



FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST



Request Number: F-2012-00196

Keyword: Crime

Subject: Hoax Bomb Alerts

Request and Answer:

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

Question 1

How much has it cost police to respond to hoax bomb alerts from January 1 2011 until January 13, 2012.

Answer

Searches were conducted which failed to locate any records or documents in relation to your request. Hoax bomb alerts are not individually costed. Accordingly I have determined that the PSNI does not hold the information to which you seek access.

Question 2

How many hoax bomb alerts have there been for calendar years January 1, 2010 to December 31, 2010; January 1, 2011 to December 31 2011; and January 1, 2012 to January 15, 2012.

Answer

There were 363 hoax bomb alerts in 2010 calendar year and 339 in 2011 calendar year. Please note that figures from April 1, 2011 are provisional and may be subject to change.

I have decided to withhold information regarding the number of hoax bomb alerts from January 1, 2012 to January 15, 2012.

Section 17(1) 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

This is a qualified and prejudiced based exemption, therefore the public authority has a responsibility to evidence the harm and the public interest in releasing the information.

Harm Test

The Police Service of Northern Ireland is charged with enforcing the law, preventing and detecting crime and protecting the communities we serve. Release of the information would indicate how many hoax bombs were responded to within a two week period at the start of this year. As the numbers involved are low, this information may be useful to terrorists or criminals in that it could allow them to determine whether their hoax bomb has been detected.

Public Interest Test

Factors Favouring Release

Better awareness of information concerning hoax bomb alerts may reduce crime or lead to more information from the public.

Factors Favouring Withholding

Release of this information would hinder the prevention and detection of crime and compromise law enforcement tactics. Due to the low cell numbers, any individual or group who had been involved in a bomb alert hoax would be able to establish whether the matter had been detected and dealt with by police and take action to avoid detection.

Decision

Whilst there are valid reasons for release of this information in line with the reasons for and spirit of the legislation, where such a release has potential to impact on law enforcement issues, making the job of the police more difficult, then the information should not be released and the exemption should be applied.

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.