



Foreign &  
Commonwealth  
Office

Western Balkans Department  
Foreign and Commonwealth Office  
King Charles Street  
London SW1A 2AH

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

08 May 2017

Dear

**FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000 REQUEST REF: 0375-17**

Thank you for your email of 14 April asking for information under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) 2000. You asked:

*Parliamentary question 61655 asked "To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 24 January 2017 to Question 60166, what preparations (a) his Department and (b) the British Embassy in Belgrade undertook prior to his visit to Serbia in November 2016."*

*To which Sir Alan Duncan replied: "As is standard practice, Embassy staff in Belgrade worked with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office's Western Balkans Department, Media Office and the Foreign Secretary's Private Office on the visit. This included developing an itinerary, providing briefing and a media plan, making the necessary travel arrangements, as well as liaising with Serbian Government protocol and other local authorities "*

*Can you please supply me with a copy of the itinerary, media plan and details of travel arrangements prepared for this trip.*

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 using Section 27 (international relations), Section 38 (Health and Safety) and Section 40 (personal information).

Section 27:

Section 27(1)(a) of the FOIA recognises the need to protect information that would be likely to prejudice relations between the United Kingdom and other states if it was disclosed. In this case, the release of information relating to the media and regional sensitivities could harm our relations with Serbia.

The application of s.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 this issue would increase public knowledge about our relations with Serbia. However, s.27 (1) (a) recognises that the effective conduct of international relations depends upon maintaining trust and confidence between governments. If the United Kingdom 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 disclosure of information detailing our relationship with the Serbian Government could potentially damage the bilateral relationship between the UK and Serbia. This would reduce the UK government's ability to protect and promote UK interests through its relations with Serbia, which would not be in the public interest. For these reasons we consider that, the public interest in maintaining this exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing it.

#### Section 38:

In applying the public interest test we again took into consideration the factors in favour of disclosure; in this case that releasing such information would demonstrate openness and public accountability towards the security arrangements for the protection of the Foreign Secretary and his delegation. We balanced these against the grounds for non-disclosure. We felt that disclosure of details with regard to the security and transport arrangements for the Foreign Secretary's visit to Serbia could be used by others in the future to pose a significant risk to any individual's personal safety during similar visits. There is a strong public interest in withholding information, for example, Foreign and Commonwealth Office planning and procedures for preparing overseas visits, particularly where disclosure could endanger the safety of individuals. On balance we concluded that the public interest in maintaining this exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

#### Section 40

Some of the information you have requested is personal data relating to third parties, the disclosure of which would contravene one of the data protection principles. In such circumstances sections 40(2) and (3) of the FOIA 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, s.40 confers an absolute exemption on disclosure. There is, therefore, no public interest test to apply.

Yours sincerely,

Western Balkans Department

