



Foreign &  
Commonwealth  
Office

**Knowledge & Technology Department**  
Foreign and Commonwealth Office  
King Charles Street  
London SW1A 2AH

10 September 2016

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

Dear

**FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000 REQUEST REF: 0749-16**

Thank you for your email of 3 August asking for information under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) 2000. You asked:

*- Can you please send me a copy of your policy relating to the use of the fco.gov.uk email system by staff for personal use?*

I can confirm that the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) does hold information relevant to your request. We are withholding some of the information requested under Section 31.1 (a) Law Enforcement - the prevention or detection of crime.

Section 31

The exemption in section 31 (1) (a) is designed to cover all aspects of the prevention and detection of crime.

Section 31 is a qualified exemption, which means that it is subject to a public interest test. We acknowledge the public interest in openness and transparency and we recognise that releasing this information would provide the public with assurance that we are protecting our IT infrastructure. However, disclosure of the information requested would expose the FCO to potential threats of a criminal nature, for example, the targeting of our supply chain. The FCO takes the protection of its IT infrastructure very seriously. We implement the mandatory requirements of the Cabinet Office Security Policy Framework and follow Her Majesty's Government's Information Assurance standards and best practice which covers all areas of security.

For the reasons set out above, we have assessed that the public interest in maintaining this exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosure.

The Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO) has a set of Security Operating Procedures (SOPS) that all users are required to sign up to before using our centrally managed IT system (Firecrest) for the first time. The FCO allows a limited amount of personal use provided this does not interfere with a user's duties or the network. The relevant extract is below:

## **Email**

- *The FCO email system is for FCO business use. You are permitted a limited amount of personal use provided that this does not interfere with your duties or the network.*
- *Emails are subject to relevant legislation. We may disclose all relevant emails, included deleted ones, if required by law, or in accordance with the rules governing the conduct of litigation.*
- *If you receive pornographic or offensive material, notify your Post Security Officer or Departmental Security Coordinator immediately. Don't delete or forward the message unless authorised to do so.*
- *Follow the Government Security Classifications when classifying emails. Make sure that the classification of any attachments is clear, that they do not contain any hidden mark-ups, and that you are aware of their contents. It is a security breach to email information to systems which are not cleared to receive it.*
- *You must not intentionally:*
  - *Send or request any material that is obscene, defamatory, racist, sexist, or which may harass, intimidate or cause distress to another person;*
  - *Post from an FCO email address to social media sites or newsgroups unless authorised to do so as part of FCO business;*
  - *Install or use an unauthorised email client application on FCO ICT equipment;*
  - *Send wide distribution emails for personal, financial, commercial or political purposes;*
  - *Represent personal opinions as those of the FCO;*
  - *Send junk email, including lists of jokes, pyramid emails and virus warnings;*
  - *Breach copyright, trademark, libel, slander and other laws.*

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Yours sincerely,

Knowledge & Technology Department



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