



FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST



Request Number: F-2011-01138

Keyword: Operational Policing

Subject: Close Protection Unit Overtime

Request and Answer:

Question 1

I am seeking to find out how much has been paid in overtime to the 37 officers drafted in to the Close Protection Unit since April 1 to replace the Full Time Reserve officers who finished on March 31.

Question 2

What is the average hourly rate for these 37 officers?

Question 3

From what units have these 37 officers been drafted in to the CPU?

Question 4

Are these officers entitled to a meal allowance? If so, how much is paid to each officer on a daily basis?

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 response to questions 2 to 4 in full; and
- fully exempt information in response to questions 1 and 3 pursuant to the provisions of Sections 24 and 31 of the Act.

Answer 2

I have been advised that the PSNI do not hold any information with regard to the average hourly rate paid to any police officers.

Answer 4

As per the PSNI Police & Allowances code officers may claim up to £7.25 for a meal allowance.

The PSNI constantly reviews its use of resources in order to provide the best service possible as well

as providing value for money.

The PSNI are currently giving additional support to those who require the services of CPU and are working to balance the cost effectiveness of this service with operational capability and capacity. This is also balanced with a duty of care to officers to ensure their health and wellbeing.

Answer 1 and 3

I can confirm that the PSNI hold information relating to the overtime and costs of the CPU but information relating to how the loss of 37 officers has been managed and any associated costs is exempt by virtue of:

S24 (1) National Security and
S31(1)(a) Law Enforcement

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:

S24 (1) National Security
S31(1)(a) Law Enforcement

Sections 24 and 31 are prejudice based and qualified exemptions therefore a Harm Test and Public Interest Test are necessary.

Harm Test

The PSNI is charged with enforcing the law, preventing and detecting crime and protecting communities we serve. Release of some of this information i.e. information about how the loss of officers is being managed would have an adverse effect on the functions of the unit and place the officers and subjects at risk. Number of officers assigned to CPU could with information possibly already known provide enough detail to allow terrorists to ascertain levels of protection provided and expose possible areas to significant risk of harm.

The functions of the unit relate to security, intelligence and bodyguard services for members of the royal family, government officials and visiting dignitaries, as such the disclosure of any information regarding the capacities of the unit which will prove useful to those engaged in criminal activities against those being protected to such an extent as to create an undesirable effect on national security by terrorist attack.

Public Interest Test

Section 24 National Security

For release

Where information relates to how the PSNI fulfils its roles and functions there is an interest in disclosure. The release of the requested information could provide a better understanding of how public funds are spent in relation to national security and would also encourage more informed debate about national security issues.

For retention

Release of the requested information could impact on national security in reducing the ability and manner in which the PSNI would be able to effectively protect the safety and well being of its community. Releasing details about the unit would assist in providing individuals intent on committing acts of terrorism with vital intelligence as to the level of police protection. This would hinder the ability of law enforcement bodies to protect these individuals and the personal safety of such individuals is inextricably linked to national security.

Section 31 Law Enforcement

For release

The PSNI has a duty of protection in Northern Ireland and the public have a right to know that resources, both in terms of police personnel and finance, are being used both adequately and responsibly to do so.

For retention

To provide resource information in relation to this particular unit would clearly provide terrorists with valuable information that they could use easily to target officers / principals. 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 these officers and the individuals they protect for attacks thereby increasing the risk to those officers, a breach of Article 2.

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 the individuals they are protecting and therefore I have decided not to release resource information and associated costs of the Close Protection Unit.

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.

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.

