



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

18 September 2015

Dear

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

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

Your Freedom Of Information Request: 0141 - 15

Thank you for your request for information which we received on 11 February.

In your request you asked for;

British Embassy in Iceland. Annual report for 1996

British Embassy in Iceland. Annual report for 2004

Dispatches between the British Embassy in Iceland and the FCO or other departments on the decision by the President of Iceland, Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson, to refuse to sign a law on media control in June 2004.

Personalities reports, chapters on Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson and Vigdís Finnbogadóttir, 1980-1998

I am writing to confirm that we have now completed the public interest test for this request.

I will be forwarding to you by separate emails (due to the size of the attachments): -

- (1) Icelandic Annual Review for 1996 dated 30/12/96
- (2) Icelandic Annual Review for 2004 dated 24/12/04
- (3) Telegram 019 from Reykjavik to the FCO dated 02/06/04
- (4) Telegram 028 from Reykjavik to the FCO dated 25/06/04
- (5) Telegram 032 (part 1) from Reykjavik to the FCO dated 16/07/04
- (6) Personality report on Olafur Ragnar Grimsson (undated)
- (7) Personality report on Olafur Ragnar Grimsson (undated)
- (8) Personality report on Vigdis Finnbogadottir (undated)

Some of the information has been withheld under section 27 – international relations. Section 27 is a qualified exemption and as such we have conducted a public interest test. 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. Information has also been withheld under section 27 (2), which notes that information is exempt if it is confidential information obtained from a state other than the United Kingdom, or from an international organisation or international court. Where this was done has been clearly marked in the information released.

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 our diplomatic relationship with Iceland would increase public knowledge on the UK's relationship with Iceland, as would our reporting on Icelandic domestic events. 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 information under consideration for release included assessments by our then Ambassadors on the domestic situation in Iceland, as well as references to conversations with the Icelandic government and others. Despite the age of the information, the main focus of the request involves the President of Iceland, who is still in office. Release of some of this information would inhibit the future ability of our Ambassadors to provide free and frank advice to Ministers in London, and thus be detrimental to our ability to protect and promote UK interests. Similarly, a small part of the reporting was information clearly given to us in strictest confidence. Despite the age of the information, if the UK does not maintain this confidence it would reduce the trust of other governments, NGOs and others that they could hold free and frank discussions with us on sensitive issues. This would also reduce our ability to protect and promote UK interests in the future - both in Iceland and elsewhere.

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Please contact us if you have any queries about this letter.

Yours sincerely,

EU Enlargement Team
Europe Directorate
FCO
King Charles Street



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