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Susan Gordon  
via Email  
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03 June 2021

Dear Susan,

**Freedom of Information Act 2000 Request (our reference 63036)**

Thank you for your e-mail of 06 March 2021 in which you ask for the latest copy of the ViSOR standards booklet for your university paper. Your request has been handled as a request for information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

I can disclose the information set out in the attached Annexes - NPCC Visor Standards v3.2.REDACTED.pdf and NPCC Visor Standards v3.3.REDACTED.pdf.

These versions of the ViSOR standards have been redacted under Section 23(1) (information supplied by or relating to security bodies), Section 24(1) (national security) and Section 31(1) (a) (b) and (e) (prevention and detection of crime, apprehension or prosecution of offenders, and the operation of immigration controls) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

Section 24(1) is a qualified exemption, which means that the balance of the public interest in applying it must be considered. Arguments for and against disclosure, in terms of the public interest and in relation to section 24(1) are set out in the attached **Annex A**. Section 23(1) is an absolute exemption and no public interest test is required.

Section 31(1) (a) (b) and (e) provides that information can be withheld where disclosure would or would be likely to prejudice the prevention and detection of crime, apprehension or prosecution of offenders, and the operation of immigration controls. Section 31(1) (a) and (e) of the Act is a qualified exemption and requires consideration of the public interest test. Arguments for and against disclosure in terms of the public interest, with the reasons for our conclusion, are set out in **Annex B**.

If you are dissatisfied with this response you may request an independent internal review of our handling of your request by submitting a complaint within two months to [foirequests@homeoffice.gov.uk](mailto:foirequests@homeoffice.gov.uk), quoting reference 63036. If you ask for an internal review, it would be helpful if you could say why you are dissatisfied with the response.

As part of any internal review the Department's handling of your information request would be reassessed by staff who were not involved in providing you with this response. If you were to remain dissatisfied after an internal review, you would have a right of complaint to the Information Commissioner as established by section 50 of the FOIA.

Yours sincerely,

DDaT Police and Public Protection Technology (PPPT)

[FOIRequests@homeoffice.gov.uk](mailto:FOIRequests@homeoffice.gov.uk)

## **Annex A**

### **Public interest test in relation to section 24(1)**

Some of the exemptions in the FOI Act, referred to as ‘qualified’ exemptions, are subject to a public interest test (PIT). This test is used to balance the public interest in disclosure against the public interest in favour of withholding the information, or the considerations for and against the requirement to say whether the information requested is held or not. We must carry out a PIT where we are considering using any of the qualified exemptions in response to a request for information.

The ‘public interest’ is not necessarily the same as what interests the public. In carrying out a PIT we consider the greater good or benefit to the community as a whole if the information is released or not. Transparency and the ‘right to know’ must be balanced against the need to enable effective government and to serve the best interests of the public.

The FOIA is ‘applicant blind’. This means that we cannot, and do not, ask about the motives of anyone who asks for information. In providing a response to one person, we are expressing a willingness to provide the same response to anyone, including those who might represent a threat to the UK.

### **Considerations in favour of disclosing the information**

There is a general public interest in openness and transparency in government, which will serve to increase public trust. There is a public interest in members of the public being able to understand systems and processes in place.

### **Considerations in favour of maintaining the exemption**

Disclosure of this information would enable those with criminal intent to target specific areas of the UK to conduct their criminal or terrorist activities. This would also enable criminals to take measures to counteract the tactical capabilities of police forces nationally.

In addition, disclosure of this information would have the likelihood of identifying specific vulnerabilities, which would ultimately compromise police tactics, operations and future prosecutions. Any information identifying the focus of policing activity could be used to the advantage of terrorists or criminal organisations. Information that undermines the operational integrity of these activities will adversely affect public safety and have a negative impact on law enforcement. Public safety would be put at risk if criminals were able to counteract police tactics. The NPCC is committed to demonstrating proportionality and accountability.

Any information that could impact or undermine ongoing investigations or any future investigations would enable targeted individuals / groups to become tactically aware of the police capabilities. This would help subjects and avoid detection and inhibit the prevention and detection of crime.

### **Conclusion**

We conclude that the balance of the public interest lies in maintaining the exemption and withholding the information.

## **Annex B**

### **Public interest test in relation to section 31(1) (a) (b) and (e)**

Some of the exemptions in the FOI Act, referred to as 'qualified exemptions', are subject to a public interest test (PIT). This test is used to balance the public interest test in disclosure against the public interest in maintaining the exemption. We must carry out a PIT where we are considering using any of the qualified exemptions in response to a request for information.

The 'public interest' is not the same as what interests the public. In carrying out a PIT we consider the greater good or benefit to the community as a whole if the information is released or not. Transparency and the 'right to know' must be balanced against the need to enable effective government and to serve the best interests of the public.

The FOI Act is 'applicant blind'. This means that we cannot, and do not, ask about the motives of anyone who asks for information. In providing a response to one person, we are expressing a willingness to provide the same response to anyone, including those who might represent a threat to the UK.

### **Considerations in favour of disclosing the information**

We recognise there is a general public interest in disclosure of information in the interests of openness, and fairness and which would facilitate the accountability and transparency of public authorities for decisions taken by them. It would also allow individuals to understand decisions made by public authorities for the services provided both nationally and internationally. We also recognise the public interest in providing this information may help build greater public confidence in our processes.

### **Considerations in favour of maintaining the exemption**

The release of this information would provide sensitive details about the processes adopted UK policing and law enforcement bodies to prevent and detect crime and apprehend and prosecute offenders. The information would allow individuals to infer the level of ability police forces maintain in regard to safeguarding national security. There is a significant risk that knowledge and understanding of any capabilities that the police have would allow terrorists or individuals to undermine or circumvent the police thereby prejudicing the ability to maintain national security.

Any disclosure under FOI is a disclosure to the world at large. Release of the information would limit operational capabilities as criminals / terrorists would gain a greater understanding of the police's methods and techniques, enabling them to take steps to counter them; and provide an indication to any individual who may be undertaking criminal / terrorist activities that the police service may be aware of their presence and taking counter terrorist measures.

### **Conclusion**

We conclude that the balance of the public interest lies in withholding the information.