



Foreign &  
Commonwealth  
Office

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Dr Emma L Briant

By Email: [request-608535-d0cb7eb5@whatdotheyknow.com](mailto:request-608535-d0cb7eb5@whatdotheyknow.com)>

10 January 2020

Dear Dr Briant

**FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000 REQUEST REF: 1122-19**

Thank you for your email of 12 November asking for information under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) 2000. You asked for:

*Thank you for your response to my request and for the opportunity to refine the request to ensure it is narrow enough for the permissible time for such requests. Based on your helpful guidance for what might be narrow enough, please could I ask only for information relevant to the original request (relating to Counter-Da'esh Foreign Ministerial visit to Washington, DC on 21 - 25 March 2017) and held by the British Embassy in Washington.*

*Please could I therefore ask you to look for just the minister's schedule or diary pages for what meetings occurred on those days?*

I am writing to confirm that we have now completed the search for the information which you requested.

I can confirm that the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) does hold information relevant to your request. Please find attached the information that the FCO can release to you.

Some of the information you have requested is personal data relating to third parties, the disclosure of which would contravene one of the data protection principles. In such circumstances sections 40(2) and 40 (3A)(a) of the Freedom of Information Act apply. In this case, our view is that disclosure would breach the data protection principle that personal data should be processed lawfully, fairly and transparently. It is the fairness aspect of this principle, which, in our view, would be breached by disclosure. In such circumstances, s.40 confers an absolute exemption on disclosure. There is, therefore, no public interest test to apply.

The application of s.27(1)(a) requires us to consider the public interest test arguments in favour of releasing and withholding the information. We acknowledge that releasing information on this issue would increase public knowledge about our relations with the United States of America. However, s.27 (1) (a) recognises that the effective conduct of international relations depends upon maintaining trust and confidence between governments. If the United Kingdom does not maintain this trust and confidence, its ability to protect and promote UK interests through international relations will be hampered, which will not be in the public interest. The disclosure of information detailing our relationship with the US Government could potentially damage the bilateral relationship between the UK and the United States of America. This would reduce the UK government's ability to protect and promote UK interests through its relations with the United States of America, which would not be in the public interest. For these reasons we consider that, the public interest in maintaining this exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing it.

Further to this, the FCO can neither confirm nor deny whether it holds any additional information that would meet the terms of your request, in reliance on the exemptions in sections 23(5) and 24(2) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000. To the extent that section 24(2) applies, the department has determined that in all circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining exclusion of the duty to confirm or deny outweighs the public interest in confirming whether or not the information is held, and to give a statement of the reasons why the exception applies would involve the disclosure of exempt information. Therefore, under section 17(4) of the Act, the FCO is not obliged to give such a statement. However, this should not be taken as necessarily indicating that any further information what would meet your request exists or does not exist.

Once an FOI request is answered, it is considered to be in the public domain. To promote transparency, we may now publish the response and any material released on [gov.uk](http://gov.uk) in the [FOI releases](#) section. All personal information in the letter will be removed before publishing.

The information supplied to you continues to be protected by the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988. You are free to use it for your own purposes, including any non-commercial research you are doing and for the purposes of news reporting. Any other re-use, for example commercial publication, would require the permission of the copyright holder. Most documents supplied by the FCO will have been produced by government officials and will be protected by Crown Copyright. To re-use Crown Copyright documents please consult the [Open Government Licence v3](#) on the National Archives website.

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If you would like a review of our decision, or if you wish to make a complaint, please write to the Central FOI Unit, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Room WH2.177, King Charles Street, London, SW1A 2AH. E-mail: [foi-dpa.pmcs@fco.gov.uk](mailto:foi-dpa.pmcs@fco.gov.uk). You have 40 working days to do so from the date of this letter.

You can apply directly to the Information Commissioner. However, the Information Commissioner will not normally make a decision unless you have first exhausted the

complaints procedure provided by the FCO. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at: Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire SK9 5AF.

Yours sincerely,

Central FOI Unit



For information about how the FCO handles personal information please see our [Personal Information Charter](#)