



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

Information and Technology Directorate
Foreign and Commonwealth Office
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Website: <https://www.gov.uk>

8 March 2016

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000 REQUEST REF: 0062-16

Thank you for your email of 20 January 2016 asking for information under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) 2000. You asked for:

- 1. A list of all domain names (URLs) registered and currently owned by your department, including any dormant or unused names; and*
- 2. The date at which the domain name was registered, and the date when ownership of that domain name is set to expire.*

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. Under section 21 of the Act, we are not required to provide information in response to a request if it is already reasonably accessible to you. To comply with Cabinet Office rules on website rationalisation, all FCO websites must sit under the fco.gov.uk domain name. Further details on domain names, URLs and naming conventions for FCO websites can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/naming-and-registering-government-websites/central-government-naming-and-registering-websites>

A searchable database of government domain names registered up until October 2015 can be found at:
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/465282/gov.uk_domains_as_of_01Oct_2015.csv/preview

There have been 0 domain names registered by the FCO since the publication of the above government list.

The FCO does not hold information of any dormant or unused domain names.

The information relating to the registration and expiration dates of domain names held by the FCO has been withheld under FOIA exemptions s24(1) – national security, s31(1)(a) – crime prevention, and s43 – commercial interests. Under section 24(1) we consider that disclosure would not be in the interest of the UK's national security. Disclosing details about the expiration dates of our domain names could allow individuals to assess the strength of our website defences.

The public interest arguments against disclosure under section 31(1)(a) are similar. Any attempt to hack into an IT system is a criminal offence. Disclosing this information could aid a criminal who was intent on launching an attack on the Department's websites and could expose the FCO to potential threats such as targeted e-crime. We acknowledge the public interest in openness and transparency. We also appreciate that disclosure of this information would provide assurance that we are appropriately protecting our IT infrastructure while ensuring value for money. However, for the reasons outlined above we have concluded that the balance of public interest favours withholding this information.

Some of the information is exempt under Section 43 (2) of the Act, which relates to commercial interests. The use of this exemption was carefully considered. The factors in favour of disclosure of this information, including the general public interest and greater transparency and accountability, were carefully weighed against the need to allow business-people and commercial organisations the space to conduct their lawful business competitively and without fear of disclosure of sensitive commercial information. We consider that this transparency also poses risks to the protection of commercially confidential information. Failure to protect such commercially sensitive information would limit the sources of information and interlocutors available to the FCO and limit the FCO's ability to promote the British economy and lobby for the interests of British businesses overseas. In this case after such consideration we believe that the public interest in withholding the information outweighs the public interest in its release.

Yours sincerely,

Information and Technology Directorate



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.