



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

South East Asia Department
Foreign and Commonwealth Office
King Charles Street
London SW1A 2AH

Website: <https://www.gov.uk>

05 June 2017

Dear

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000 REQUEST REF: 0345-17

Thank you for your email of 5 April 2017 asking for information under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) 2000. You asked:

“Please disclose all communications between the British Embassy in the Philippines and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office concerning Liam Fox’s trip to the Philippines, from 1st February 2017 to date.”

I am writing to confirm that we have now completed the search for the information which you requested.

I can confirm that the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) does hold information relevant to your request.

Please find attached a digest of the information that the FCO can release to you. Some of the information has been withheld as we judge it is exempt from release under the following exemptions of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA):

- section 27 (1) (a) (c) (International relations);
- section 40 (2) and (3) (Personal information);

Section 27 (1) (a) & (c) - International Relations

Section 27 is a qualified exemption and is subject to a public interest test. Section 27(1) (a) and (c) of the FOIA recognises the need to protect information that would be likely to prejudice relations between the United Kingdom and other states if it was disclosed. In this case, the release of some information within email correspondence could harm our relations with the Philippines.

We acknowledge that releasing information on this issue would increase public knowledge about our relations with the Philippines, however, s.27 (1) (a) and (c) recognises that the effective conduct of international relations depends upon maintaining trust and confidence

between Governments. If the United Kingdom does not maintain this trust and confidence, its ability to protect and promote UK interests through international relations will be hampered, which will not be in the public interest. The disclosure of information detailing our relationship with the Philippine Government could potentially damage the bilateral relationship between the UK and the Philippines. This would reduce the UK Government's ability to protect and promote UK interests through its relations with the Philippines which would not be in the public interest. For these reasons we consider that the public interest in maintaining this exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing it.

Section 40 (2) and (3) - Personal Information

Some of the information you have requested is personal data relating to third parties, the disclosure of which would contravene one of the data protection principles. In such circumstances sections 40 (2) and (3) of the FOIA apply. In this case, our view is that disclosure would breach the first data protection principle. This states that personal data should be processed fairly and lawfully. It is the fairness aspect of this principle which, in our view, would be breached by disclosure. In such circumstances section 40 confers an absolute exemption on disclosure. There is, therefore, no public interest test to apply.

Yours sincerely,

South East Asia Department



We keep and use information in line with the Data Protection Act 1998. We may release this personal information to other UK government departments and public authorities.