



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

Royal, Ceremonial and Honours Unit
Foreign and Commonwealth Office
King Charles Street
London SW1A 2AH

Website: <https://www.gov.uk>

Ned D Donovan

By email: request-287886-d28311fe@whatdotheyknow.com

22 October 2015

Dear Mr Donovan

INTERNAL REVIEW OF FOI REQUEST REF: 0849-15

Thank you for your email of 18 September asking for an internal review of the decision conveyed to you in our email of the same date.

I am writing to confirm that I have conducted a full examination of all the material of relevance to your request.

Search for information

In your email of 25 August you asked:

“Could you please provide me with all reasonable information held on the following topics:

- 1. The offering and acceptance by David Cameron MP of the Order of Abdulaziz al Saud from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.*
- 2. Any information held on other instances of foreign orders, decorations and medals being offered to Mr Cameron.*
- 3. Whether Tony Blair MP was offered and accepted the Order of Abdulaziz al Saud from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia while Prime Minister, and if so any information related to it.*
- 4. The offering and acceptance by Tony Blair MP of the Presidential Medal of Freedom from the United States of America.*
- 5. Any information held on other instances of foreign orders, decorations and medals being offered to Mr Blair.”*

Use of exemptions

Although, in responding to your initial request, we were able to confirm that the Foreign and Commonwealth Office held information of relevance, the information was withheld under

Section 37(1)(b) of the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) - conferring by the Crown of any Honour or Dignity. I am content that this was a correct application of the exemption.

I am also content that a further exemption has been correctly applied to the release of information which you sought namely Section 40(2) which concerns personal data relating to third parties. Section 40 is an absolute exemption for these purposes, so there is no FOIA public interest exercise to be carried out.

Your specific queries

You stated in your request for an internal review that “public interest does in fact outweigh the issues of exclusion. Permission to wear foreign honours was also in the past published by the government in the London Gazette, so it has not always been undisclosed”.

In the past, it may have been the case that some permissions to wear foreign honours were published. I can confirm, however, that it is no longer the practice to publish details of non-military foreign awards in the London Gazette.

The FCO considers that there is a public interest in not disclosing information about honours matters. There is a public interest in protecting confidences and the feelings and privacy of nominators and nominees. So in carrying out the public interest test, I have taken into account the fact that steps have been taken to consider whether disclosure is in the public interest. I conclude that the greater public interest lies in retention of the information.

Therefore after internal review of the original handling of the request, we uphold our original decision.

I hope you are satisfied with the process of this review and the outcome. However, if you feel we have applied the exemptions incorrectly or that we have not handled your internal review correctly and you wish to make a complaint, you may then apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

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

Yours sincerely,

Marina Pettigrew

Deputy Head, Royal, Ceremonial and Honours Unit
Protocoll Directorate



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