



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

23 August 2016

Protocol Directorate
Foreign and Commonwealth Office
King Charles Street
London SW1A 2AH

Website: <https://www.gov.uk>

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000 REQUEST REF: 0727-16

Thank you for your email of 29 July asking for information under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) 2000. You asked:

In the document titled 'State and Guest of Government visits - January 2015 to March 2016', £93,372.40 of expenditure for the Chinese state visit in October 2015 was recorded as 'Accommodation'. Please provide a full, itemised breakdown of all accommodation costs during that visit, including: a) hotel names, b) number of guests per night, c) the cost per night of each room, d) room service charges.

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 enclosed some of the information you have requested. I am able to confirm part B of your request, however Part A & C are being withheld under sections 43 and 24 of the FOIA. We do not hold information retaining to part D of your request.

Part B of your request asks for details of number of guests per night. The detail of this is broken down as below:

Wednesday 7 October 2015	Monday 19 October 2015	Tuesday 20 October 2015	Wednesday 21 October 2015	Thursday 22 October 2015
15 guests	13 guests	11 guests	14 guests	48 guests

Part A & C of your request are being withheld under section 43(2) of the FOIA. Section 43(2) protects information which would, or would be likely to, prejudice the commercial interests of any person (including the public authority holding it).

In applying section 43 we have had to balance the public interest in withholding the information against the public interest in disclosing it.

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 achieve the best hotel rates possible when organising State and Guest of Government visits. In this case after such consideration we believe that the public interest in withholding the information outweighs the public interest in its release.

Information about VIP visits to the UK is however being withheld under Section 24 (1) - National Security, of the Freedom of Information Act. Section 24 is a qualified exemption, which requires the application of a public interest test. We acknowledge the public interest in openness and transparency but we consider there is also a public interest in protecting national security.

Having reviewed the requested material, we are concerned that disclosure the names of the hotel used by the delegation would present an increased threat for any future visits. Disclosing this information would make planning the safety and security of the VIPs visiting to the UK much more difficult for the Police, and consequently adversely impact on the UK's security.

We have therefore concluded that the exemption applies and that withholding the material serves the public interest better than release in this instance.

Yours sincerely,

Protocol 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.