



FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST



Request Number: F-2016-00334

Keyword: Organisational Information/Governance

Subject: Practice and Procedure for Police Helicopters and Police Dogs

Request and Answer:

Question 1

Detail the Practice and Procedure in place for Police Officers to request the assistance of a Police Helicopter.

Answer

Your request for information has now been considered. In respect of Section 1(1)(a) of the Act I can confirm that the Police Service of Northern Ireland does hold information to which your request relates. The decision has been taken to disclose the following.

The record keeper has confirmed that there are two different methods of tasking a Police Helicopter. If the request for the PSNI helicopter is made in advance to a pre-planned operation then the requesting officer must complete and submit an electronic form to Air Support Unit (ASU) requesting the assistance of the PSNI helicopter. In more urgent cases, where immediate assistance may be required, direct contact can be made by PSNI officers to the police controls rooms to request the assistance of the PSNI helicopter.

Question 2

In what circumstances may a Police Helicopter be requested to assist officers on the ground?

Answer

The Police Service of Northern Ireland's Air Support Unit (ASU) may be requested to assist front line officers throughout Northern Ireland with crime investigations, anti-crime operations, traffic management, search and rescue operations, public order situations, crime reduction initiatives and tackling terrorism.

Question 3

What criteria is used, and by whom when deciding whether or not to deploy a Police Helicopter?

Answer

When a request for assistance is received, the ASU Duty Sergeant will examine the details of the request and will determine if the requested tasking can be accommodated and the most suitable type of aircraft to perform the task.

Question 4

Are there any restrictions on the hours of operation/flight of Police Helicopters?

Answer

Yes, the PSNI adhere to strict flying guidelines and restrictions as laid down by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA), the UK's specialist aviation regulator, a link to their website is provided below,

<https://www.caa.co.uk/home/>

Question 5

Detail the practice and procedure for Police Officers to request the assistance of Police dogs and Police dog Handlers

Answer

If a PSNI Officer believes that they require the assistance of a Police dog, they can request the attendance of a Police dog and dog handler through the police control room.

Question 6

What criteria is used, and by whom when deciding whether or not to engage the use of Police dogs and Police dog Handlers

Answer

The PSNI officer requesting the assistance of a police dog and handler will be required to provide the dog handler with all the relevant information about the incident and it is the dog handler who will use their expertise to determine whether or not a police dog would be of any assistance in each circumstance.

Question 7

Are there any restrictions on the hours of operation of Police dogs and their Handlers?

Answer

There are no restrictions on the hours of operation of police dogs and the police handlers but the welfare of the officer and animal are taken into consideration in each incident.

Question 8

Are there any restrictions on the tasking of a POLSA in the search of a missing person?

Answer

There are no restrictions on the tasking of a POLSA in the search of a missing person.

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.psnj.police.uk

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