

Background Quality Report

UK Defence Statistics Compendium: Chapter 4

Formations, Vessels, Aircraft and Vehicles of the Armed Forces

1. Introduction

Overview

This Chapter contains 15 tables, which fall into three sections described below.

Tables 4.1 to 4.7 provide information on **formations and vessels** of the Armed Forces. In 2011 formations and vessels were shown separately. These sections have been merged in 2012 as for Naval Service the distinction is somewhat arbitrary - a ship is both a formation and a vessel. The ordering of the tables has also changed so that all information relating to Naval Service is together.

Table 4.1 Number of vessels in the Royal Navy and Royal Fleet Auxiliary, and squadrons in the Fleet Air Arm, at 1 April each year

Table 4.2 shows the number of Royal Navy (RN) and Royal Fleet Auxiliary (RFA) vessels at 1 April in the current year. Tables 4.3 and 4.4 show counts of militarily-useful vessels that could be requisitioned in appropriate circumstances in support of the Armed Forces, as at 31 December from 2006 to 2011.

Tables 4.5 to 4.7 show the formations (a measure of the resources, both physical and people) of, the Army, the RAF and Joint Units at 1 April in 2000 (except Table 4.4) and from 2006 to 2012.

Tables 4.8 to 4.10 give information size of the forward available fleet of **aircraft** for the RN Fleet Air Arm, The RAF and Joint Units at 1 April from 2007 to 2012.

Tables 4.11 to 4.15 show holdings of **vehicles and aircraft** under the Treaty on Convention Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) at 1 January from 2006 to 2012, and declared holdings and ceilings for a selection of countries in, and not in NATO at 1 January 2011.

DASA has published some statistics on vessels and formations, and merchant vessels available for defence purposes since 1992. From UKDS 2002 onwards all the subjects covered in the 2012 edition of UKDS are included.

Methodology and Production

Data are received annually from data suppliers from

- MOD Finance and Military Capability (previously known as MOD Resources and Plans) (Tables 4.1 to 4.2 and 4.5 to 4.10),
- Department for Transport (Tables 4.3 and 4.4)
- MOD Directorate for Arms Control and Counter-Proliferation Policy (ACP) (Tables 4.11 to 4.15).

Data on numbers of Naval ships, aircraft and formations are extracted from Naval Plans.

Information on Militarily useful British-registered commercial vessels is provided by the Department for Transport who purchase the data from a commercial supplier (IHS global) under contract. See <http://assets.dft.gov.uk/statistics/series/shipping-fleet/shipping-fleet-tech-note.pdf> for further details.

Data on Information on RAF aircraft numbers is provided by Air Commands and cross checked against numbers planned in the relevant Annual Budgeting Cycle (previously known as the Planning Round). Information on RAF Squadrons and Formations has been incrementally generated from planned force structure changes, which are recognised when they have taken place and cross checked against details held elsewhere such as the RAF station and Force information held on the RAF website.

The Joint Helicopter Command (JHC) Forward Available Fleet is calculated by the JHC HQ engineering staff. It represents the total number of aircraft held by the Command that are available for use and not undergoing

depth maintenance. Forecasts will therefore be driven by the size of the total (Departmental) fleet and usage or engineering factors.

The data suppliers complete standard templates for each Table using data that are derived from their administrative systems, or in the case of information on holdings under the CFE from the CFE Data Exchange Chart IIA. Some Tables provide an annual "snapshot" of data at a specific date; others provide a time series, typically from 2006 to 2012.

The CFE Vehicles And Aircraft tables are compiled annually via census. The census, which is sponsored by the MOD Arms Control and Counter Proliferation Policy Department (ACP), is normally completed in the 2nd week of October each year. It directs all UK military Formations and Units to provide detailed information on their holdings of military hardware. The information is sourced primarily to meet the data requirements of the Conventional Forces in Europe Treaty (CFE), The Vienna Document 2011 (VD11), and The Global Exchange of Military Information (GEMI). The data provided through the census is error checked by the military Chain-of-Command, and by the Joint Arms Control Implementation Group (JACIG), who are responsible for the collation and dissemination of the data to signatory states of each Treaty / Agreement. extracted by the Directorate for Arms Control and Counter-Proliferation Policy (CFE Data Exchange Chart IIA).

Definitions and explanations of the terminology used are provided in the Chapter. There are particularly extensive notes on the CFE Treaty, its coverage and definitions, which precede the Tables about this. All the Tables in this Chapter except Tables 4.3 and 4.4 are National Statistics. The reason for the exception is that Department for Transport statistics based on (their) same data sources are not currently National Statistics.

Contact details

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DASA welcome feedback on this Background Quality Report or any of the statistics mentioned.

2. Relevance

Between 28 September 2011 (when UKDS 2011 was published) and 31 August 2012 received over 1500 unique views on the DASA internet site. This figure was depressed by technical issues which meant that the HTML version of UKDS Chapter 4 was not available for much of March, April and May 2012.

The information in UKDS Chapter 4 contributes to the public accountability of the MOD and collates information in one place from the three Services. While internal systems may be sufficient for internal use, publication in UKDS makes this information available publicly, regularly and as a time series. UKDS Chapter 4 is thought to be the only place in which information on vessels, aircraft and formations is brought together systematically in a coherent document. The Tables include definitions and other information so that the data are set in context and can be understood by a lay audience as well as those with professional interests.

While the MOD has a budget for Defence as a whole, there is much interest in the media in, for example, the size of the Navy, and number and types of ships that it has. The recent Strategic Defence and Security Review (SDSR) and the associated changes have highlighted such issues. These Tables provide information on the current position and also comparisons with past years. They also show the impact of past policy decisions, such as the SDSR decisions on aircraft carriers and Harrier aircraft.

3. Accuracy

The data on Royal Navy ships is considered to be very accurate. The data are extracted from live Navy plans and are checked by Government Statisticians who validate changes to figures against independent sources.

Figures on commercial vessels have been provided by Government Statisticians who consider them to be "of good quality".

No information is available on the quality of information on Army Formations. The figures are subjected to sense checks by Government Statisticians, so there is some level of quality control.

Information on RAF aircraft and formations is validated against an independent source by the data supplier and subjected to sense checks by Government Statisticians. They are considered to be of good quality.

The data in the CFE Vehicles And Aircraft tables is considered to be of good quality. It is error checked by the military Chain-of-Command, and by the Joint Arms Control Implementation Group (JACIG), who are responsible for the collation and dissemination of the data to signatory states of each Treaty / Agreement. It has also been subjected to sense checks by Government Statisticians.

4. Timeliness and Punctuality

Publication dates for UKDS as a whole are agreed up to 12 months in advance and are published on the [Publication Release Dates](#)¹ section of [DASA website](#)² and on the [National Statistics Publication Hub](#)³.

These statistics are published by DASA only in UKDS, and each year the tables are updated to include the latest annual data: this can be as at 1 April, 31 December or 1 January depending on the subject. The timetable for the publication of these statistics is thus driven by the timetable for UKDS as a whole. As this chapter is a relatively small component of UKDS and the statistics are produced once a year, the loss of any timeliness is thought to be outweighed by the benefits of publication in a compendium like UKDS.

UKDS is normally published in late September. In 2012 the publication of UKDS Chapters 2-7 was delayed until 12 December due to resource constraints in DASA (the statistical division of the MOD). The publication of UKDS 2012 Chapter 1 was delayed until early 2013 as a result of the late receipt of source data which was in turn a result of the late publication of the MOD Annual Report and Accounts 2011 /12.

5. Accessibility and Clarity

UKDS is published on [DASA website](#)². Individual Chapters are available as pdfs, with individual tables and charts also available as webpages. The data underpinning the tables are also available as an Excel file to enable the data to be reused.

The introduction to this Chapter has sections on each of the groups of tables. Each section also has a more detailed introduction. The introductions assist accessibility and clarity by setting out the context of the statistics, outlining the material in the tables, identifying the key conclusions that can be drawn from the statistics, providing definitions and explanations of the terms used and giving information on methods and data quality. Some also include links to websites that provide further more detailed information.

6. Coherence and Comparability

Formations and vessels: Most of the tables in this section cover the years 2000 and 2006 to 2012, providing a seven-year time series at 1 April, together with a snapshot of the beginning of the century. The footnotes provide additional detail that explains changes from one year to the next. The introductory material and footnotes explain the impact on the statistics of any factors that affect coherence over time.

Aircraft: Tables 4.8 to 4.10 all provide statistics on Forward Available Fleets (FAF) of aircraft at 1 April. Each table provides a time series from 2007 and 2012.

Equipment Holdings within the CFE Treaty: the Tables in this section provide both a time series at 1 January (4.11 to 4.13) and international comparisons at a point in time - 1 January 2011 (4.14 and 4.15) - of holdings and holdings in relation to ceilings.

7. Trade-offs between Output Quality Components

Collation of data from a number of sources takes considerable time and there are often delays due to operational commitments and the need to discuss information with suppliers. Although the data are requested early, they are often not finalised until close to the publication date and could not be published earlier.

8. Assessment of User Needs and Perceptions

DASA holds regular consultation meetings with both internal and external users of UKDS, which provide a forum for user feedback on their needs and perceptions. DASA also publishes a summary of proposed changes on the home page of its website before the consultation meeting which invites users to comment on the proposals by email if they cannot attend the meeting.

Between 28 September 2011 (when UKDS 2011 was published) and 31 August 2012 UKDS Chapter 4 received over 1500 unique views on the DASA internet site. The fact that so few of these enquiries (less than 0.1%) resulted in a follow up query suggests that the data provided broadly meet user needs. In addition DASA actively encourages feedback from users. Very little feedback relating to UKDS Chapter 4 has been received.

9. Performance, Cost and Respondent Burden

The outputs are produced from the administrative data provided by the MOD and the DfT. The benefit of DASA publishing these statistics is that outputs from these administrative data are placed in the public domain, and as National Statistics, in a way that ensures their independence from political interference and adherence to quality standards. The small burden that this places on the data suppliers is considered to be worthwhile to achieve this, and the consequent public accountability provided by their publication.

10. Confidentiality, Transparency and Security

UKDS Chapter 4 does not contain any identifiable personal data.

All staff involved in the production process have signed the Data Protection Act, and all MOD, Civil Service and data protection regulations are adhered to. All data are stored, accessed and analysed using the MOD's restricted network and IT systems.

We adhere to the principles and protocols laid out in the [Code of Practice for Official Statistics](#)⁴ and comply with pre-release access arrangements. The [DASA Pre-Release Access lists](#)⁵ are available on the DASA website. This Chapter is subject to the pre-release access arrangements for UKDS as a whole.

11. References

	Reference	Website Location
1	Publication Release Dates	http://www.dasa.mod.uk/applications/newWeb/www/index.php?page=68
2	DASA webpage	http://www.dasa.mod.uk
3	National Statistics Publication Hub	http://www.statistics.gov.uk/hub/index.html
4	Code of Practice for Official Statistics	http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/code-of-practice/code-of-practice-for-official-statistics.pdf
5	DASA Pre-Release Access lists	DASA Pre-Release Access lists

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