



Policy Legacy FOI Team
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Reference: FOI 2021/00784

Date: 25 February 2021

Dear [REDACTED]

REQUEST FOR INFORMATION – 3 QUESTIONS RELATING TO THE NISGS – PERSONAL PROTECTION WEAPONS

Thank you for your e-mail dated 24 January, I can confirm that your request has been considered under the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOI (A)), and the process is now complete.

You asked the following:

- “1 – do NISGS officers carry a person protection weapon off duty ie handgun, given the large threat from dissident republicans in Northern Ireland.
2 - if so, do they require a firearms certificate for a PPW or does their attestation as special Constable give them the authorisation to carry a firearm off duty as it would a police officer?
3 - What firearms do the NISGS officers use on duty and off duty.”***

In response to questions 1 and 2 no information is held, I can however advise that the carriage and licensing of weapons for off duty Northern Ireland Security Guard Service (NISGS) officers is a matter between the NISGS officer and the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI).

3 - What firearms do the NISGS officers use on duty and off duty.

Some of the information requested falls within the scope of Section 26 (Defence) of the FOI(A) as its release would or would be likely to prejudice the capability, effectiveness or security of any relevant forces. Section 26 is a qualified exemption and we have conducted a public interest test to determine whether the information should be released or withheld. The factors for this public interest have determined that whilst disclosure would demonstrate openness and transparency this is outweighed by the detrimental effect disclosure would have in revealing the capabilities of the NISGS. I have therefore concluded that the public interest supports withholding this information under Section 26.

This information also falls within the scope of Section 38 (Health and Safety) of the FOI(A), as its release could endanger the physical or mental health of any individual or endanger the safety of any individual.

Section 38 is a qualified exemption and we have conducted a public interest test to determine whether the information should be released or withheld. The factors for this public interest have determined that whilst disclosure would demonstrate openness and transparency this is outweighed by the detrimental effect disclosure could have on members of the NISGS along with

the military and civilian staff working on MOD establishments. I have concluded that disclosure of this information would prejudice the security of the NISGS personnel, as it could provide information which may be useful to anyone intent on causing harm to members of the NISGS in Northern Ireland. Whilst disclosure may be of public interest, it could prejudice the health and safety of the NISGS personnel and others. Therefore, this information has been withheld under Section 38 of the FOI(A).

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

If you wish to complain about the handling of your request, or the content of this response, you can request 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.gov.uk). Please note that any request for an internal review should be made within 40 working days of the date of this response.

If you remain dissatisfied following an internal review, you may raise your complaint directly to the Information Commissioner under the provisions of Section 50 of the FOI(A). Please note that the Information Commissioner will not normally investigate your case until the MOD internal review process has been completed. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at: Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF. Further details of the role and powers of the Information Commissioner can be found on the Commissioner's website at: <https://ico.org.uk/>.

Yours sincerely

38 (Irish) Brigade FOI Team