

Question and Answer - Casualties in Iraq

QUESTION

Total number of British casualties that have been suffered in Iraq and adjacent countries and medical referral facilities, in all services, since the invasion of Iraq in 2003. The figure of interest includes both fatalities (available from your www site) and the number of wounded which is not currently given. The data requested would ideally contain a breakdown of wounded according to the severity of injury. Secondly I wish to find out the number of Iraqi casualties that are estimated to have been inflicted by British forces since the invasion began in March 2003. The information I seek includes the categories of both civilian and military casualties and includes fatalities and in injuries.

ANSWER

Release of Information

Thank you for your correspondence received 10 January 2005 which contained a request, under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), for two sets of information concerning the number of British and Iraqi casualties which have been sustained since March 2003. Your request has been passed to the Permanent Joint Headquarters at Northwood and I am responding on behalf of the information holders.

Your first question concerned the total number of British casualties that have been suffered in Iraq and adjacent countries and medical referral facilities, in all Services, since the invasion of Iraq in March 2003 (including both fatalities and wounded). As you rightly point out, our web site (www.operations.mod.uk/telic/casualties) contains details pertaining to all 85 British Fatalities and there is nothing further I can add to this. Turning to the question of personnel wounded, clearly, details of all injuries or illnesses are recorded on an individual's medical records. There is, however, no centrally held breakdown of those medically evacuated into combat and non-combat injuries, nor of injuries which did not require medical evacuation, but which were treated in theatre. It has been assessed that to retrospectively collate the detailed information you have requested would exceed the upper limit of £600 set by Fees regulations and under the terms of Section 12 of the FOIA, would not, therefore, be undertaken. However, the most recent information held was provided in response to an Oral Parliamentary Question in the House of Commons on Monday 10 January 2005. In response to a question from the Labour MP for Selby (Mr John Grogan), the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Defence (Mr Ivor Caplin) stated "... Since February 2003, the United Kingdom (UK) has conducted 2,762 medical evacuations from Iraq. That includes a small number of entitled civilians and Iraqis. Of these, 790 have involved the evacuation of UK service personnel because of injuries sustained as a result of hostile actions, accidents and other incidents."

Regarding the medical referral facilities, during the war fighting phase in Iraq each Ship, Army and Air Unit had its own intrinsic Role 1 medical facility. Role 1 medical facilities deploy with units and provide medical measures for restoring functions of minor casualties for immediate return to duty. Role 1 medical facilities also provide physician managed measures for restoring and stabilising vital functions in order to achieve fitness for further evacuation.

Role 2 medical facilities were deployed in support of the 7 Armoured Brigade, 16 Air Assault Brigade and 3 Commando Brigade. Role 2 can be mobile or static units and provide resuscitative surgery and measures for restoring and stabilising vital functions in order to achieve fitness for further evacuation. They would also hold personnel with minor clinical conditions for early return to duty.

Role 3 medical facilities provided hospital level care and were deployed as 1 Primary Casualty Receiving Facility and 3 UK Field Hospitals. The Role 3 medical facilities are usually static for periods of time and provide life and limb saving surgery. Furthermore, they also provide hospitalisation and onward evacuation for longer term care via the Royal Air Force Aeromed system.

Since the end of the war fighting phase medical facilities have been drawn down. Role 1 medical facility continues to be provided by each individual Ship, Army and Air Unit. There are 2 in number Role 2 static facilities and 1 Role 3 static hospital unit.

You also requested information on the number of Iraqi casualties that are estimated to have been inflicted by British forces. The most recent information held was provided in response to a Parliamentary Question in The House of Commons on 27 January 2005. In response to a question from the Labour MP for North West Leicestershire (Mr David Taylor) The Rt. Hon Adam Ingram MP stated “ Between 1 May 2003 and 26 November 2004, Significant Incident reports indicate that United Kingdom forces in Iraq encountered a number of Iraqi casualties. The figures drawn from those reports are not an accurate estimate of Iraqi casualties, either those caused by UK forces or those caused by insurgent activities, and should not be taken as such. They apply only to casualties which were witnessed or discovered by UK forces, and give no indication of casualties outside the UK’s areas of operations in South East Iraq, although they also cover the Black Watch deployment to the North Babil area in November 2004. UK forces are not always present at all incidents which result in Iraqi civilian casualties, and following hostile contacts they are not always able to make an accurate count of Iraqi casualties, either because they have withdrawn from the area, or because such casualties have been removed

These reports indicate that 200 Iraqis believed to have been enemy combatants have died, and 80 have been injured, in incidents where military force was deliberately applied by UK forces. 5 Iraqis believed not to have been enemy combatants have died, and a further 13 have been injured, in incidents during the course of which military force was deliberately applied by UK forces. These figures do not necessarily indicate that UK forces caused the casualties, but merely that they recorded them during the course of incidents in which deliberate military force was applied.

Reports indicate that 17 Iraqis believed to have been enemy combatants have died, and 22 have been injured, during the course of other incidents. 144 Iraqis believed not to have been enemy combatants have died, and 192 have been injured, during the course of other incidents. This includes the full range of incidents in which UK forces have been involved, or to which UK forces have been called, but where no deliberate military force was applied. This includes improvised explosive device attacks by insurgent forces on civilian targets, road traffic accidents and in one case, the discovery in May 2003 of a mass grave, thought to date back to 1991, containing 32 dead. Iraqi Security Force casualties are not included.”

I hope that you find the information supplied above helpful.

If this information does not address your requirements or you wish to complain about any aspect of the handling of this request, then you should contact the undersigned in the first instance. Should you remain dissatisfied, then you may apply for an internal review by contacting the Director of Information Exploitation, 6th Floor, MOD Main Building, Whitehall, SW1A 2HB.

If you are still 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 your case until the MOD 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, www.informationcommissioner.gov.uk