



## FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST



**Request Number:** F-2012-02392

**Keyword:** Operational Policing

**Subject:** London Olympics

**Request and Answer:**

### Question 1

Please state how many PSNI staff/officers will be attending the London Olympics (excluding those for personal/non-official reasons)?

### Answer

Your request for information has now been considered and I am not obliged to supply the information you have requested.

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 the applicant with a notice which: (a) states the fact, (b) specifies the exemption in question and (c) states (if that would not otherwise be apparent) why the exemption applies.

The following exemption has been applied:

Section 21 - Information Reasonably Accessible by Other Means

The information you request may be located using the link below:

<http://www.acpo.presscentre.com/Press-Releases/Police-service-delivers-resources-for-largest-ever-pre-planned-operation-the-London-2012-Olympic-and-Paralympic-Games-17c.aspx>

### Question 2

Please provide a breakdown of the date(s), location(s), event(s) which each plans to attend and the anticipated costs.

### Answer

Your request for information has now been considered and the decision has been taken not to supply the information you have requested.

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 exemptions, as well as the factors the Department considered when deciding where the public interest lies, are listed below:

Section 24 (1) – National Security

Section 31 (1) (a) (b) (c) – Law Enforcement

Sections 24 and 31 are prejudiced based, qualified exemptions and there is a requirement to articulate the harm in disclosure of the requested information as well as carrying out a public interest test.

### **Harm Test**

Releasing information in relation to officer strength at specific Olympic events would result in harm to the national security of the United Kingdom. This is because it would provide those individuals intent on committing acts of terrorism with valuable information as to the level of resistance they might expect to encounter when undertaking such an act.

Release would also prejudice the prevention and detection of crime and would identify the level of policing assigned to specific events. This would compromise safety arrangements as it would enable those wishing to circumvent those arrangements to form an assessment of the level of security provided at Olympic events. It would also reveal policing tactics and would be used to form part of a wider assessment of levels of policing provided at similar events.

### **Public interest Test**

#### Factors Favouring Release – Section 24

Release would serve an important public interest in demonstrating accountability and furthering public understanding in relation to the costs incurred in policing the Olympics. It would also encourage more informed debate about national security issues.

#### Factors Favouring Retention – Section 24

Release of this information would allow extremists to gauge the level of police resources afforded to police the London Olympics. This would provide anyone intent on committing acts of terrorism with vital intelligence as to the level of policing afforded to specific events, the level of resistance they would be likely to encounter and times or areas of increased vulnerability. Release would therefore increase the risk to the safety of individuals attending events and jeopardise national security.

#### Factors Favouring Release – Section 31

Releasing details of policing levels to be provided at specific events would allow the public to see where public funds are being spent and lead to increased public awareness.

#### Factors Favouring Retention – Section 31

Release of the information would compromise law enforcement tactics and hinder the prevention and detection of crime. More crime would be committed and individuals would be placed at risk. Policing and security arrangements for major events are intended to prevent the commission of serious crime. Arrangements are re-used and have been monitored by criminal groups. All UK police forces have a duty to protect the safety of individuals. Release of this information would be likely to increase the risk to individuals attending Olympic events, as well as members of law enforcement bodies and the general public.

### **Balance Test**

Whilst there is a public interest in the transparency of policing operations and providing assurance in the ability of the police to prevent crime at an event such as the Olympics, the security of the country

is of paramount importance and the Police Service will not divulge information that would place the safety of individual at risk or undermine national security. There is a very strong public interest in safeguarding national security and the integrity of police operations in the highly sensitive issue of terrorism prevention. The threat of terrorism and the attractiveness of the event as a potential target necessitates a stance of caution when considering whether to release information relating to the levels of police resources planned.

On this basis, I consider that the balance test favours retention of the requested information.

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.psni.police.uk](http://www.psni.police.uk)

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