

Britain's Air and Drone War in Syria

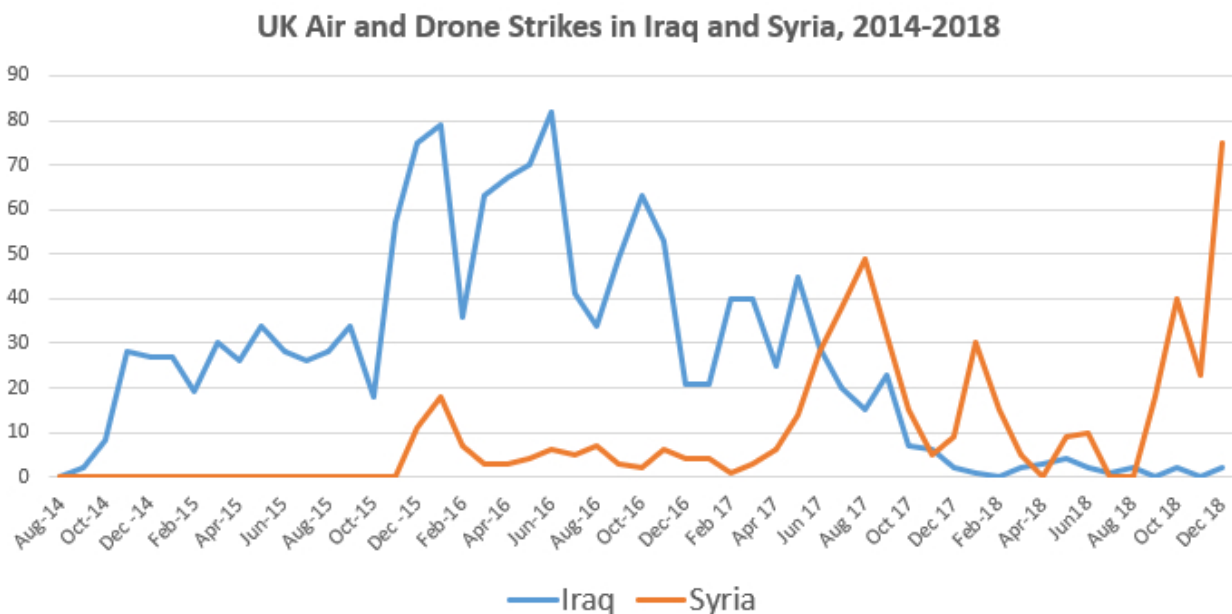
Latest Freedom of Information Release from Ministry of Defence (MoD)

By [Chris Cole](#)
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[Drone Wars UK](#) 11 February 2019

Region: [Europe](#), [Middle East & North Africa](#)
Theme: [Intelligence](#), [Militarization and WMD](#), [US NATO War Agenda](#)
In-depth Report: [SYRIA](#)

The rise in UK air and drone strikes in Syria since September 2018 has been laid bare in the MoD's latest responses to a Drone Wars UK FoI request.

The number of British strikes in Syria per month rose to its highest ever amount (75) in December 2018.

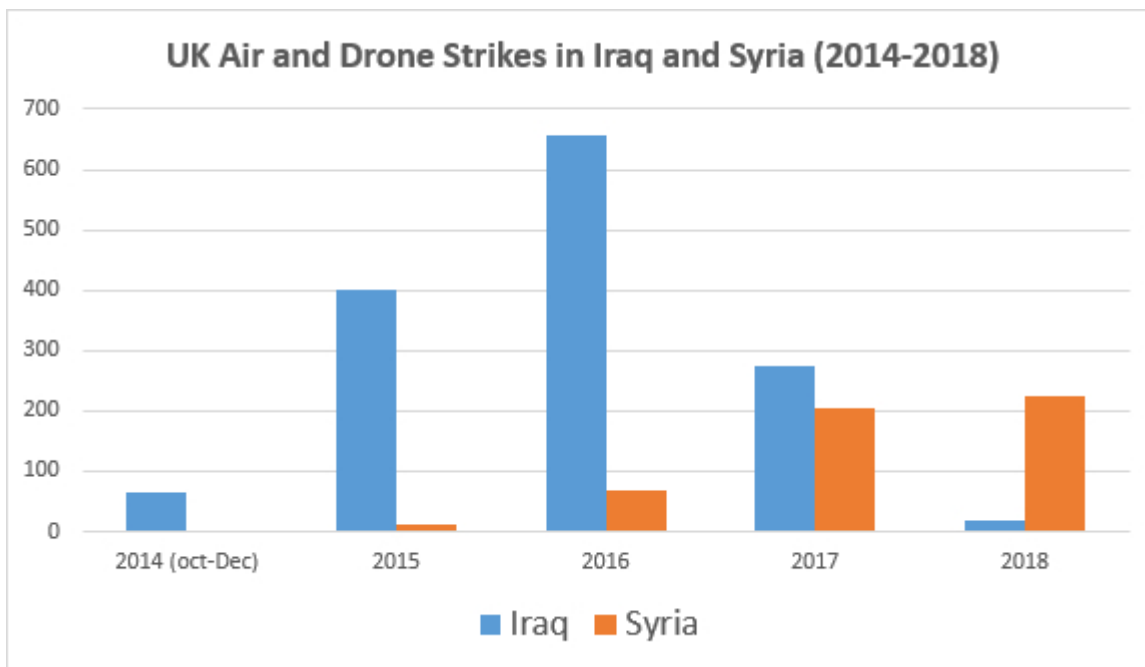


Overall, the UK launched 244 air and drone strikes in Iraq and Syria during 2018, firing 512 munitions. Between 2014 and the end of 2018, the UK has fired more than 4,100 missiles and bombs in a total of 1,925 strikes against ISIS in Iraq and Syria. You can see the details on [our stats page here](#).

UK Air and Drone Strikes in Iraq/Syria, 2014-2018 (Summary)

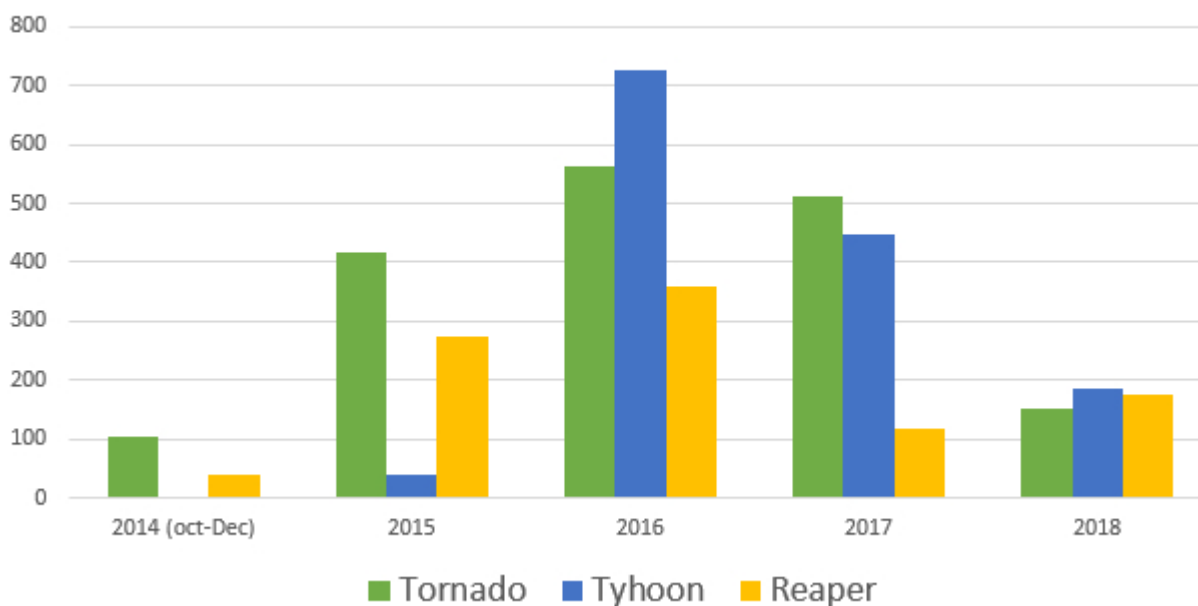
	UK Missions Flown Iraq	UK Missions Flown Syria	Total UK Missions Flown	UK strikes Iraq	UK strikes Syria	Total UK strikes	UK Weapons fired Iraq	UK Weapons fired Syria	Total UK weapons fired
2014 (Oct-Dec)	271	10	281	65	0	65	142	0	142
2015	1,261	272	1,533	402	11	413	707	23	730
2016	1,307	457	1,764	658	68	726	1,466	183	1,649
2017*	599	1,297	1,896*	273	204	477	707	371	1,078
2018	178	1,613	1,791	19	225	244	48	464	512
TOTAL UK	3,616	3,649	7,265	1,417	508	1,925	3,070	1,041	4,111

In 2018, for the first time, more UK weapons were fired in Syria than in Iraq – in fact almost 10 times more (464 in Syria, 48 in Iraq). While UK aircraft continue to fly in Iraq, 90% of UK missions occurred in Syria.



UK Reaper drones continued to operate in both Iraq and Syria during 2018, however there were no UK drone strikes in Iraq. While the MoD continues to insist that its drones are primarily for intelligence and surveillance operations, Reapers fired more weapons in 2018 than the UK's dedicated strike aircraft, the Tornado, and almost as many as Typhoons. 27% of UK strikes were carried out by drones during 2018. Overall, a quarter of all British air strikes against ISIS have been carried out by drones.

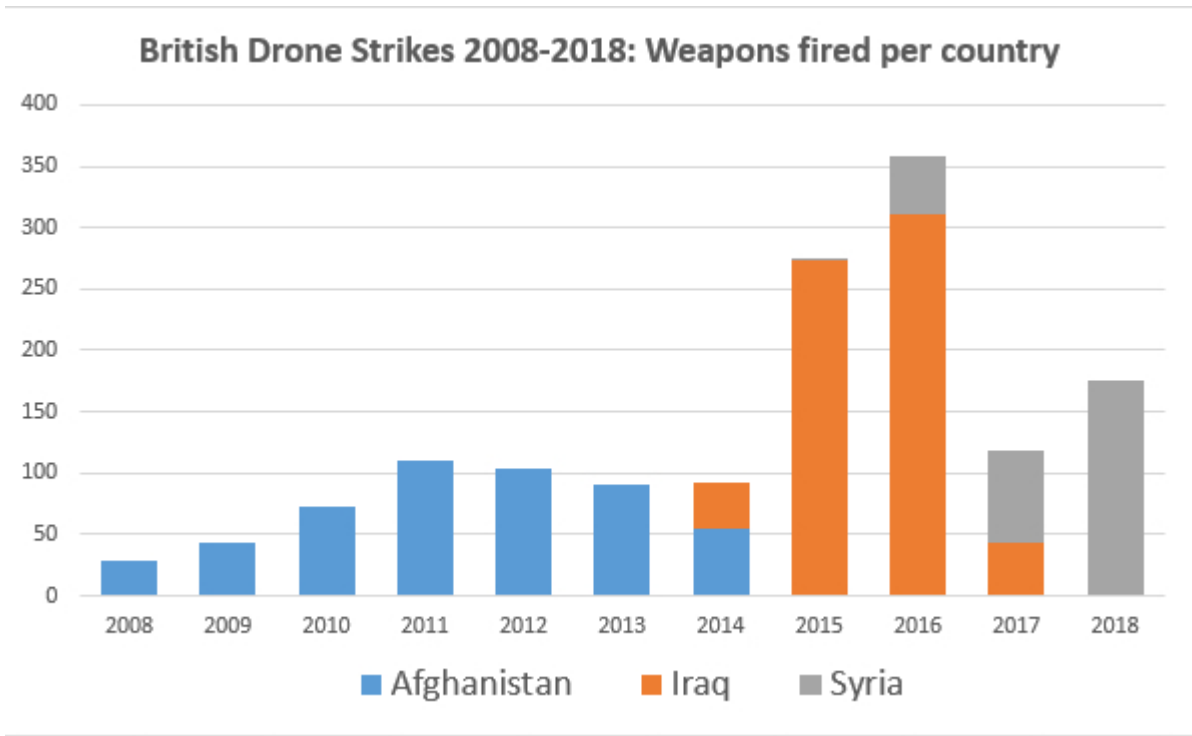
Munitions fired by UK aircraft type in Iraq and Syria 2014-2018



Air Weapons Fired in Iraq and Syria 2014 - 2018

Weapon	No. used (2014-17)	No. used 2018	Total used	Cost per weapons	Total cost
Paveway IV	2,378	325	2,703	70,000	189,210,000
Hellfire	721	156	877	70,000	61,390,000
Brimstone	373	11	384	105,000	40,320,000
GBU-12	68	20	88	60,000	5,280,000
Enhanced Paveway II	47		47	100,000	4,700,000
Enhanced Paveway III	8		8	150,000	1,200,000
Storm Shadow	4		4	800,000	3,200,000
Total	3,599	512	4,111		£305,300,000

Although ISIS has been virtually defeated as a military force in Iraq and Syria, with its territory reduced to a few square miles in the Euphrates Valley (indeed this weekend [the final battle is reported to have begun](#)) UK Ministers and defence officials [insists](#) that UK strikes will continue until the group is absolutely and totally defeated. This though other nations are [withdrawing their forces](#) and senior [UK commanders acknowledge that ISIS is no longer a credible military force](#). While the [UK's Tornado's have been withdrawn](#), UK drones and Typhoons will continue to launch strikes. In the case of British Reaper drones, that's approaching 12 years of continuously launching strikes.



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