



Foreign &  
Commonwealth  
Office

**Gulf Team**

Foreign and Commonwealth Office  
King Charles Street  
London SW1A 2AH

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

29 January 2015

**FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000 - REQUEST REF: 1173-15**

Thank you for your email of 08 December asking for information under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) 2000. You asked:

*"I would like any available documents relating to Tobias Ellwood's January 2015 meeting with Lockheed Martin, a 'Discussion about Middle East defence exports' – I would like to see any emails setting up the meeting, any preparatory notes or minutes, any thank you and follow-up notes, letters or emails or similar documents"*

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 under Section 27(1)(a), (c) and (d). The application of these exemptions 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 some of the Gulf States. However, sections 27 (1)(a), (c) and (d) recognise the effective conduct of international relations depends upon maintaining trust and confidence between governments. This relationship of trust allows for the free and frank exchange of information on the understanding that it will be treated in confidence. If the UK does not maintain this trust and confidence, its ability to protect and promote UK interests overseas will be hampered. Countries may be more reluctant to share sensitive information with the UK Government in future and may be less likely to respect the confidentiality of information supplied by the UK Government, to the detriment of UK interests. For all these reasons, we consider that in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining this exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information covered by section 27.

Additionally, some of the information is exempt under Section 43 (1) and (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 redacted information outweighs the public interest in its release.

I also wish to advise that some of the information you requested has been withheld as it falls under Section 40 of FOIA – Personal information. The nature of your request means that the information found contains personal data relating to living third parties, the disclosure of which would contravene one of the data protection principles. In such circumstances Sections 40(2) and (3) of the Freedom of Information Act apply. In this case our view is that disclosure would breach the first data protection principle. This states that personal data should be processed fairly and lawfully. It is the fairness aspect of this principle, which in our view, would be breached by disclosure. In such circumstances Section 40 of the Act confers an absolute exemption on disclosure. There is therefore no public interest test to apply.

In keeping with the spirit and effect of the Freedom of Information Act, all information is assumed to be releasable to the public unless it is exempt. The information we have supplied to you may now be published on our website together with any related information that will provide a key to its wider context.

The copies of information being supplied to you continue to be protected by the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988. You are free to use it for your own purposes, including any non-commercial research you are doing and for the purposes of news reporting. Any other re-use, for example commercial publication, would require the permission of the copyright holder. Most documents supplied by the FCO will have been produced by government officials and will be protected by Crown Copyright. To re-use Crown Copyright documents please consult the [Open Government Licence v3](#) on the National Archives website.

Information you receive which is not subject to Crown Copyright continues to be protected by the copyright of the person, or organisation, from which the information originated. You must ensure that you gain their permission before reproducing any third party (non-Crown Copyright) information.

You can find responses to other FOI requests on the FCO's [website](#).

Yours sincerely,

Arabian Peninsula and Iran Department

