

**Force Disclosure Unit**

Wiltshire Police HQ

London Road

Devizes

Wiltshire

SN10 2DN

Tel 101 ext 62005

www.wiltshire.police.ukdisclosure@wiltshire.pnn.police.uk

XXXXXX – by email

Date: 4th December 2023

Your ref: FOI

Our ref: FOI 2023 / 1155

Reply contact name is: Nick Penny

Dear XXXXXX,

I write in connection with your request for information dated 30th November 2023 concerning Countries Officers have been deployed to.

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:

Please answer the following questions for the time period between 1 Jan 2023 and 31 Oct 2023:

Please can you provide me with the names of all the countries that officers from your force were deployed to, to either assist or train local law enforcement or as a response to requests from foreign governments/police forces after a major incident such as a terror attack (please specify), along with the number of officers that were deployed to each country? Please can you tell me the total cost of each deployment (with the breakdown of the costs incurred).

Our response:

Wiltshire Police can neither confirm nor deny that it holds the information you requested as the duty in Section 1(1)(a) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

The following exemptions apply to the request:

- Section 23(5) Information supplied by, or concerning, certain Security Bodies
- Section 24(2) National Security
- Section 27(1) International relations
- Section 31(1) Law Enforcement



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Section 23 is a class based absolute exemption and there is no requirement to evidence the harm or consider the public interest.

Sections 24, 27 & 31 are prejudice based qualified exemptions and there is a requirement to articulate the harm that would be caused in confirming or not that the information is held as well as carrying out a public interest test

Evidence of Harm in complying with s1(1)(a) FOIA

Confirming or denying whether any information is or isn't held would contravene the constrictions laid out within Section 23 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 in that this stipulates a generic bar on disclosure of any information applied by, or concerning, certain Security Bodies.

Any release under FOIA is a disclosure to the world, not just to the individual making the request. Whilst not questioning the motives of the applicant, confirming or denying that any information is held relating to countries that our officers may have been deployed to in order to either assist or train local police forces or as a response to a request from foreign governments / police forces in response to major incidents (and the cost of it) would highlight to criminals the tactical abilities and capabilities between the force and the relevant country. This awareness would allow terrorists to target specific areas within the United Kingdom and abroad which they feel are vulnerable targets.

Confirming or denying whether any specific agreements are held or such services have been provided would risk prejudicing relations between the United Kingdom and those respective countries and could undermine the smooth relations between them in upholding confidence and trust between Government Heads of State and Diplomats. Should the United Kingdom fail to preserve these qualities by disclosing such information, the UK's relationship with other countries would be compromised.

Confirming or denying whether any specific agreements are held or such services have been provided would lead to an increase of harm to investigations as well as compromise law enforcement. This would be to the detriment of providing an efficient policing service and a failure in providing a duty of care to all members of the public.

The threat from terrorism cannot be ignored. It is generally recognised that the international security landscape is increasingly complex and unpredictable. The UK Government publish the threat level which is based on current intelligence and currently stands at 'Substantial' which means an attack is likely.

It is publicly acknowledged that police forces train their officers and staff to a high standard across the United Kingdom, which includes specific training for terrorism related offending, and that these courses are offered to international clients.

Confirming or denying that any information is held relating to the types of training and/or support provided to other countries by Wiltshire Police would provide terrorists with a greater understanding of where specific training and exchange programmes are provided. This awareness would reveal vulnerabilities. This detriment effect is increased as the request has been received by more than one force. In addition to the local criminal fraternity being better informed, those intent on carrying out terrorist atrocities would be able to 'map' which forces deals with which country and vice versa. This can be useful information to those committing crimes.

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 both national security and law enforcement.

Public Interest Test

Factors favouring Confirming information is held for Section 24 FOIA:

The information if held simply relates to national security and confirming or denying would not actually harm it. The public are entitled to know what public funds are spent on and whether appropriate security measures are in place. To confirm or deny whether any information exists in this case would lead to a better informed public.

Factors against Confirming information is held for Section 24 FOIA:

By confirming or denying whether any information is held would render security measures less effective and could lead to ongoing or future operations to protect the security of the United Kingdom being compromised and becoming less effective. This in turn would increase the risk of harm to the public.

Factors favouring Confirming information is held for Section 27 FOIA:

The police are a service and are accountable to the public. It is therefore appropriate that the force provides as much information as is possible about its activity in order to ensure openness and transparency in its processes and use of public funds. Confirmation or denial that information is held would accordingly reinforce the police's commitments to transparency as an organisation.

Factors against Confirming information is held for Section 27 FOIA:

The general public are aware that forces work internationally with other police forces and law enforcement agencies in their endeavour to prevent and detect crime or disorder and maintain public safety. However to confirm or deny information is held in relation to a named state outside of the UK could undermine the smooth relations between the United Kingdom and that state in upholding confidence and trust between Government Heads of State and Diplomats; risking significant compromise to the UK's relationship with that, and other states.

Factors favouring Confirming information is held for Section 31 FOIA:

Confirming or denying whether any information is held regarding any meetings, joint training, and exchange programmes between the force and the bodies listed within the request would provide an insight into the Police Service. This would enable the public to have a better understanding of the effectiveness of the police and how the police relationships with other countries are handled, inasmuch as partnerships being documented appropriately. This would provide openness and transparency.

Factors against Confirming information is held for Section 31 FOIA:

In this case confirmation or denial would have the effect of compromising law enforcement tactics and would also hinder any future policing. In addition, it has been recorded that FOIA releases are monitored by criminals and terrorists and so to confirm or deny any information is held would lead to law enforcement being undermined. The Police Service utilises a number of techniques whilst training their officers and staff and we would not wish to inadvertently reveal tactical options within an FOI disclosure that may undermine law enforcement.

Balance Test

The security of the country is of paramount importance and the Police Service will not divulge whether any other information is or isn't held if to do so would place the safety of an individual at risk, undermine National Security or compromise the effective delivery of Operational Law Enforcement. Whilst there is a public interest in the transparency of training provided to officers and staff in other countries, there is a very strong public interest in safeguarding the integrity of police training and relationships with outside agencies, including police forces abroad. As much as there is a public interest in knowing that policing activity is appropriate and balanced this will only be overridden in exceptional circumstances. The areas of police interest discussed above for this case are sensitive issues and therefore it is our opinion that for these issues confirmation or denial that any information is held, at this time, is not made out. This should not be taken as necessarily indicating that any other information that would meet your request exists or does not exist.

Section 17 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 requires the Wiltshire Police, when refusing to provide such 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.

The exemptions applicable to the information requested are as follows :

- Section 23(5) Information supplied by, or concerning, certain Security Bodies
- Section 24(2) National Security
- Section 27(1) International relations
- Section 31(1) Law Enforcement

In accordance with section 17 of the Act, this letter represents a Refusal Notice for this particular request.

I am satisfied that all the relevant information has been passed to me and been considered in the light of your request within the time constraints applicable under the legislation.

Wiltshire Police would like to thank you for the interest that you have shown in the Force.

Yours sincerely,

Nick Penny
Disclosure Decision Maker

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.pnn.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