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(by email only)



4 January 2011

FOI274506 – Manual of Protective Security

I am writing in response to your email of 18 March 2010, in which you made the following requests under the freedom of Information Act 2000:

... please provide me with a *full* copy of the Manual of Protective Security, and a *full* copy of the Security Policy Framework: not the redacted/limited version(s) made available online.

Earlier this year, I wrote to advise you that I would be treating your requests for the Manual of Protective Security (MPS) and the Security Policy Framework (SPF) separately. At that time I responded substantively in respect of the former.

In response to your request for the SPF, please find enclosed a copy of the relevant information which may be released to you. I would like to apologise for the time it has taken to provide you with a full response. As explained in my previous letters it has taken some time for us to consider the public interest in releasing information in relation to your request.

Further relevant information held by the Cabinet Office is exempt from release under sections 21(1) (information available to the applicant by other means). Section 21 is an absolute exemption, and so not subject to a public interest test, and applies to a number of documents that are published on the Cabinet Office website at:

www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/intelligence-security-resilience/intelligence-and-protective-security.aspx

Further, as previously mentioned, some of the information is covered by section 23(1) (the information was supplied by, or relates to, bodies dealing with security matters) or section 40(2) in reliance on section 40(3)(a)(i) (personal information). Section 23 and this limb of section 40 are absolute exemptions and do not require that I consider the balance or public interest.

For the rest of the withheld information, qualified exemptions apply which are subject to the public interest test. The public interest test, as set out in section 2 of the Act, requires us to consider whether, in all the circumstances



of the case, the public interest in maintaining an exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosure. We required further time to consider the public interest test in relation to these exemptions before we could decide whether or not to disclose the information.

Having now considered this we have decided to withhold information under the following exemptions:

- section 24(1) (National Security), to the extent that the information includes detailed guidance on security measures required to protect government buildings, staff and information, the exemption is required to protect national security.
- section 27 (1) (a) (International Relations) to the extent that information relates to matters of international co-operation on security matters, disclosure would prejudice relations between the United Kingdom and another State.
- section 31 (1) (g), in conjunction with section 31(2)(b), as disclosure would prejudice the exercise by public authorities of their functions for the purpose of ascertaining whether any person is responsible for any conduct which is improper.
- section 38 (1)(a) and (b) (health and safety) in so far as disclosing some of the information could endanger individuals who do not have a public facing role and whose work may well be disrupted if their contact details were placed in the public domain.

With regards to section 24, while it is in the public interest to be assured that government assets are properly protected, we consider release of this information would undermine security measures to such an extent as to cause damage to national security. The SPF sets out comprehensive, authoritative guidance on current security policies and procedures that are applied across government. Disclosure could provide individuals/groups seeking to plan/carry out an attack on government assets with the detailed information necessary to circumvent government security controls.

With regards to section 27, disclosure of the details of security measures agreed between the United Kingdom and other States is likely to erode the basis of confidentiality and trust on which such discussions are conducted, and will consequently reduce the United Kingdom's ability to hold full and frank discussions with other States. If the United Kingdom is unable to respect such confidences, its ability to protect and promote United Kingdom interests through international relations will be hampered.

In respect of section 31, whilst maintaining confidence that unofficial disclosures are effectively investigated is in the public interest, we judge that disclosure of the details of the policies and procedures of such investigations would undermine their deterrent effect and could potentially enable adversaries to monitor or impede investigations. We do not consider that the public interest in disclosure outweighs the public interest in maintaining an



effective operational capability for future investigations.

Section 40 has been used in conjunction with section 38, to withhold the details of staff working in sensitive positions within the government security community. Such individuals do not have a public-facing role and maybe vulnerable to inappropriate lobbying. Releasing contact details risks circumventing normal contact routes for public enquiries and could expose staff to improper external pressures, time-wasting and harassment, and could potentially pose a risk to their safety and security. There is no public interest in releasing the details of members of staff whose work would not otherwise require them to have contact with the public.

In summary, while there is a public interest in providing assurance that government assets are properly protected, there is an overriding degree of public interest in maintaining government's ability to: ensure that proper procedures are followed prior to publication of material from third parties, including international partners; safeguard measures taken in the interests of national security and defence; pursue the interests of the United Kingdom overseas; conduct effective internal investigations; and protect the wellbeing of those to whom it has a duty of care.

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

If you are unhappy with the service you have received in relation to your request or wish to request an internal review, you should write to:



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Our ref: FOI274506

Sue Gray
Director
Cabinet Office
70 Whitehall
London
SW1A 2AS

email: foiteam@cabinet-office.x.gsi.gov.uk

You should note that the Cabinet Office will not normally accept an application for internal review if it is received more than two months after the date that the reply was issued.

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

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



YASMINE EDWARDS



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