



Foreign &  
Commonwealth  
Office

**Protocol Directorate**  
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Website: <https://www.gov.uk>

Ned D Donovan

By Email: [request-287886-d28311fe@whatdotheyknow.com](mailto:request-287886-d28311fe@whatdotheyknow.com)

18 September 2015

Dear Mr Donovan

**FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000 REQUEST REF: 0849-15**

Thank you for your email of 25 August asking for information under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) 2000. You asked:

*Could you please provide me with all releasable 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.*

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.

However, any information we hold is being withheld because it is exempt under section 37(1) (b) (conferring by the Crown of any Honour or Dignity). This includes foreign or international awards where The Queen's permission is required or sought to accept and wear them.

Consideration has been given to whether it would be in the public interest to release those parts of the information we hold which are not covered by the absolute exemption provided

for third party personal information (section 40) but which are covered by section 37(1)(b). It is in the public interest to ensure that the award of honours and dignities is accountable and transparent. It is also, however, in the public interest to maintain the integrity of the honours system. Non disclosure of information relating to individual nominations ensures:

- that those invited to offer information about a candidate can continue to do so freely and honestly, in confidence, on the understanding that their confidence will be honoured;
- that decisions about honours continue to be taken on the basis of full and honest information about the person concerned and their achievements;
- that those who sit on honours assessment panels can carry out their work free from pressure for, or on behalf of, potential or actual candidates.

We have decided that the public interest in maintaining the exclusion outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

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 (3) of the Freedom of Information Act apply. In this case, our view is that disclosure would breach the first data protection principle. This states that personal data should be processed fairly and lawfully. 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.

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](https://www.gov.uk) in the [FOI releases](#) section. All personal information in the letter will be removed before publishing.

I hope you are satisfied with this reply. However, if you wish to make a complaint or if you would like a review of our decision, please write to the FOI and DPA Team, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Room K4.14, King Charles Street, London, SW1A 2AH. E-mail: [foi-dpa.imd@fco.gov.uk](mailto:foi-dpa.imd@fco.gov.uk). You have 40 working days to do so from the date of this letter.

If you are not content with the outcome of your complaint, you may then apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. Generally, the Information Commissioner cannot make a decision unless you have 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,  
Protocol Directorate



We keep and use information in line with the Data Protection Act 1998. We may release this personal information to other UK government departments and public authorities.