



Via Email



Force Disclosure Unit
Wiltshire Police HQ
London Road
Devizes
Wiltshire
SN10 2DN
www.wiltshire.police.uk
disclosure@wiltshire.police.uk

Date: 10 November 2022

Your ref: **FOI**

Our ref: FOI 2022/800

Reply contact name is

Dear ,

I write in connection with your request for information dated 11/10/2022 concerning the number of officers with CTSFO and / or SFO training.

I am required by the Freedom of Information Act 2000 to handle all requests in a manner that is blind as to the identity and motives of the requestor. Any information released as a response to a request is regarded as being published and therefore in the public domain without caveat.

Your request for information has now been considered and I am not obliged to supply the information you have requested.

You wrote:

I wish to obtain the following:

- The number of officers with CTSFO training (if any)
- The number of officers with SFO training (if any)

Response:

Evidence of Harm in Confirming or Denying that any other information is held

Armed Policing requires important and often time-critical decisions to be made by Authorised Firearms Officers, some of whom may have undergone training to perform a particular specialised Armed Policing role. To confirm or deny whether information is or isn't held relating to any type of specialist firearms officer would provide a geographical map of where these officers are located which would identify vulnerable force areas and reveal sensitive tactical capability.

The Police Service has a positive duty to protect the public from harm and that duty of care to all involved must be the overriding consideration. Confirmation or denial that information is held, in this case, would be extremely beneficial to terrorist organisations and individual terrorists.



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Furthermore, modern-day policing is intelligence led and irrespective of what information may or may not be held, the flow of intelligence into police forces may reduce which would compromise the effective delivery of operational law enforcement within the Armed Policing arena which is a dynamic and ever changing operational environment.

Public Interest Considerations

Section 24(2) National Security

Factors favouring complying with Section 1(1)(a) confirming that information is held

The public are entitled to know how public funds are spent and how resources are distributed within an area of policing. To confirm whether CTSFOs/SFOs are located within would enable the general public to hold Wiltshire police to account to ensure the level of armed policing is appropriate and balanced.

In the current financial climate of cuts and with the call for transparency of public spending, this would enable public debate into this subject.

Factors against complying with Section 1(1)(a) confirming or denying that information is held

Security measures are put in place to protect the community we serve. As evidenced within the harm, to confirm information is held would highlight to terrorists and individuals intent on carrying out criminal activity, tactical resource capability and vulnerabilities within Wiltshire police.

Taking into account the current security climate within the United Kingdom, no information (such as the citing of an exemption which confirms information is held, or conversely, stating 'no information held') which may aid a terrorist should be disclosed. To what extent this information may aid a terrorist is unknown, but it is clear that it will have an impact on a force's ability to monitor terrorist activity.

Irrespective of what information is or isn't held, the public entrust the Police Service to make appropriate decisions with regard to their safety and protection and the only way of reducing risk is to be cautious with what is placed into the public domain.

The cumulative effect of terrorists gathering information from various sources would be even more impactful when linked to other information gathered from various sources about terrorism. The more information disclosed over time will give a more detailed account of the tactical infrastructure of not only a force area but also the country as a whole.

Any incident that results from such a disclosure would, by default, affect National Security.

Section 31(1) Law Enforcement

Factors favouring complying with Section 1(1)(a) confirming that any other information is held

Irrespective of what information may or may not be held, to confirm information exists would lead to a better informed public which may encourage individuals to provide intelligence in order to reduce the risk of firearms incidents occurring.

Factors against complying with Section 1(1)(a) neither confirming nor denying that any other information is held

Confirmation or denial that information is held in this case would suggest Wiltshire police take their responsibility to ensure specialised officers are resourced dismissively and inappropriately.

Balancing test

The points above highlight the merits of confirming nor denying that information exists. The Police Service is charged with enforcing the law, preventing and detecting crime and protecting the communities we serve. As part of that policing purpose, information is gathered which can be highly sensitive relating to high profile investigative activity.

Weakening the mechanisms used to monitor any type of criminal activity, and specifically terrorist activity would place the security of the country at an increased level of danger.

In addition, anything that places that confidence at risk, no matter how generic, would undermine any trust or confidence individuals have in the Police Service. Therefore, at this moment in time, it is our opinion that for these issues the balance test favours neither confirming nor denying that any other information is held.

Section 17 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 requires Wiltshire Police, when refusing to provide information (because the information is exempt) to provide you the applicant with a notice which: (a) states that fact, (b) specifies the exemption in question and (c) states (if that would not otherwise be apparent) why the exemption applies. In accordance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000 this letter acts as a Refusal Notice for those aspects of your request.

Exemptions applied:

S24(2) National Security;
S31(3) Law Enforcement
S38(2) Health and Safety

Yours sincerely

Force Disclosure Decision Maker

The Wiltshire Police offers a re-examination of your case under its review procedure



Force Disclosure Unit

Wiltshire Police HQ, London Road, Devizes, Wiltshire SN10 2DN
Telephone 101 ext 62005

Freedom of Information Request Appeals Procedure

1. Who Can Ask for a Review

Any person who has requested information from Wiltshire Police, which has been dealt with under the Freedom of Information Act, is entitled to complain and request an internal review, if they are dissatisfied with the response they received.

2. How to Request a Review

Requests for review of a Freedom of Information request must be made in writing to the:
Force Disclosure Unit
Wiltshire Police Headquarters,
London Road, Devizes,
Wiltshire,
SN10 2DN

Email at disclosure@wiltshire.police.uk.

The reference number, date of the request and details of why the review is being requested must be included. Requests for review should be brought to the attention of the Force Disclosure Unit within 20 working days of the Force's response to the original FoI request.

3. Review Procedure

Receipt of a request for review will be acknowledged in writing to include confirmation of the reasons for the review. The review will be conducted by another Decision Maker, who is independent from the original Decision Maker. The Force Disclosure Unit will set a target date for a response. The response will be made as soon as is practicable with the intention to complete the review within twenty working days. In more complex cases the review may take up to 40 working days.

The Independent Decision Maker will conduct a review of the handling of the request for information and of decisions taken, including decisions taken about where the public interest lies in respect of exempt information where applicable. The review enables a re-evaluation of the case, taking into account the matters raised by the complaint.

4. Conclusion of the Appeal

On completion of the review the Independent Decision Maker will reply to the complainant with the result of the review. If the complainant is still dissatisfied following the review they should contact the Information Commissioner to make an appeal. The Information Commissioner can be contacted via the following details:

Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF
Tel: 01625 545 700
Fax: 01625 524 510
Email: mail@ico.gsi.gov.uk

Please note that the ICO's offices will be closed for the foreseeable future and are therefore unable to receive correspondence via post.

If you should wish you contact them, please visit <https://ico.org.uk/global/contact-us/>