



Making Northern Ireland Safer For Everyone Through Professional, Progressive Policing

## FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST



**Request Number:** F-2011-00752

**Keyword:** Human Resources

**Subject:** Officers Being Redeployed at the End of March

### Request and Answer:

I am writing to confirm that the Police Service of Northern Ireland has now completed its search for the information.

I have today decided to:

- disclose information in relation to questions 3 to 4 in full; and
- fully exempt information in relation to questions 1 and 2 pursuant to the provisions of Section 31(1)(a)(b)(c) of the Act.

### Question 1

How many PSNI officers will have to be deployed to guard duties at the end of March? (Duties formerly or currently carried out by police reserve).

### Question 2

How many PSNI officers overall will be removed from 'normal' duties to replace Reserve officers who will leave at the end of March?

### Answer

Section 17 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 requires the Police Service of Northern Ireland, 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 not otherwise apparent) why the exemption applies.

The exemption/s, as well as the factors the Department considered when deciding where the public interest lies, are listed below:

Section 31(1)(a)(b)(c) Law Enforcement  
Section 38(1)(a)(b) Health and Safety

Sections 31 and 38 are prejudice based and qualified exemptions therefore a Harm Test and Public Interest Test are necessary.

### **Harm Test**

Individual officers, staff and members of the public entering the police estate or in close proximity are vulnerable to attack, as are those performing guard duty at station gates. Information in the public domain which helps to identify the level of protection at any location is of potential value to terrorist groups. Incidents such as the recent attacks at Newtownhamilton and Strand Road police stations demonstrate the scant regard that terrorist groups have for the communities which reside or work around police stations. Police officers would not expect PSNI to release any information that may jeopardise their health and safety.

### **Public Interest Test Section 31**

For Release - The PSNI has a duty of protection in NI and the public have a right to know that resources are being used both adequately and responsibly.

For Retention - To provide resource information in relation to this, guard duties would clearly provide terrorists with valuable information that they could use easily to target stations. Article 2 of the Human Rights Act 1998 imposes a positive obligation on police to protect life, including the lives of police officers. Release of this information would be useful to terrorists in targeting station attacks thereby increasing the risk to officers, a breach of Article 2.

### **Public Interest Test Section 38**

For Release - Disclosure would lead to a better public awareness and debate.

For Retention - The release of information concerning police resources at any time, taken on its own or together with other information, either already available or subject of further requests, could place stations / police officers and any individuals entering the police estate at risk of attack. Police officers would not expect PSNI to release any information that may jeopardise their health and safety.

### **Decision**

There is always a strong interest in the accountability of the Service however balanced against this I have taken into consideration the likelihood of serious threat and the subsequent harm that could be caused to officers and therefore I have decided not to release any resource information relating to guard duties.

### **Question 3**

How will the Chief Constable cope with this redeployment re officers available on the ground?

### **Answer**

Officers will not be abstracted from Neighbourhood Policing Duties to perform this role. District Command teams will manage their resources as necessary to ensure adequate protection to the police estate while maintaining the level of service the public expects.

### **Question 4**

How many 'back office' officers have been switched to operational duties?

### **Answer**

611 additional officers are in front line roles. This issue was a target area within the last year's Northern Ireland Policing Board (NIPB) Policing Plan and is overseen by the NIPB Human Resources Committee, discussed with NIPB by the Chief Constable and has been subject to scrutiny by PSNI audit arrangements.

If you have any queries regarding your request or the decision please do not hesitate to contact me on 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](mailto: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.psnj.police.uk](http://www.psnj.police.uk)

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