



Ministry of Defence

Ref: FOI2016/03727

[REDACTED]

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Ministry of Defence
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21 April 2016

Thank you for your email of 30th March requesting the following information:

"I wonder whether you might be able to release the Hospitality register, of all gifts and other hospitality given to Defence ministers from June 2014-present?"

I am treating your correspondence as a request for information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA).

A search for the information has now been completed within the Ministry of Defence, and I can confirm that information within the scope of your request is held.

Firstly I must inform you that most of your request is exempt under section 21 of the FOI Act because the information is reasonably accessible to you by other means. As this is an absolute exemption it does not require a Public Interest Test to be conducted. Please be aware that all forms of Hospitality and Gifts received by MOD Ministers are published online via Data.gov.uk on a quarterly basis as part of the on-going Transparency Agenda which has been in place since 2010. The most recent returns were published up until the end of December 2015 and these can be accessed via the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/mod-ministerial-gifts-hospitality-travel-and-meetings-january-to-december-2015>

In regards to your request for this data from 1st January 2016 until the present day, I am withholding the held information under Section 22 (Information Intended for Future Publication) of the FOIA. Section 22 is a qualified exemption and therefore subject to public interest testing. In applying this exemption we have had to carefully balance the public interest in disclosing the information against the public interest in withholding the information.

We accept that the benefits of release include increasing public knowledge; however, releasing information ahead of official publication, which will occur in the near future, would ultimately weaken the Transparency Agenda approach and the mechanism of reporting. For the reasons outlined above we consider that the public interest in withholding the information outweighs the public interest in disclosing it. The outcome of the Public Interest Test is that this information is exempt under section 22 of the Freedom of Information Act and is therefore being withheld.

If you are not satisfied with this response or you wish to complain about any aspect of the handling of your request, then you should contact me in the first instance. If informal resolution is not possible and you are still dissatisfied then you may apply for an independent internal review by

contacting the Information Rights Compliance team, 1st Floor, MOD Main Building, Whitehall, SW1A 2HB (e-mail CIO-FOI-IR@mod.uk). Please note that any request for an internal review must be made within 40 working days of the date on which the attempt to reach informal resolution has come to an end.

If you remain dissatisfied following an internal review, you may take your complaint to the Information Commissioner under the provisions of Section 50 of the Freedom of Information Act. Please note that the Information Commissioner will not investigate your case until the MOD internal review process has been completed. Further details of the role and powers of the Information Commissioner can be found on the Commissioner's website, <http://www.ico.org.uk>.

Yours sincerely,

Top Office Group Business Manager