



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

24 May 2010

SG/162
Foreign and Commonwealth Office
Old Admiralty Building
London SW1 2PA

Tel: 02070088806
Fax: 02070081160
E-mail: cgarn@fco.gov.uk

Mr Steve Elibank

By e-mail: request-30490-bc14dba5@whatdotheyknow.com

Dear Mr Elibank,

Freedom of Information Request: 0239-10

Thank you for your e-mail of 10 March under the Freedom of Information Act, in which you asked:

"I would like to know the total cost of security, for the calendar year 2006, at the UK's embassy, high commission or permanent mission to each of the following countries/organisations:

Australia, Austria, Belgium, Germany, Hungary, South Africa, the United Nations, the United States.

I do not require data for consulates etc., only for the main delegations. "Security" should include the salaries of security guards, staff and advisers, the cost of purchasing new equipment and maintaining old equipment, etc., though I don't require an itemised list, just a total figure for each venue."

I confirm that the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) does hold information relevant to your request. However, the type of information you have requested in your request is exempt information under section 38 (health and safety) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000. We acknowledge that releasing the information could increase public knowledge, and show greater transparency about the cost of security at our overseas missions.

However if we were to release this information this would involve information on the relative costs of security to our staff at our overseas posts; and give an indication of security levels and

trends. The disclosure of any such information would be likely to endanger the safety of our staff and visitors.

We have determined that in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in protecting the lives of United Kingdom citizens outweighs the public interest in public discussion on merits or weaknesses of protection offered to our staff and visitors to our missions overseas.

In addition the information you have requested is also exempt information under Section 24 (national security) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000. Again we acknowledge that releasing the information could increase public knowledge, and show greater transparency about matters relating to national security. However in this instance it would reveal information on the relative costs of providing security to our buildings at our overseas posts. The disclosure of any such information would be likely to endanger the security of our offices by providing an indication of the levels of security afforded to each of these buildings.

We have determined that in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in protecting a British Mission overseas outweighs the public interest in public discussion on merits or weaknesses of protection offered from a possible attack on a British Government building.

If you have any queries about this letter, please contact me. Please remember to quote the reference number above in any future communications.

If you are unhappy with the service you have received in relation to your request and wish to make a complaint or request a review of our decision, you should write to the Information Rights Team. Please note any request for an internal review must be submitted within 40 working days from the date our response was issued.

If you are not content with the outcome your complaint, you may apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. Generally, the ICO cannot make a decision unless you have exhausted the complaints procedure provided by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

The Information Commissioner's Office,
Wycliffe House,
Water Lane,
Wilmslow,
Cheshire
SK9 5AF.

Yours sincerely,

Carl Garn

Carl Garn
Estates and Security Directorate