



Foreign &  
Commonwealth  
Office

**Estates and Security Directorate**  
Foreign and Commonwealth Office  
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Website: [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk)

22 September 2015

### **Your Freedom Of Information Request: 0884-15**

Thank you for your request for information which we received on 7 September 2015. In your request you asked for:

- 1 - How many FCO staff have lost their jobs since 2010?*
- 2 - How many FCO properties have been sold around the world since 2010?*
- 3 - Can you provide details of sales of FCO properties ie the full address of the property, how much it was originally bought for and how much it was sold for?*
- 4 - Can you provide details of sales of other FCO assets since 2010?*
- 5 - Can you provide a list of FCO properties currently up for sale with full details - ie full address of the property, how much it was bought for and how much is the current sale price?*
- 6 - How many staff did the FCO employ globally in 2010?*
- 7 - How many staff does FCO currently employ?*

I can confirm that the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) does hold information relevant to your request. I am pleased to enclose some of the material which we can release to you. Some information is being withheld under the following exemptions of the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA):

- Section 21 (1) Information accessible to the applicant by other means
- Section 43 (2) Commercial interests

#### **1. How many FCO staff have lost their jobs since 2010?**

Individuals will have left for a variety of reasons. The FCO has not carried out a Voluntary or Compulsory Redundancy Scheme during this period.

The number of staff leaving the FCO is shown below for each of the last five financial years:

## FCO Staff leavers, 2010/11 to 2014/15

2010/11 2011/12 2012/13 2013/14 2014/15

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Total					
Leavers	252	218	157	216	177

### 2. How many FCO properties have been sold around the world since 2010?

Under section 21 of the Freedom of Information Act, we are not required to provide information in response to a request if it is already reasonably accessible to you. Section 21 is an absolute exemption which means there is no requirement to carry out a public interest test if the requested information is exempt. Detail of FCO properties sold from 2009 to 2014 is already publicly available on a previous Freedom of Information Request (FOI 0936-14) at the following link <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/foi-release-fco-properties-disposed-of-in-last-five-years> .

I have however detailed below the locations and types of FCO properties sold for the 2014/15 financial year.

Location	Previous Use	Price
Brussels	Residential	£198,000
Buenos Aires	Residential	£760,000
Alicante	Office	£285,000
Ottawa	Residential	£193,000
Washington	Residential	£778,000
Washington	Residential	£570,000
Ottawa	Office	£189,000

### 3. Can you provide details of sales of FCO properties ie the full address of the property, how much it was originally bought for and how much it was sold for?

The information you have requested is being withheld under Section 43(2) of the FOIA. Section 43(2) protects information which 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 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.

For these reasons, we consider that the public interest in maintaining this exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing it.

#### **4 - Can you provide details of sales of other FCO assets since 2010?**

Under section 21 of the FOI Act, we are not required to provide information in response to a request if it is already reasonably accessible to you. Totals of capital assets sold (both property and non-property) can be obtained from the FCO Annual Report and Accounts for each year, available at the following link <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/annual-report-and-accounts>.

#### **5 - Can you provide a list of FCO properties currently up for sale with full details - ie full address of the property, how much it was bought for and how much is the current sale price?**

This information is also being withheld under Section 43(2) of the FOIA. As detailed above, Section 43(2) protects information which 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.

Again, 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. For these reasons, we consider that the public interest in maintaining this exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing it.

#### **6 - How many staff did the FCO employ globally in 2010?**

Under section 21 of the FOI Act, we are not required to provide information in response to a request if it is already reasonably accessible to you. The information requested about the number of people employed in 2010 is available from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office's Annual Accounts on the Gov.uk webpage [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/229172/0974.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/229172/0974.pdf) - page 21.

#### **7 - How many staff does FCO currently employ?**

Under section 21 of the FOI Act, we are not required to provide information in response to a request if it is already reasonably accessible to you. The information requested about the number of people currently employed is available from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office's Annual Accounts on the Gov.uk webpage

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/444067/Amended\\_FCO\\_Annual\\_Report\\_2015\\_web\\_1\\_.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/444067/Amended_FCO_Annual_Report_2015_web_1_.pdf) - page 27

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

Yours sincerely,

Estates Department



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