

Dame Chi Onwurah MP
Chair
Science, Innovation and Technology Committee
House of Commons
London
SW1 0AA

Our reference: ICO/O/JE/L/RTL/0808

By email to: commonssitc@parliament.uk

28 July 2025

Dear Chair,

Re: 2022 Ministry of Defence Data Breach

Thank you for your letter of 17 July regarding the details of the 2022 Ministry of Defence (MoD) data breach.

Summary

In your letter you ask that I “confirm that your response to this particular alert conformed with your usual approach to investigating leaks; and usual methods of assessing an organisations’ internal handling of data breaches”.

The brief answer is, that because of the unusual circumstances of the super injunction, and the classified nature of the information, “No”.

However, in substance, our approach to this matter was consistent with our involvement in a great many similar breach notifications in that we indicated areas of inquiry, asked direct questions, and satisfied ourselves that MoD was applying sufficient diligence, rigour and direction to its internal review.

Additional Background

As the Secretary of State said in his statement to Parliament, the ICO was informed within 72 hours of the MoD becoming aware of the breach. This was in August 2023, as the MoD itself did not become aware of the breach until then. The 72-hour notification period in UK data protection law begins when the organisation becomes aware of a personal data breach, as set out in Article 33 of the UK GDPR.

Our response to this breach report was impacted by the circumstances surrounding this case. The court injunction meant we were unable to communicate externally about our involvement until 15 July.

The highly classified nature of the relevant information meant only a very limited number of my staff with the necessary security clearances were involved. We were also limited to oral briefings from the MoD on the details of the case. It was for these reasons that we worked closely with the MoD during its own investigation to assure ourselves that it was taking the necessary steps to address the issues and minimise the risks of them occurring again.

Notwithstanding these circumstances, we did make our enquiries with the MoD as we would for a similar breach of this nature. This included understanding what steps had led to the breach, the causes of the breach and the associated processes the MoD had in place at the time, as well as the steps taken by the MoD to respond to the breach, mitigations for people affected and how it was improving its practices.

Given the understandable commentary and scrutiny around this issue, I have taken the step of [publishing more detail about our approach in this case](#).

Next Steps

I hope the above reassures you and your committee about our approach to this case. We are keeping the situation under review and may choose

to revisit our position if new information comes to light. I stand ready to provide your committee, and any others in Parliament, with the information you need to scrutinise this very serious issue.

Finally, thank you for providing your letter (dated 24 July) to the minister on government data handling. I am including a copy of my letter to the same ministers on the same issue.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'J Edwards', written in a cursive style.

John Edwards
UK Information Commissioner

Copied to:

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi MP, Chair, Defence Committee