



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

Visits Team
Protocol Directorate
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Website: <https://www.gov.uk>

14 April 2014

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000 - REQUEST REF: 0185-14

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

'In general, I would like to know details of expenditure by the FCO on accommodation on Guests of the Government from foreign sovereign states (UN member states) between January 1st 2013 and up to the date at which you can respond.

I would like to receive this information in the public interest, for the sake of transparency. Please send this information electronically in .xls format.

Specifically, I would like the data to be broken down into the following categories:

- 1) *The relevant party (Number of Guests of the Government)*
- 2) *Country of origin of the party*
- 3) *The lodgings*
- 4) *Length of stay*
- 5) *Hotel bill (If possible, could the bill be itemised?)'*

We have undertaken a search and I can confirm that the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) does hold some information relevant to your request.

Please find below the information that we can release to you.

The costs incurred by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in relation to hotel accommodation for Guest of Government visits between 1 January 2013 and 28 February 2014 are :

| Date | Number of guests covered by FCO | Number of nights | Hotel costs |
|------------------------------|---------------------------------|------------------|--------------------|
| 22 - 24 January 2013 | 8 | 2 | £4,529.25 |
| 31 January - 5 February 2013 | 11 | 3 | £41,370.00 |
| 2-5 February 2013 | 12 | 2 | £52,935.31 |
| 03 February 2013 | 34 | 1 | £6,122.00 |
| 2-4 February 2013 | 12 | 2 | £10,052.31 |
| 22 - 27 February 2013 | 5 | 3 | £7,498.10 |
| 12-13 March 2013 | 3 | 1 | £1,805.00 |
| 12-13 March 2013 | 6 | 1 | £3,101.60 |
| 21-24 May 2013 | 8 | 3 | £25,248.75 |
| 12-16 June 2013 | 7 | 4 | £20,851.18 |
| 14-16 July 2013 | 12 | 2 | £18,796.33 |
| 19-22 September 2013 | 7 | 4 | £10,641.10 |
| 28 October - 1 November 2013 | 11 | 4 | £28,570.27 |
| 30 October - 1 November 2013 | 6 | 2 | £7,777.58 |
| 14 -16 January 2014 | 11 | 3 | £26,620.02 |
| Total | | | £265,918.80 |

The principals were invited to the UK as Guests of Government. For such visits Protocol Directorate, FCO covers the cost of accommodation, transport, food and incidentals (to a set limit) in the United Kingdom (UK) for the Official Delegation (Principal plus a maximum of ten Ministers or Senior Officials) during the official programme only. Accommodation costs for one FCO Visit Officer are also paid. International air fares for the visiting delegation are the responsibility of the Government concerned. Accommodation costs for Guest of Government visits vary depending on the rank of the principal, the length of visit, numbers in the delegation and individual programme requirements.

Some of the information has been also been withheld under section 27 (1)(a) (International Relations) and section 38(1)(a) and (b)(Health and Safety) of the FOIA.

Sections 27 and 38 are both qualified exemptions and are subject to a public interest test.

Section 27(1) (a) recognises the need to protect information that would be likely to prejudice relations between the UK and other states if it were disclosed. We acknowledge that releasing information on this issue would increase public knowledge about our relations with these states. However, disclosure of this information could potentially damage the relationship between the UK and the states involved. The relationships are on-going and release of this information could be taken into account by those states. In applying the public interest test we took into consideration whether disclosure of where the delegations came from would impact on our bilateral relations with those individual states. In this case, we believe the release of the country names may impact our bilateral relations with those states. For these reasons we consider that the public interest in maintaining this exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

We have also concluded that some of the information is exempt under section 38(1)(a) and (b) as disclosure would or would be likely to endanger the physical or mental health of any individual or endanger the safety of any individual. This qualified exemption also requires the application of the public interest test. In applying the public interest test I took into consideration the factors in favour of disclosure; in this case that releasing such information would demonstrate openness in the FCO's dealings with these states. However, disclosing such information would pose a risk to the personal safety of future Guest of Government visitors to the UK. We have therefore concluded that the public interest in maintaining this exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing it.

In keeping with the spirit and effect of the FOIA, 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

Visits Team
Protocol Directorate



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