners, assistance to foreign flagged vessels or to other countries such as France.

Additional aeronautical Search and Rescue services are provided by four Maritime and Coastguard Agency helicopter units. Details of their activity are not included.

The RAF Aeronautical Rescue Coordination Centre (ARCC) at RAF Kinloss controls all military aerial resources. It watches over an area extending from the Faroe Islands in the North, the English Channel in the South, about halfway across the Atlantic Ocean and halfway across the North Sea. It has direct data and voice links with rescue assets in the UK and Europe. Detailed maps and charts are combined with an intimate knowledge of UK topography to enable controllers to match resources to tasks quickly and coordinate the rescue operation.

DASA have published a Background Quality Report on the SAR statistics, giving details of the accuracy and reliability of the statistics. This can be found at:

<http://www.dasa.mod.uk/applications/newWeb/www/apps/publications/pubViewFile.php?content=2100&date=2012-01-23&type=pdf&PublishTime=09:30:00>

More information about Royal Navy and RAF SAR can be found at:

<http://www.royalnavy.mod.uk/Operations/Enduring-Operations/UK/Search-and-Rescue> and  
<http://www.raf.mod.uk/rafsearchandrescue/>

### Data Information

The UK Military SAR data source is a weekly download from the ARCC database at RAF Kinloss. Every incident recorded by the ARCC is included in these tables. Incident data from Cyprus and the Falklands is received by email on an ad-hoc basis and may be incomplete. All data is validated and checked by DASA on receipt.

**Table 5.1** shows the numbers of incidents, callouts and persons moved from 2001 to 2011.

**Table 5.2** shows the numbers of callouts and persons moved by UK Military Search and Rescue units from 2001 to 2011.

**Table 5.3** shows the numbers of callouts and persons moved by UK Military Search and Rescue units by type of assistance from 2001 to 2011.

**Table 5.4** shows the numbers of callouts and persons moved in each region around the UK from 2001 to 2011.

**Table 5.5** shows the locations of UK Military Search and Rescue callouts in 2011.

### Key Points

- During 2011 the number of incidents fell by 5% and the number of callouts by 6%, compared to 2010. The number of persons moved fell by 5%. This was the second successive year that the number of callouts has fallen. The number of callouts during 2011 was the lowest since 2006. (Table 5.1)
- 98% of callouts during 2011 were to civilian casualties, the same as in 2010, and broadly similar to previous years. (Table 5.2)
- 64% of callouts in 2011 resulted in people being moved, a similar proportion to last year. Callouts resulting in a Medrescue were the most common, representing 47% of all callouts. This was the highest proportion of Medrescues in the past decade, mainly due to a relative decrease in most other callout types. (Table 5.3)

- Mountain Rescue Teams attended 57 callouts during 2011. This was the lowest number of callouts in the past decade, reflecting a general downward trend in incidents requiring MRT assistance since 2007. (Table 5.2)
- 24% of callouts during 2011 were to Scotland, 16% were to Wales and 13% to the South West. A further 28% of callouts were to incidents at sea. These proportions were similar to last year and reflect the prevalence of callouts to the Scottish Highlands, Snowdonia National Park, and the Southwest coastal regions and National Parks. There are few military SAR callouts along the south coast of England, as this area is typically covered by the Maritime & Coastguard Agency, whose callouts are not shown on the map. (Table 5.4)

# CHAPTER 5 – MILITARY SEARCH AND RESCUE

## Table 5.1 Military Search and Rescue incidents, callouts and persons moved: 2001 - 2011

**Incidents** are emergencies attended by Royal Navy or Royal Air Force units whose primary task is Search and Rescue, plus other military aircraft and ships that are available to the Aeronautical Rescue Coordination Centre (ARCC).

Each Search and Rescue unit attending an incident is described as a callout. An incident may result in one or more callouts. An example is two callouts to a mountain incident, with a helicopter and a Mountain Rescue Team working together to assist a casualty. Callouts are for Royal Navy and RAF units whose primary task is Search and Rescue, plus other military aircraft and ships that attended incidents because they were available to the ARCC.

**Persons moved** involves moving people from a hostile environment to a safe environment or to a medical facility to receive urgent medical attention, or between medical facilities at the request of the NHS.

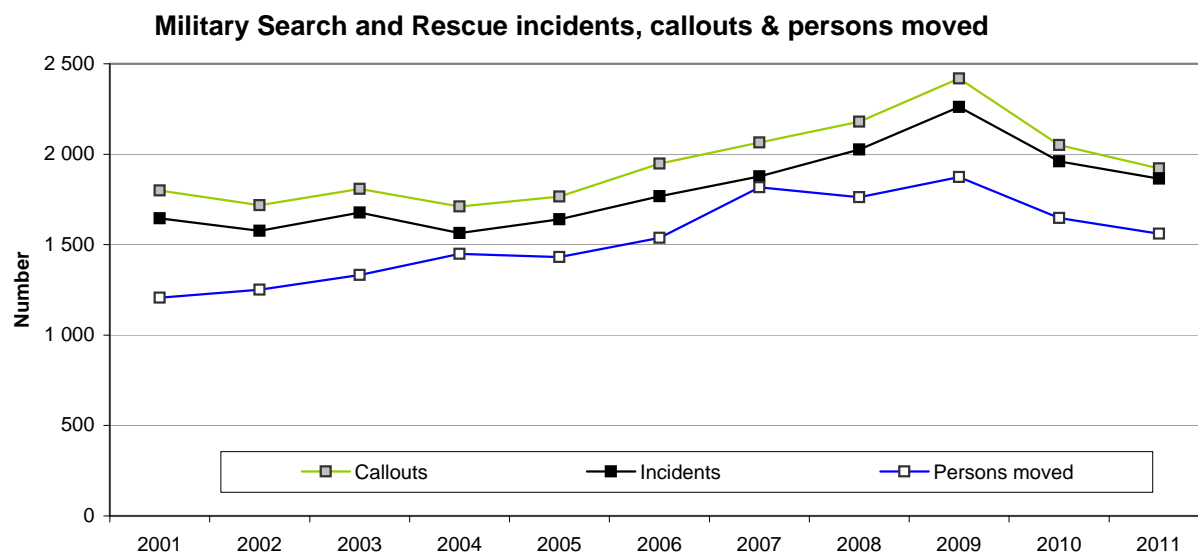
UK SAR units are coordinated by the ARCC at Kinloss (Scotland). Aldergrove (N. Ireland) closed in 2002. The overseas SAR units are based at RAF Akrotiri in Cyprus and Mount Pleasant in the Falkland Islands.

This table is a National Statistic

	Incidents			Callouts			Persons moved		
	All	UK	Overseas	All	UK	Overseas	All	UK	Overseas
2001	1 645	1 608	37	1 800	1 763	37	1 207	1 182	25
2002	1 577	1 544	33	1 718	1 684	34	1 251	1 224	27
2003	1 677	1 600	77	1 809	1 714	95	1 333	1 273	60
2004	1 564	1 504	60	1 711	1 638	73	1 449	1 412	37
2005	1 641	1 584	57	1 766	1 702	64	1 431	1 384	47
2006	1 767	1 703	64	1 948	1 875	73	1 538	1 463	75
2007	1 877	1 803	74	2 065	1 973	92	1 817	1 767	50
2008	2 025	1 941	84	2 179	2 083	96	1 763	1 607	156 <sup>1</sup>
2009	2 262	2 191	71	2 418	2 337	81	1 873	1 810	63
2010	1 960	1 901	59	2 050	1 983	67	1 647	1 605	42
2011	1 864	1 801	63	1 921	1 856	65	1 560	1 501	59

Source: DASA(Price Indices)

- This figure includes two significant incidents:  
The transfer of 79 military personnel in the Falklands during March.  
The rescue of 15 military personnel in the Falklands during February.



# CHAPTER 5 – MILITARY SEARCH AND RESCUE

**Table 5.2 Callouts and persons moved by UK Military Search and Rescue units: 2001 - 2011**

The primary role of Search and Rescue units is to recover military aircrew from crashed aircraft. However the vast majority of callouts are to assist the general public.

**Royal Navy Search and Rescue helicopters:** The Royal Navy's SAR units are 771 Squadron based at the Royal Naval Air Station Culdrose (HMS Seahawk) in Cornwall and the HMS Gannet SAR Flight located at Glasgow Prestwick International Airport.

**Royal Air Force Search and Rescue helicopters:** RAF Sea King rescue helicopters of Nos. 22 and 202 Squadrons operate from six locations - RAF Boulmer, RAF Valley, RAF Lossiemouth, RAF Leconfield, RAF Chivenor and RAF Wattisham.

**Other helicopters:** 'Other' types of helicopters are primarily Sea King helicopters operated by contractors.

**RAF Mountain Rescue Service:** The Mountain Rescue Service HQ is based at RAF Valley and coordinates the RAF's four Mountain Rescue Teams (MRT) based at: RAF Kinloss, RAF Leuchars, RAF Leeming and RAF Valley.

**RAF Nimrod:** In the past, specially equipped Nimrod maritime patrol aircraft were often used to act as "Top Cover" - an on-scene coordinator for helicopters or ships involved in the rescue operation. The Nimrod aircraft were withdrawn from service in March 2010.

This table is a National Statistic

## Callouts

	UK Total	Helicopters			MRT	Fixed wing aircraft		Ships	Civilian		Military	
		RN	RAF	Other		Nimrod	Other					
2001	1 763	502	1 115	-	91	54	1	-	1 660	103		
2002	1 684	436	1 122	-	79	46	1	-	1 586	98		
2003	1 714	424	1 173	-	80	37	-	-	1 618	96		
2004	1 638	453	1 079	-	67	37	2	-	1 538	100		
2005	1 702	478	1 114	-	73	37	-	-	1 610	92		
2006	1 875	497	1 258	1	86	32	1	-	1 785	90		
2007	1 973	592	1 258	-	102	21	-	-	1 892	81		
2008	2 083	586	1 377	-	91	29	-	-	2 028	55		
2009	2 337	758	1 479	-	86	13	1	-	2 268	69		
2010	1 983	639	1 282	-	59	3	-	-	1 944	39		
2011	1 856	542	1 257	-	57	-	-	-	1 815	41		

## Persons moved

	UK Total	Helicopters			MRT	Fixed wing aircraft		Ships	Civilian		Military	
		RN	RAF	Other		Nimrod	Other					
2001	1 182	386	781	-	15	-	-	-	1 139	43		
2002	1 224	314	900	-	10	-	-	-	1 181	43		
2003	1 273	320	922	-	31	-	-	-	1 206	67		
2004	1 412	416	978	-	17	-	1	-	1 355	57		
2005	1 384	380	907	-	97	-	-	-	1 315	69		
2006	1 463	479	968	-	16	-	-	-	1 409	54		
2007	1 767	507	1 219	-	41	-	-	-	1 710	57		
2008	1 607	516	1,062	-	29	-	-	-	1 565	42		
2009	1 810	656	1 135	-	19	-	-	-	1 761	49		
2010	1 605	539	1 047	-	19	-	-	-	1 575	30		
2011	1 501	459	1 030	-	12	-	-	-	1 475	26		

Source: DASA(Price Indices)

# CHAPTER 5 – MILITARY SEARCH AND RESCUE

**Table 5.3 Callouts and persons moved by UK Military Search and Rescue units by type of assistance: 2001 - 2011**

Two definitions have been renamed for figures from 2007 onwards (see below).

The types of assistance that involve moving people are:

**Medrescue (including Search-Medrescue):** Moving an injured casualty from a hostile environment to a medical facility.

**Rescue (including Search-Rescue):** Moving an uninjured person from a hostile to a benign environment.

**Recovery (including Search-Recovery):** Moving people declared dead on scene or confirmed dead on arrival by a qualified doctor.

**Medtransfer (formerly Medevac):** Moving a sick person between medical facilities such as a hospital, or occasionally to move transplant organs.

**Transfer (formerly Airlift):** Moving military personnel, or their families, on compassionate grounds.

The types of assistance that do not involve moving people are:

**Search:** Search for craft, people, etc which does not result in a recovery or rescue.

**Not Required:** Arrived at the scene of an incident but no action needed.

**Recalled:** Recalled from an incident whilst en route.

**Assist (including Search-Assist):** Transporting personnel or equipment to the scene of an incident, or providing on-scene assistance.

**Top Cover:** On-scene assistance, e.g. communications, that does not result in further intervention.

**Other:** Includes False Alarm, Hoax, Precaution, Aborted and Civil Aid.

This table is a National Statistic

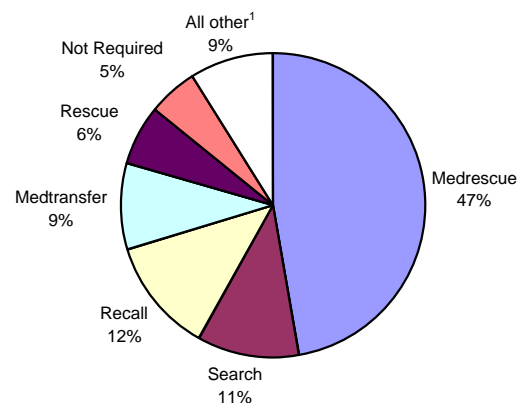
## Callouts

	UK total	Type of Assistance involving moving people					Other Types of Assistance					
		Med-rescue	Rescue	Med-transfer	Recovery	Transfer	Search	Not Req	Recall	Assist	Top cover	Other
2001	1 763	562	121	218	35	7	316	116	173	91	75	49
2002	1 684	583	112	198	21	5	311	101	171	61	65	56
2003	1 714	669	123	174	25	14	280	94	180	48	55	52
2004	1 638	593	122	186	29	15	271	60	192	58	64	48
2005	1 702	670	119	141	31	22	283	105	188	39	65	39
2006	1 875	736	102	175	37	23	328	89	238	49	48	50
2007	1 973	724	138	197	20	15	312	123	225	87	52	80
2008	2 083	779	139	208	40	10	322	88	289	100	31	77
2009	2 337	947	174	213	38	14	305	106	293	115	38	94
2010	1 983	880	148	202	19	10	194	91	246	77	23	93
2011	1 856	874	118	173	21	8	204	99	225	68	26	40

## Persons moved

	UK total	Med-rescue	Rescue	Med-transfer	Recovery	Transfer
2001	1 182	629	281	228	36	8
2002	1 224	654	343	201	21	5
2003	1 273	779	280	174	25	15
2004	1 412	672	494	195	33	18
2005	1 384	778	408	143	31	24
2006	1 463	830	384	175	43	31
2007	1 767	872	658	198	22	17
2008	1 607	869	450	219	40	29
2009	1 810	1 064	445	224	44	33
2010	1 605	964	379	219	21	22
2011	1 501	936	353	181	21	10

## Callouts by type of assistance: 2011



1. All other includes Top Cover, Other, Assist, Recovery and Transfer

Source: DASA(Price Indices)

# CHAPTER 5 – MILITARY SEARCH AND RESCUE

**Table 5.4 Callouts and persons moved by UK Military Search and Rescue units in each region: 2001 - 2011**

The statistical regions of the United Kingdom are the Government Office Regions for England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. Callouts are allocated to regions using coordinates provided by the Search and Rescue Units. The regions on this table are calculated using Microsoft MapPoint 2004 software. The At Sea figures are dependent on the algorithm used in MapPoint to define the coastline. Further information on the UK Government Office Regions can be found at:- <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/geography/ons-geography/index.html>

**This table is a National Statistic**

## Callouts

	<b>UK total</b>	North East	North West	Yorkshire & Humber	East Midlands	West Midlands	East of England	London	South East	South West	Wales	Scotland	Northern Ireland
2001	<b>1 763</b>	30	62	54	32	11	55	4	39	253	197	438	16
2002	<b>1 684</b>	48	88	61	27	13	52	2	19	209	213	375	14
2003	<b>1 714</b>	54	82	61	25	9	76	5	30	182	243	397	11
2004	<b>1 638</b>	60	96	35	22	8	62	10	29	196	207	371	11
2005	<b>1 702</b>	48	96	62	20	8	57	7	13	234	221	383	15
2006	<b>1 875</b>	50	109	48	34	6	78	15	19	259	253	433	8
2007	<b>1 973</b>	49	84	103	46	21	57	11	25	227	239	475	9
2008	<b>2 083</b>	67	108	116	43	6	64	7	27	242	237	571	6
2009	<b>2 337</b>	67	134	103	37	14	58	5	30	360	357	593	13
2010	<b>1 983</b>	55	130	80	30	2	57	11	18	312	299	484	18
2011	<b>1 856</b>	57	77	81	18	4	73	5	31	244	304	439	7

## Persons moved

	<b>UK total</b>	North East	North West	Yorkshire & Humber	East Midlands	West Midlands	East of England	London	South East	South West	Wales	Scotland	Northern Ireland
2001	<b>1 182</b>	22	49	41	18	6	22	3	48	159	149	276	10
2002	<b>1 224</b>	32	71	28	10	4	22	2	9	146	172	235	15
2003	<b>1 273</b>	29	72	35	12	3	48	2	9	163	223	314	6
2004	<b>1 412</b>	39	124	34	15	3	24	9	15	179	180	318	8
2005	<b>1 384</b>	39	128	61	10	6	36	6	6	183	193	366	12
2006	<b>1 463</b>	46	63	33	25	3	47	11	14	204	204	404	3
2007	<b>1 767</b>	41	81	155 <sup>1</sup>	15	97 <sup>1</sup>	24	11	9	283	205	348	6
2008	<b>1 607</b>	67	102	81	14	3	28	7	5	214	192	457	4
2009	<b>1 810</b>	48	142 <sup>2</sup>	54	13	7	22	2	21	351	305	452	11
2010	<b>1 605</b>	44	111	60	10	2	28	7	20	244	287	415	13
2011	<b>1 501</b>	40	48	75	6	2	38	3	19	190	279	368	2

Source: DASA(Price Indices)

1. There were a high number of people moved in 2007 in the Yorkshire & Humber and West Midlands regions due to flooding in Yorkshire and Worcestershire.

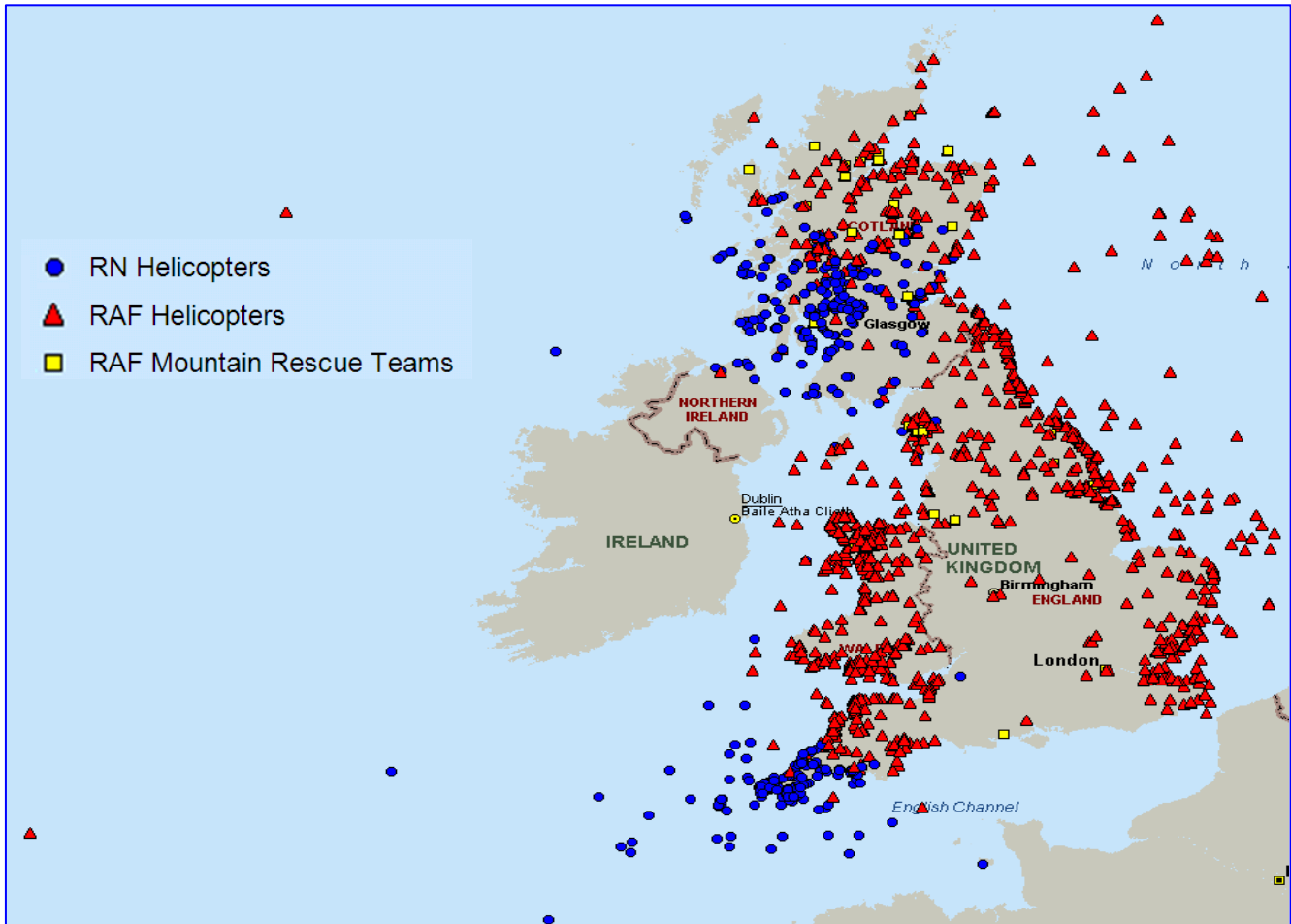
2. The figure for the North West region includes people rescued from flooding in Cocker mouth.

# CHAPTER 5 – MILITARY SEARCH AND RESCUE

**Table 5.5** Map of UK Military Search and Rescue callouts: 2011

Military Search and Rescue units are based at eight locations around the UK. The Sea King helicopters have a maximum endurance of six hours, giving a radius of action of approximately 300 nautical miles. Helicopter coverage is also provided by the Maritime & Coastguard Agency by units based in Shetland and Stornoway in Scotland, and Lee on Solent and Portland on the south coast of England. Callouts attended by the Coastguard are not shown on this map.

This table is a National Statistic



Source: DASA (Price Indices)