



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

Mr Mark Farmaner

By e-mail: mark.farmaner@burmacampaign.org.uk

9 December 2013

Dear Mr Farmaner,

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000 REQUEST REF: 0907-13

Thank you for your email of 30 September 2013 asking for information under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). You asked:

I am writing to request information regarding assistance the Foreign and Commonwealth Office is giving to Tony Blair and to the office of Tony Blair, or any associated companies or foundations regarding their visits and activities in Burma.

I would like to know details regarding what assistance has been given to Tony Blair, or anyone working for or on behalf of the Office of Tony Blair, and any of his foundations and companies, when they have visited Burma.

I would like to know details of when visits took place, who took part in them, the purpose of the visits, and who they met.

I would like to know details of any agreements, commercial or otherwise, that the FCO has made with Tony Blair or any associated companies or foundations, and any payments made to Tony Blair and/or any of his associated foundations, companies etc.

I am writing to confirm that we have now completed the search for the information you have requested. I can confirm that the FCO does hold information relevant to your request.

In response to the first two parts of your request, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), including the British Embassy Rangoon, has assisted Tony Blair, and those working on behalf of the Office of Tony Blair with logistical arrangements such as setting up meetings; and has provided political briefings.

On assessment of the relevant information we have also concluded that some of the information concerning the logistical assistance provided before and during Mr Blair's visits is exempt under section 38 (1) (a) and (b) (Health and Safety) as disclosure would or would be likely to endanger the physical or mental health of any individual or endanger the safety

of any individual. This qualified exemption also requires the application of the public interest test.

In applying the public interest test, we took into consideration the factors in favour of disclosure; in this case releasing such information would demonstrate openness and public accountability towards the assistance afforded to Mr Blair and his delegation by the FCO, including the British Embassy Rangoon, during their visits to Burma. We balanced this against the grounds for non-disclosure. We felt that disclosure of details of the logistical assistance provided by the British Embassy Rangoon to Tony Blair and his delegation during their visits to Burma could be used by others in the future to pose a significant risk to the personal safety of individuals during similar visits. There is a strong public interest in withholding information, for example, on FCO 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.

In response to the third part of your request, Tony Blair and officials from the Office of Tony Blair have visited Burma on three occasions. These visits took place on 20 October 2012: 15 - 17 March 2013: and 3-4 August 2013. Officials from the British Embassy Rangoon, including the Ambassador, accompanied Tony Blair's delegation on their calls during the visits in October 2012 and March 2013

Other information we hold on this part of your request is exempt under section 41 (Information provided in confidence), as the information relating to Mr Blair and his delegation's activities whilst visiting Burma, including who from the Office of Tony Blair was involved in his calls and the purpose of these calls, was provided in confidence to the FCO by the Office of Tony Blair. Our view is that disclosure of this information would constitute an actionable breach of confidence and so disclosure would also be unlawful under the FOIA. In these circumstances, section 41 of the FOIA confers an absolute exemption on disclosure. There is, therefore, no public interest test to apply.

In relation to the fourth part of your request, I can confirm that the FCO has not entered in to any agreements, commercial or otherwise with the Office of Tony Blair. The FCO provides no funding for the Office of Tony Blair's activities in Burma.

I hope you are satisfied with this reply. However, if you wish to make a complaint or if you would like a review of our decision, please write to the FOI and DPA Team, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Room K4.10-13, King Charles Street, London, SW1A 2AH. E-mail: foi-dpa.imd@fco.gov.uk . You have 40 working days to do so from the date of this letter.

If you are not content with the outcome of your complaint, you may then apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. Generally, the Information Commissioner cannot make a decision unless you have exhausted the complaints procedure provided by the FCO. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at: Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire SK9 5AF.

You can also find out more about previous FOI replies published on our website at [Publications - Inside Government - GOV.UK](#).

Yours sincerely,

J. Horbacki

Joseph Horbacki
Desk Officer Burma
ASEAN Department



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