



Ministry  
of Defence

**Ministry of Defence**

Defence Business Services Secretariat

Room 6303

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Ref: FOI2020/02454

E-mail: DBSRES-Secretariat@mod.uk

March 2020

Dear

Thank you for your email of 19 February requesting the following information:

*“Under Freedom of Information I would like to see the turnaround times of all SC Vetting applications since January 2018 to January 2020”*

I am treating your correspondence as a request for information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA).

A search for the information has now been completed within the Ministry of Defence, and I can confirm that all the information in scope of your request is held however, an Exemption under Section 24 of the FOIA (National Security) has been applied to the request. Section 24 is a qualified exemption and is subject to public interest testing which means that the information requested can only be withheld if the public interest in doing so outweighs the public interest in disclosure.

We previously corresponded with you on 5 March 2020 to advise that further consideration, in the form of a Public Interest Test (PIT), was required.

The outcome of the PIT concluded that there remains significant public interest in maintaining the effectiveness and integrity of the vetting process. It has been determined that release of the recorded information of specific internal procedures, would in this instance, compromise the ability of Her Majesty's Government (HMG) to successfully deliver the safeguards required that vetting offers. The balance of the public interest was therefore found to be in favour of withholding the information and that the public interest is best served in not releasing the turnaround times for Security Check (SC) vetting applications.

Under Section 16 of the Act (Advice and Assistance) you may find it helpful to note that each application for security clearance is dealt with on a case by case basis and is dependent on an individual's personal circumstances. As such, processing times can vary significantly depending on the relevant vetting policy requirements. Other factors which may cause delays to vetting applications include referral to vetting decision making authorities and other third parties who are outside of UKSV control. Further information can be found in HMG Personnel Security Controls and the United Kingdom Security Vetting pages on Gov.UK website at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/hmg-personnel-security-controls> and  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/united-kingdom-security-vetting>

If you have any queries regarding the content of this letter, please contact this office in the first instance.

If you are not satisfied with this response or you wish to complain about any aspect of the handling of your request, then you should contact us in the first instance at the address above. If informal resolution is not possible and you are still dissatisfied then you may apply for an independent internal review by contacting the Information Rights Compliance team, Ground Floor, MOD Main Building, Whitehall, SW1A 2HB (e-mail [CIO-FOI-IR@mod.uk](mailto:CIO-FOI-IR@mod.uk)). Please note that any request for an internal review must be made within 40 working days of the date on which the attempt to reach informal resolution has come to an end.

If you remain dissatisfied following an internal review, you may take your complaint to the Information Commissioner under the provisions of Section 50 of the Freedom of Information Act. Please note that the Information Commissioner will not normally investigate your case until the MOD internal review process has been completed. Further details of the role and powers of the Information Commissioner can be found on the Commissioner's website, <http://www.ico.org.uk>.

Yours sincerely,

DBS Secretariat