Dear,

I am writing in response to your request for information dated 25 April 2007, this request is being treated in accordance with the Freedom of Information (FOI) Act 2000. Your email requested ‘a copy of the report drawn up by the Lessons of Northern Ireland study group and any associated material reviewing specialised or operational aspects of Operation Banner.’ You have since confirmed that you would like a copy of the document entitled ‘Operation BANNER: An analysis of Military Operations in Northern Ireland’ which was published in July 2006.

The document has been considered for release and is attached to this email in soft copy. Some redactions have been made from the original document. These are made in accordance with Section 23(1) (Information supplied by, or relating to, bodies dealing with security matters). Section 23 is an absolute exemption under the Act and as such it is not necessary to carry out a public interest test.

The redaction in para 537 has been made in accordance with section 23, section 24 (National Security) and section 26(1)(b) (Defence). We are required to carry out an assessment of the public interest in relation to these exemptions, before determining whether information should properly be withheld. We have carefully considered the information under the requirements of sections 24 and 26 and have determined that the exemptions should be upheld. Whilst there is a public interest in ensuring that the public understand how and why decisions are taken in sensitive areas, there are outweighing public interest arguments in protecting this information. In this case to disclose some of the information held would prejudice national security and reveal sensitive information that would undermine defence techniques, methods and procedures. Accordingly in all the circumstances where these exemptions apply, we have concluded that the public interest in maintaining the exemptions under s.24 and s. 26(1)(b) in respect of the information requested clearly outweighs the public interest in disclosure of the information and is therefore properly exempt from disclosure.
There is no other material associated with the attached document that reviews specialised or operational aspects of Operation BANNER.

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If you are unhappy with this response or you wish to complain about any aspect of the handling of your request, then you should contact me in the first instance. If informal resolution is not possible and you are still dissatisfied then you may apply for an independent internal review by contacting the Director of Information Exploitation, 6th Floor, MOD Main Building, Whitehall, SW1A 2HB (e-mail Info-XD@mod.uk). Please note that any request for an internal review must be made within two calendar months of the date on which the attempt to reach informal resolution has come to an end.

If you remain unhappy following an internal review, you may take your complaint to the Information Commissioner under the provisions of Section 50 of the Freedom of Information Act. Please note that the Information Commissioner will not investigate the case until the internal review process has been completed. Further details of the role and powers of the Information Commissioner can be found on the Commissioner's website, http://www.informationcommissioner.gov.uk.

Yours sincerely,