

Our ref: 01/FOI/23/011230/U

Please quote our reference
number when responding

Wednesday, 20 September 2023

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST REFERENCE NO: 01/FOI/23/011230/U

I write in connection with your request for information dated 22/08/2023, I note you seek access to the following information:

This is a request under the Freedom of Information Act. I am requesting all documents, including itineraries, briefings, internal notes, and email correspondence, from the calendar year 2020 to present, in regard to exchanges, visits, trainings, and learning programs between GMP and Israel's police, civil administration, or defense force.

Result of Searches

Greater Manchester 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(4) International relations**
- **Section 31(3) Law Enforcement**

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 meetings, exchanges, learning visits or joint training between the force and the Israeli police, Israeli Civil Administration or Israeli Defence Forces 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 would risk prejudicing relations between the United Kingdom and Israel 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 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, meetings and exchange programmes provided to other countries between the force and the Israeli Police, Israeli Civil Administration or Israeli Defence Forces between 2014-present, 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.