



Our Ref: 004078/20

Your Ref:

Address Correspondence to: Information Management

Date 05 January 2021

Freedom of Information Act 2000

I write further to your request for information received 08/12/2020.

I note you seek access to the following information:

How many planned Terrorist attacks on emergency service personnel or buildings have been thwarted/stopped by Security Services and or Police in your area Leicestershire within the last five years?

Following receipt of your request, searches were conducted within Leicestershire Police to locate information relevant to your request.

The Leicestershire Police Service can neither confirm nor deny that it holds the information you requested 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;
- Section 31(3) Law enforcement;

This should not be taken as conclusive evidence that any information that would meet your request exists or does not exist.

Section 23 is an absolute exemptions which means that the legislators have identified that harm would be caused by release and there is no requirement to consider the public interest test.

Sections 24(2) and 31(3) are qualified and require us to carry out a harm and public interest balancing test before they can be relied upon.

Overall harm for the NCND

Any release under FOIA is a disclosure to the world, not just to the individual making the request. To confirm or not that information is held pertinent to this request would reveal whether or not Leicestershire Police has had any planned terrorist attacks targeting emergency service personnel and buildings thwarted within the last five year period by either the Security Services or the Police.

Police forces work in conjunction with other agencies and information is freely shared in line with information sharing protocols. Modern day policing is intelligence led and this is particularly pertinent with regard to both law enforcement and national security. The public expect police forces to use all powers and tactics available to them to prevent and detect crime or disorder and maintain public safety.

The prevention and detection of crime is the foundation upon which policing is built and the threat from terrorism cannot be ignored. It is generally recognised that the international security landscape is increasingly complex and unpredictable. The current [UK threat level](#) from international terrorism, based on intelligence, is assessed as 'Severe' which means that a terrorist attack is highly likely.

In order to counter criminal and terrorist behaviour, it is vital that the police have the ability to work together, where necessary covertly, to obtain intelligence within current legislative frameworks to assist in the investigative process to ensure the successful arrest and prosecution of offenders who commit or plan to commit acts of terrorism.

To achieve this goal, it is vitally important that information sharing takes place between police officers, members of the public, police forces as well as other security law enforcement bodies within the United Kingdom. Such an action would support counter-terrorism measures in the fight to deprive terrorist networks of their ability to commit crime.

The impact of providing information under FOI which aids in identifying whether there have been thwarted terrorist attacks on emergency service personnel or buildings or not would provide those intent on committing criminal or terrorist acts with valuable information as to where the police are targeting their investigations. If there had or hadn't been any thwarted attacks, confirmation or denial would undermine the effective delivery of operational law enforcement by highlighting which areas have or have not received police attention. Furthermore, intelligence would be weakened thereby undermining national security and leaving the United Kingdom at risk of more terrorist attack.

Factors favouring confirmation or denial for S24

The public are entitled to know how public funds are spent and resources distributed within an area of policing, particularly with regard to how the police investigate terrorist atrocities. To confirm whether any information exists would enable the general public to hold Leicestershire Police to account in relation to how they respond and resource counter terrorism operations.

Furthermore, confirmation or denial may improve public debate and assist the public to take steps to protect themselves.

Factors against confirmation or denial for S24

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.

The public entrust the Police Service to make appropriate decisions with regard to their safety and protection. 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 build a picture of vulnerabilities within certain scenarios, such as thwarted

planned terrorist attacks. The more information disclosed over time will provide a more detailed account of the tactical infrastructure of not only a force area but also the country as a whole.

Any incident that results from such a disclosure would by default affect National Security.

Other organisations outside the Police Service are also widely engaged in targeting terrorism, therefore confirmation or denial as to whether information exists relevant to this request would harm the close relationship that exists with such organisations where trust and confidence has been built up.

Factors favouring confirmation or denial for S31

There is information within the public domain, such as information on [international terrorism](#) on the MI5 website and this in itself favours confirming information is held.

Factors against confirmation or denial for S31

Leicestershire Police has a duty of care to the community at large and public safety is of paramount importance. If an FOI disclosure revealed information to the world (by citing an exemption or stating no information held) that would undermine the security of the national infrastructure, offenders, including terrorist organisations, could use this to their advantage which would compromise public safety and more worryingly encourage offenders to carry out further crimes.

By its very nature, information relating to any counter terrorist operation undoubtedly undermines National Security. Under FOI there is a requirement to comply with Section 1(1)(a) and confirm what information is held. In some cases it is that confirmation, or not, which could disclose facts harmful to members of the public, police officers, the Government and its employees.

Balance test

The points above highlight the merits of confirming, or denying, whether any information pertinent to this request exists. The security of the country is of paramount importance and the Police Service is charged with enforcing the law, preventing and detecting crime and protecting the communities we serve. As part of that policing purpose, various operations with other law enforcement bodies may or may not be ongoing. The Police Service will never divulge whether or not information is held if to do so would place the safety of individual(s) at risk or undermine national security.

Whilst there is a public interest in appropriately and effectively engaging with the threat from criminals, there is a very strong public interest in safeguarding National Security. As much as there is a public interest in knowing that policing activity is appropriate and balanced in matters of National Security, this will only be overridden in exception circumstances.

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 any information that is released. Confirming or denying whether counter terrorist attacks have or haven't taken place would definitely reveal police activity and would assist those intent on causing harm. Any incident that results from confirmation or denial would, by default, affect National Security.

Therefore, at this moment in time, it is our opinion that for these issues the balance test for confirming, nor denying, that information is held is made out.

None of the above can be viewed as an inference that any other information does or does not exist.

Leicestershire Police provides you the right to ask for a re-examination of your request under its review procedure. Letters should be addressed to Information Manager, Corporate Services Department at the above address. If you decide to request such a review and having followed the Force's full process you are still dissatisfied, then you have the right to direct your comments to the Information Commissioner who will give it consideration.

Yours sincerely

Freedom of Information Officer
Leicestershire Police

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