



FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST



Request Number: F-2012-01919

Keyword: Crime

Subject: Unsolved Murders

Request and Answer:

Question 1

Using the Freedom of Information Act, I would like to know how many murders remain unsolved in Northern Ireland from 1995 to present day.

Question 2

Please break down the figures into counties Londonderry, Antrim, Down, Armagh, Tyrone and Fermanagh and provide the name of the victim and the year they were murdered.

Answer

The Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) does not hold the requested information in an easily retrieval format. Therefore, 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.

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

By way of explanation, these questions have very wide parameters and a lengthy time span, it would be extremely difficult, even with IT intervention, to pull together the statistics requested. A manual case by case search would also have to be conducted. This would involve looking at each murder file individually, carrying out various checks, which would for example include, checking if someone has been ever charged and subsequently found not guilty at court etc which clearly would be very labour intensive and in excess of the 18 hour limit.

Therefore, 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.

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.

Section 16 – Duty to provide advice and assistance:

You may wish to refine your request to a specific time span, although as this search may still prove to

be labour and time intensive, as the information would be embedded in different systems it may still be over the cost. Additionally, you may also wish to specify what you consider to be unsolved. For example, where 3 gunmen carried out an attack and only one is convicted the case is statistically considered to be 'cleared'. Obviously, in this example 2 suspects are outstanding. This does not even begin to consider suspects who may have assisted the gunmen in any capacity either before or after the murder.

Taking all of the above into account, and due to the nature and structure of the information requested it makes 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 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.