



FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST



Request Number: F-2012-01581

Keyword: Operational Policing

Subject: Officers Deployed in Magherafelt

Request and Answer:

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

Question 1

How many officers are deployed in Magherafelt on Friday and Saturday nights?

Question 2

How much does it cost the police service to patrol crowds of revellers in the town on these nights?

Answer

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 31 (1)(a) and (b) Law Enforcement
Section 38 (a) and (b) Health and Safety

Sections 31 and 38 are prejudice based and qualified exemptions, therefore a Harm Test and Public Interest Test are necessary.

Harm Test

Disclosing information in relation to costs and numbers of officers deployed could enable criminal elements to ascertain the level of police resources available at a particular time, leaving the district and officers vulnerable to criminal activity or terrorist attack. Disclosing details of officer deployments at a specific time and location could directly impact on the law enforcement ability of police. Release of the information could potentially pose a risk to both police officers and members of the public.

Public Interest Test

Factors favouring release – Section 31

The PSNI must be accountable for their procedures. The public would be better informed about the policing measures in place.

Factors favouring retention – Section 31

Disclosing details of officer deployments could assist criminals in evading police and undermining the law enforcement role of the PSNI. This information could assist terrorists to predict the level of resources at specific times and enable them to target areas or individuals.

Factors favouring release – Section 38

The information relates directly to the efficiency and effectiveness of the Service and its officers. The public have an interest in knowing that adequate arrangements are in place to protect communities.

Factors favouring retention – Section 38

Disclosing the level of police resources deployed could highlight opportunities for terrorists to launch attacks in the area, placing both officers and members of the public at risk.

Decision

Criminal elements could use this information to evade police, directly undermining the law enforcement role of the police. Disclosing costs and numbers of officers deployed at weekends in a specific location has the potential to reveal a pattern or routine of deployments. Disclosing the level of police resources in a specific area could enable terrorists to launch an attack or target individuals. The PSNI is currently under an increased threat of terrorism and the release of operational policing details into the public domain would not be in the public interest. The lives of individuals are of paramount importance and the PSNI will not divulge any information which could put any individual at risk.

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.psnipolice.uk

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

