



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

Pacific Department

Foreign and Commonwealth Office
King Charles Street
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18 August 2015

Dear

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000 REQUEST REF: FOI 0705-15

Thank you for your email of 16 July asking for information under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) 2000. You asked:

I would like to receive information on all diplomatic reporting cables which I understand are called 'diptels' produced by the British Embassy in Mongolia and sent to the Foreign Office Department responsible for Mongolia in London. At present I am only looking for the titles of the cables and the date they were sent. I do not yet require the main cable content. The search should cover anything produced from the 1st January 2014 to today.

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 the information that the FCO can release to you. Some of the information has been withheld using sections 27 and 43. These are both qualified exemptions and are subject to public interest tests.

Section 27(1)(a) of the Freedom of Information Act recognises the need to protect information that would be likely to prejudice relations between the UK and other states if it was disclosed. In this case, the release of information relating to titles of Diptels could harm our relations with Mongolia.

The application of section 27(1)(a) requires us to consider the public interest test arguments in favour of releasing and withholding the information. We acknowledge that releasing information on this issue would increase public knowledge about our relations with Mongolia, but section 27(1)(a) recognises that the effective conduct of international relations depends

upon maintaining trust and confidence between governments. If the UK 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 Mongolian Government could potentially damage the bilateral relationship between the UK and Mongolia. This would reduce the UK Government's ability to protect and promote UK interests through its relations with Mongolia, 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 the information.

Section 43

Section 43 (2) of the Act relates to commercial interests. We have considered the public interest arguments in favour of releasing and withholding this information. The factors in favour of disclosure of this information include the general public interest and greater transparency and accountability. We have carefully weighed these against the factors in favour of withholding this information and the need to allow commercial organisations the space to conduct their lawful business competitively and without fear of disclosure of sensitive commercial information. Companies and individuals disclose commercially sensitive information to us in trust and confidence and we consider that disclosing this poses risks to the UK in that companies and individuals would be much less likely to provide the FCO with this type of information. This would limit the sources of information and interlocutors available to the FCO. In doing so, it would seriously impair our ability to work for UK interests in a safe, just and prosperous world. In this case after such consideration we believe that the public interest in withholding the redacted information outweighs the public interest in its release.

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Yours sincerely,

Pacific Department



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