

## 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)

1) Operational Fatality and Casualty Statistics 29 February 2012

<http://www.dasa.mod.uk/applications/newWeb/www/index.php?page=48&pubType=0&thiscontent=1360&PublishTime=09:30:&date=2012-03-15&disText=7 Oct 2001 - 29 Feb 2012&from=listing&topDate=2012-03-15>

2) UK Armed Forces Monthly Manning Report February 2012.

<http://www.dasa.mod.uk/applications/newWeb/www/index.php?page=48&pubType=1&thiscontent=160&PublishTime=09:30:&date=2012-03-15&disText=1 February 2012&from=listing&topDate=2012-03-15>

3) Royal Navy Situation Reports February 2012.

<http://www.dasa.mod.uk/applications/newWeb/www/index.php?page=48&pubType=0&thiscontent=2710&PublishTime=09:30 &date=2012-03-08&disText=February 2012&from=listing&topDate=2012-03-08>

All three publications were scheduled for release at 09:30 on 15 March 2012.

Name of Producer Organisation

Defence Analytical Services and Advice (DASA)

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

Simon Mahony, Head of Profession for Statistics, Ministry of Defence (MoD)  
020 7218 1466  
15 March 2012

## 2 Circumstances of Breach

Relevant Principle/Protocol and Practice(s)

Protocol 2 : Release Practices,  
Practice 4. Issue statistical releases at a standard time of 09:30 on a weekday to maintain consistency and to permit time for users to understand and respond to the information during normal working hours.

Date of occurrence

15 March 2012

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

The publication was not made available until 11:30 on the date of publication.

Reasons for breach

The DASA website had been unavailable from 2 March 2012 for technical and security reasons. At the time of the breach work was in progress to overcome the technical and security issues and a temporary interim website was put in place to enable the public to access key outputs and current consultations, and to facilitate the release of new publications. Publications were loaded onto the interim web site manually by non-DASA staff in a different geographical location to the DASA team. This was the first occasion on which new publications were loaded onto the interim site and the loading was delayed due to

- a technical issue which blocked the transmission of the publication files from the DASA to the team publishing the report, which meant that the files were only received by the non-DASA publishing team late on the evening prior to publication.
- the non-DASA staff loading the publications not fully appreciating the implication of the files not being made available at exactly 09:30.

## 3 Reactions and Impact

The publications were still available before noon on the pre announced day of publication, allowing users time to understand and respond to the publication during normal working hours. We are not aware of any adverse reaction or impact.

One publication had pre-release access (Operational Fatality and Casualty Statistics). We are not aware that any public comment was made on these statistics prior to the actual time of release.

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

The technical issue which blocked the transmission of publications to the non-DASA team releasing publications on an interim basis was resolved within 24 hours.

The non-DASA team releasing publications on an interim basis has been made aware of the need for publications to go live at 09:30 on the day of publication.

DASA notes that some other Government Statistical Services (GSS) organisations have had similar issues, and recognises that it would be helpful to have a standard policy on action to take to ensure equality of access. DASA suggests that the National Statistician's Office (NSO) might want to provide guidance on the issue for departments. In advance of the guidance being issued, DASA will give full consideration to the equality of access issues if there is a future breach of this nature. DASA will consider emailing known users a copy of the release and / or issuing a notice on its website explaining that a copy of the release is available on request, depending on the length of delay and the statistics involved.

The issues with the DASA website have now been resolved and the full DASA web site which includes an automated Content Management System (CMS) went live on 16 May 2012. The automated CMS ensures that publications are automatically released at 09:30 on the pre announced day of publication.