



FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST



Request Number: F 2011 01169

Keyword: Crime

Subject: Lost or stolen police firearms

Request and Answer:

Question 1

A breakdown of the number and type of firearms - belonging to the Royal Ulster Constabulary - lost or stolen between 1970 and November 2001 and still unaccounted for?

Question 2

A breakdown of the number and type of firearms - belonging to the Police Service of NI - lost or stolen since November 2001 and still unaccounted for?

Question 3

Also, whether the test-firing ballistic records of each firearm are still held by the PSNI and if not, what has happened to the missing records?

Answer

Section 17(5) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 requires the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI), when refusing to provide such information (because the cost of compliance exceeds the appropriate limit) to provide you the applicant with a notice which states that fact.

It is over the cost to retrieve records from 1970 to 2001 in order to answer question 1 as the requested information is not held in an easily retrievable format. This research has been estimated to take approximately 30 plus hours. This would require a case by case, year by year paper and computer check and in addition a cross checking exercise to individually verify if the weapon had been recovered. It is therefore considered that the cost of complying with your request for information would exceed the "appropriate costs limit" under Section 12(1) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000, which is currently set by the Secretary of State at £450 (18hours). If this cost applies to one or more questions, then it applies to the entire request.

In accordance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000, this letter should be considered as a Refusal Notice, and the request has therefore been closed.

Section 16 Advice and Assistance

You may wish to submit a refined request in order that the cost of complying with your request may be facilitated within the 'appropriate limit'. In compliance with Section 16 of the Act, I have considered how your request may be refined to bring it under the appropriate limit. Although PSNI would hold information relevant to your request, these records cover various aspects as mentioned previously

and would be embedded in both paper based and computer based systems. Therefore, due to the nature and structure of the information requested this would make it extremely difficult for the PSNI to advise you how to refine your request to a point below the £450 cost limit.

Submission of a refined request would be treated as a new request, and considered in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000, including consideration of relevant Part II exemptions.

If you have any queries regarding your request or this decision please do not hesitate to contact 028 9070 0164. When contacting the Freedom of Information Team, please quote the reference number listed at the beginning of this letter.

If you are dissatisfied in any way with the handling of your request, you have the right to request a review. You should do this as soon as possible, or in any case within two months of the date of issue of this letter. In the event that you require a review to be undertaken, you can do so by writing to the Head of Freedom of Information, PSNI Headquarters, 65 Knock Road, Belfast, BT5 6LE or by emailing foi@psni.pnn.police.uk.

If following an internal review, carried out by an independent decision maker, you were to remain dissatisfied in any way with the handling of the request you may make a complaint, under Section 50 of the Freedom of Information Act, to the Information Commissioner's Office and ask that they investigate whether the PSNI has complied with the terms of the Freedom of Information Act. You can write to the Information Commissioner at Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF. In most circumstances the Information Commissioner will not investigate a complaint unless an internal review procedure has been carried out, however the Commissioner has the option to investigate the matter at his discretion.

Please be advised that PSNI replies under Freedom of Information may be released into the public domain via our website @ www.psni.police.uk

Personal details in respect of your request have, where applicable, been removed to protect confidentiality.