



## FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST



**Request Number:** F-2022-02140

**Keyword:** Organisational Information Police/Staff Training

**Subject:** PSNI Training - Colombia and Qatar

### Request and Answer:

Your request for information has now been considered. In respect of Section 1(1)(a) of the Act we 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.

#### Request 1

Details of the training provided by the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) from 2016 to 2021 inclusive to Colombian bodies including in each instance, (i) the start date of the training and its duration, (ii) the focus of the training, (iii) the specific unit(s) involved, (iv) the number of individuals trained, and (v) whether the training was provided in Northern Ireland, in Colombia or elsewhere;

#### Answer

Two PSNI officers visited Columbia at the request of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), from 22nd to 26th January 2017 on a scoping exercise where they met with Justice and Policing personnel. This type of visit does not require approval from the Northern Ireland Policing Board under Section 8 of the Police (Northern Ireland) Act 2000.

PSNI with the support of Northern Ireland Co-operation Overseas (NICO) hosted a 2.5 day study visit from a number of delegates from Columbia in March 2017. In total four PSNI officers were involved for one day of the visit covering Policing with the Community and Reducing Offending in Partnership. External community agencies also delivered a day of the study visit, with the third day used for conclusions and questions, involving one police officer. A total of 9 individuals were trained.

#### Request 2

Details of requests made by Colombian bodies to the PSNI for training from 2016 to 2021 inclusive where that request was refused. Please include in each instance the (i) the date of the request, (ii) the focus of the training, (iii) the specific unit(s) involved, and (iv) the reason for the refusal;

#### Answer

The PSNI was approached by the British Embassy Bogota to assist with Policing in the Community work during 2020. The Record Owner has no details as to the specific units. The request was considered but turned down due to the situation within Colombia in 2020.

#### Request 3

Details of the training provided by the PSNI from 2016 to 2021 inclusive to the Qatari bodies

including in each instance, (i) the start date of the training and its duration, (ii) the focus of the training, (iii) the specific unit(s) involved, (iv) the number of individuals trained, and (v) whether the training was provided in Northern Ireland, in Qatar or elsewhere.

### **Answer**

During this period no training was provided by the PSNI to Qatari authorities.

### **Partial NCND**

In addition PSNI can neither confirm nor deny that it holds any further information relating to your request as the duty in s1(1)(a) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 does not apply, by virtue of the following exemptions:

### **Section 23(5) Information relating to the Security bodies Section 24(2) National Security**

The Police Service of Northern Ireland can neither confirm nor deny that it holds any other information with regard to an exempt body as the duty in Section 1(1)(a) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 does not apply by virtue of the following exemption:

Section 23(5) Information Supplied by, or concerning, certain Security Bodies

Section 23 is a class based absolute exemption and there is no requirement to consider the public interest in this case.

Confirming or denying the existence of whether any other information is held would contravene the constrictions laid out within Section 23 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 in that this stipulates a generic bar on disclosure of any information applied by, or concerning, certain Security Bodies.

### **Section 24**

#### **Factors favouring confirmation that information is held**

The public are entitled to know how public funds are spent and resources are distributed within an area of policing. To confirm whether any other information is held relating to this request would enable the general public to hold the force to account with regard to the financing and deployment of resources in this country and overseas, and providing the rationale behind such a deployment. In the current financial climate of cuts and with the call for transparency of public spending this would enable improved public debate.

#### **Factors favouring denial that information is held**

Security measures are put in place to protect the community that we serve. To confirm whether any other information relevant to this request is/is not held would highlight to terrorists and individuals intent on carrying out criminal activity vulnerabilities within the Police Service and which countries require UK policing support.

Taking into account the current security climate within the United Kingdom, no information which may aid a terrorist should be disclosed. To what extent this information may aid a terrorist is unknown, but it is clear that it will have an impact on a force's ability to monitor terrorist activity both nationally and internationally whilst also taking steps overseas to ensure the UK is safeguarded from terrorism.

Irrespective of what information is or isn't held, the public entrust the Police Service to make appropriate decisions with regard to their safety and protection and the only way of reducing risk is to be cautious with what is placed into the public domain.

The cumulative effect of terrorists gathering information from various sources would be even more impactful when linked to other information gathered from various sources about terrorism. The more information that is disclosed over time will provide a detailed account of the tactical infrastructure of

not only a force area but also the country as a whole and globally.

Any incident that results from confirming that any other information is held would by default affect National Security.

In addition, other organisations outside the police service are also widely involved in overseas deployments, and therefore by confirming whether or not other information exists relevant to the request would harm the close relationship that exists with such organisations, where trust and confidence in this specific area has been built up in the exchange of information and training.

To confirm whether the PSNI hold any other additional information would allow inferences to be made about the nature and extent of national security related activities abroad. This could enable terrorist groups to take steps to avoid detection, and as such, confirmation or denial would be damaging to national security. This would lead to the compromise of ongoing or future operations to protect the security or infra-structure both within the UK and Internationally.

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 Corporate Information Branch, 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 Corporate Information Branch, 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 remain dissatisfied with the handling of your request, you may make a complaint to the Information Commissioner's Office, under Section 50 of the Freedom of Information Act, 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', or use the ICO self-service portal available at [www.ico.org.uk/make-a-complaint/officialinformation-concerns-report/official-information-concern/](http://www.ico.org.uk/make-a-complaint/officialinformation-concerns-report/official-information-concern/)

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 their 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.