



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

Africa Directorate
Foreign and Commonwealth Office
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8 October 2014

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000 - REQUEST REF: 0798-14

Thank you for your email of 14 August 2014 asking for information under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) 2000. You asked:

'I would like to obtain a copy of the following public records:

A letter written by Sir Tony Baldry to David Miliband, then the foreign secretary, in 2009 regarding Nigerian James Ibori. I believe the letter was written in September. Mr. Ibori was the governor of Nigeria's Delta State between May 1999 and May 2007'

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.

Attached is an electronic copy of the letter sent by Tony Baldry MP to David Milliband, the then Foreign Secretary, on 24 September 2009.

Information in this correspondence was redacted as exempt under section 27 (1) - International Relations - of the Act. Section 27 is a qualified exemption including information described as:

"Information whose disclosure would be likely to prejudice international relations. (The term "international relations" means relations between the UK and any other state, international organisation or court, or the interests of the UK abroad or the promotion or protection of those interests.)"

As section 27 is a qualified exemption we must consider where the balance of the public interest in disclosure lies. We acknowledge the public interest in this issue and that disclosure of the letter would enhance public understanding of the UK's relationship with Nigeria. However, after careful consideration, we have concluded that the disclosure of certain parts of the letter could compromise the UK's interests abroad by damaging the trust upheld in our bilateral relationship with Nigeria. The withheld information includes sensitive

opinions expressed by a senior Nigerian political figure. Trust is essential in our bilateral relationship as it allows for the free and frank exchange of information on the understanding that it will be treated in confidence. If the United Kingdom does not maintain this trust and confidence, its ability to protect and promote UK interests in Nigeria will be hampered. For this reason, we judge the public interest in withholding this information is greater than the public interest in disclosing.

In keeping with the spirit and effect of the Freedom of Information Act, all information is assumed to be releasable to the public unless it is exempt. The information we have supplied to you may now be published on our website together with any related information that will provide a key to its wider context.

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Yours sincerely,

Nigeria Team
Africa Department (East and West)



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