



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

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Foreign and Commonwealth Office
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02 June 2017

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000 REQUEST REF: 0462-17

Thank you for your e-mail of 10 May 2017 asking for information under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) 2000. You asked:

- 1. Whether the table used for dining in the dining room of the ambassador's residence is the Gertrude Bell table. From the information provided, it appears the Gertrude Bell table is not used as a dining table. If this is the case, I would be grateful for information on the actual dining table.*
- 2. I would be grateful for information on the history of the British ambassador's current residence in Baghdad, Iraq, for example:*
 - *The location.*
 - *When and how it was acquired.*
 - *Whom it belonged to previously.*
 - *Photographs.*

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.

In answer to your first question, we can confirm that the table used for dining in the Ambassador's Residence is not the one known as the Gertrude Bell table. The table used for dining was purchased brand new from standard FCO suppliers in 2010.

Regarding your second question, the current residence was completed in September 2009 on land we were allocated by the Coalition Provisional Authority. Part of the land was a school belonging to the Ministry of Education but all public land such as this had been transferred to a centralised Government Property Office. The Residence is within the British Embassy compound, which is in the International Zone of Baghdad, also known as the Green Zone.

It is standard policy for us to withhold any photographs we have of our residence under Section 38 (1)(b) – Health and Safety. We acknowledge the public interest in openness and transparency regarding our missions overseas, but we also consider that releasing this information would likely endanger the safety of individuals working at the mission. The FCO has a clear duty of care towards its employees and therefore we have concluded that, in this

case, the public interest is best served by withholding the information. I hope you will understand our position.

Once an FOI request is answered, it is considered to be in the public domain. To promote transparency, we may now publish the response and any material released on [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk) in the [FOI releases](#) section. All personal information in the letter will be removed before publishing.

Yours Sincerely

Estates Department



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.