



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

26 November 2007

Mr Andrew Tyrie MP
Chairman
All Party Parliamentary Group on Extraordinary Rendition
House of Commons
London SW1A 2AH

Overseas Territories Directorate
Foreign and Commonwealth Office
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Dear Mr Tyrie

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT REQUEST: 0874-07

Thank you for your letter of 30 October 2007 requesting "a copy of the minutes of the 2007 US/UK Political Military Talks held in Washington on 12 and 13 September 2007".

I can confirm that we do hold the 2007 minutes that you specifically requested.

However, they are being withheld under Section 26 of the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) as information is exempt information if its disclosure would, or would be likely to, prejudice (a) the defence of the British Islands or of any colony, or (b) the capability, effectiveness or security of any relevant forces. Release of the Minutes would do so as it would prejudice the defence of the British Indian Ocean Territory by exposing plans to counter possible terrorist attacks.

Information is also being withheld under 27(1) (a) of the Freedom of Information Act. Information is exempt from disclosure under the Act if its disclosure would, or would be likely to, prejudice relations between the United Kingdom and any other State. This exemption requires the application of the public interest test. Factors in favour of release include that it will increase public knowledge of the issues and inform debate. However, the effective conduct of the UK's international relations depends upon maintaining trust and confidence with other governments. This relationship of trust allows for the free and frank exchange of information on the understanding that it will be treated in confidence. In this instance the US governments may be more reluctant to share information with the UK Government in future, and may be less likely to respect the confidentiality of information supplied by the UK Government to them, to the detriment of UK interest. For all these reasons, we consider that the public interest in withholding the information outweighs the public interest in disclosing it.



If you are unhappy with the decisions made in relation to your request, you may ask for an internal review. You should contact (within 40 working days) – Andrew Allen, Overseas Territories Department, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, King Charles Street, London, SW1A 2AH - if you wish to complain.

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review, you have the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. Generally the ICO cannot make a decision unless you have exhausted the complaints procedure provided by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF

If you have any queries about this letter, please contact me. Please remember to quote the reference number above in any future communications on this matter.

Yours sincerely

Tony Humphries
Head, BIOT Section
Overseas Territories Directorate