



FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST



Request Number: F-2012-01741

Keyword: Crime

Subject: Unauthorised Access to Police Computers Systems

Request and Answer:

In the last ten years (2002-2012):

Question 1

How many times has the Police National Computer been accessed by unauthorised officers, past or present? In as much as is possible and if known, can you disclose details surrounding the unauthorised access: the date of the access, the person(s) who accessed the unauthorised information, what type of information was accessed (QUEST, VODS, ANPR, Property, CRIMELINK, identity of CHIS') and whether the information pertained to a live case. If so, which case the information pertained to, and what, if any, disciplinary or legal action was taken against the person(s) who accessed the unauthorised information.

Question 2

How many times has PSNI's internal police database been accessed by unauthorised person(s). In as much as is possible and if known, can you disclose details surrounding the unauthorised access: the date of the access, the person(s) who accessed the unauthorised information, what type of information was accessed (serving officers' private details, identity of CHIS') and what, if any, disciplinary or legal action was taken against the person(s) who accessed the unauthorised information.

Question 3

Referring to unauthorised accessing of information of both the police national computer AND internal police databases, how many instances of unauthorised deletion of information have there been? In as much as is possible and if known, can you disclose details surrounding the unauthorised deletions of information: the date of the deletion, the person(s) who deleted the information, what type of information was deleted, if the deletion of information pertained to a live case, whether the information pertained to a live case, and if so, which case the information pertained to, and what, if any, disciplinary or legal action was taken against the person(s) who deleted the unauthorised information.

Question 4

How many times have the identities of informants (CHIS') and witnesses under police protection been compromised? In as much as is possible and if known, can you disclose details surrounding the compromising of information about informants and witnesses under police protection: the year in which the information was compromised, how the information came to be compromised, what

information was compromised (identity of CHIS', discovery of location of witnesses etc.)

Answer

Section 17(5) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 requires the Police Service 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.

The requested information is not held in an easily retrievable format and it would be over the fees to locate, retrieve and extract. Information of this nature is embedded into different police records, both electronic and paper based, and is not held in one central location therefore each District and Department would have to be consulted. The research to locate, retrieve and extract the requested information would require both a manual and electronic case by case search and would necessitate trawling through a large number of records.

It is estimated 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 (i.e. 18 hours work) as it would be over the fees to locate, retrieve and extract. In addition it would involve creating information which we are not obliged to do under the Act.

As outlined above it is estimated that question 1 alone would be well in excess of the 18 hours appropriate limit. Please note that when one part of a request exceeds the cost limit the whole request is considered over the cost.

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 – Duty to provide 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. You may wish to refine the time frame from 10 years to a shorter period ie Professional Standards Department (PSD) would hold information on officers investigated and disciplined for inappropriate/unauthorised access of police systems where cases have been reported to PSD (this information would refer to police officers only, not police staff). To keep the request within cost PSD could provide (subject to any exemptions that may apply) the number of officers disciplined for inappropriately accessing police systems since 2010.

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 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.