Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office

Information Rights Unit
WG.75
King Charles Street
London
SW1A 2AH

Email:
information.rights@fcdo.gov.uk

www.gov.uk/fcdo

[redacted]

[redacted]

22nd August 2024

Dear [redacted],

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000 - REQUEST REF: FOI2024/09519

Thank you for your email of 9th April asking for information under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) 2000. You asked:

Under the FOIA 2000, please disclose any read outs, agendas, notes, emails, handouts, reports or any other documentation related to any meetings held within the Foreign Office between 10 October 2016 and 14 October 2016 regarding the Saudi-led coalition bombing of a funeral hall in Sanaa on 8 October 2016.

I am writing to confirm that we have completed the search for the information which you requested. The Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) does hold information relevant to your request. That which can be released to you is contained within the Digest of Information attached to the email sending this response letter.

Some of the information that you have requested has been withheld under Section 27(1)(a) of the FOIA. This section of the Act recognises the need to protect information that would be likely to prejudice relations between the United Kingdom and other states if it was disclosed. The application of Section 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 the Governments of Saudi Arabia and Yemen. However Section 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. For these reasons we consider that, the public interest in maintaining this exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing it.

Some of the information that 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 40 (3A)(a) of the Freedom of Information Act apply. In this case, our view is that disclosure would breach the data protection principle that personal data should be processed lawfully, fairly and transparently. 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".

If you would like to request a review of our decision please email us at: information.rights@fcdo.gov.uk or write to: Information Rights Unit, Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office, Room WG.75, King Charles Street, London, SW1A 2AH. Please note 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 FCDO. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at: Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire SK9 5AF, or online at: https://ico.org.uk/make-a-complaint/

Yours sincerely,

Information Rights Unit

For information about how the FCDO handles personal information please see our Personal Information Charter

09519 Fully Redacted Digest of Information:

From: **(Redacted)**@fco.gsi.gov.uk>

Sent on: Wednesday, October 12, 2016 10:37:18 PM

To: **(Redacted)**@fco.gsi.gov.uk

CC: Neil Crompton * (Sensitive) <Neil.Crompton@fco.gsi.gov.uk>; Philip Parham * (Sensitive) <Philip.Parham@fco.gsi.gov.uk>; Matthew Rycroft (Sensitive) <Matthew.Rycroft@fco.gsi.gov.uk>;**(Redacted)**@fco.gsi.gov.uk>; Tim Barrow * (Sensitive) <tim.barrow@fco.gsi.gov.uk>; Christian Turner (Sensitive) <christian.turner@fco.gsi.gov.uk>; **(Redacted)**@fco.gsi.gov.uk>; Stephen Hickey (Sensitive) <Stephen.Hickey@fco.gsi.gov.uk>; **(Redacted)**@fco.gsi.gov.uk>;

Subject RE: UN/Yemen

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Neil,

1. Many thanks for the helpful discussion during the cross-Whitehall Yemen VTC this morning. As agreed, please see attached draft UNSCR that we have worked up. The Key elements are:

(i) A call for an immediate Cessation of Hostilities (CoH);
(ii) Language on the humanitarian situation, including a call for unhindered access for humanitarian supplies;
(iii) A call for transparent and timely investigations and subsequent accountability;
(iv) A call to urgently resume consultations toward a political solution.

2. **(Redacted) s.27 (International Relations).**

Recommended Next Steps

3. Seen from here, we need to have a draft UNSCR ready to go as soon as possible. We recommend:

(a) A note to Ministers on Thursday setting out our recommended approach, requesting a swift response;
(b) You agree that we are able to share the draft with the US here in New York tomorrow to begin discussion;
(c) That Matthew Rycroft (or Mr Ellwood if appropriate) is able to speak publicly about our intention to move with a UNSCR as a means of occupying the space.

4. We would also welcome comments on the draft UNSCR **by 14:00 (UK) tomorrow, Thursday 13th October**.

Yours,

(Redacted)

From: Simon Collis * (Sensitive)
Sent: 12 October 2016 07:32
To: Stephen Hickey (Sensitive); Neil Bush (Sensitive); Edmund Fitton-Brown (Sensitive)
Cc: Neil Crompton * (Sensitive); Philip Parham * (Sensitive); Matthew Rycroft (Sensitive); **(Redacted)** Tim Barrow * (Sensitive); Christian Turner (Sensitive); **(Redacted)**.
Subject: RE: UN/Yemen

Neil, Stephen

These are timely questions, we will reply fully following various meetings here today and Mr Ellwood's visit tomorrow.

Bringing in Edmund, whose views will of course be essential.

Simon

Simon Collis CMG
HMA Riyadh **(Redacted)**

From: Stephen Hickey (Sensitive)
Sent: 11 October 2016 23:22
To: Neil Bush (Sensitive)
Cc: Neil Crompton * (Sensitive); Philip Parham * (Sensitive); Matthew Rycroft (Sensitive); **(Redacted)** Simon Collis * (Sensitive); Tim Barrow * (Sensitive); Christian Turner (Sensitive); **(Redacted)**)
Subject: UN/Yemen

Neil,

1. Many thanks for this note on next steps. As others have already noted, there is mounting pressure in New York for the Security Council (and for the UK as pen-holders) to do more to end the conflict in Yemen in light of the weekend's events. **(Redacted)** We are also getting calls from USUN and middle ground Council members, asking us what the next steps are.

(Redacted)

Yours,

Stephen

Stephen Hickey
Political Counsellor
UK Mission to the United Nations

(Redacted)

From: Neil Bush (Sensitive)
Sent: 11 October 2016 14:17
To: **(Redacted)**
Cc: **(Redacted)** Neil Crompton * (Sensitive); Christian Turner (Sensitive); **(Redacted)** Philip Parham * (Sensitive); **(Redacted)** Kim Darroch (Sensitive); Matthew Rycroft (Sensitive); Stephen Hickey (Sensitive); **(Redacted)** Simon Collis * (Sensitive); **(Redacted)** Martin Reynolds (PPS) (Sensitive); Tim Barrow * (Sensitive); **(Redacted).**
Subject: Immediate proposed next steps with Saudi Arabia - in advance of Ellwood trip to Riyadh

(Redacted)

We agreed at the office meeting to identify a set of immediate asks of the Saudis.

The set of immediate asks should be:

1. Reiterate urgent need by all parties for a Cessation of Hostilities and to recommit to political talks;

2. For Saudi Arabia specifically, an immediate cessation of all dynamic targeting, except in relation to border security (i.e. where the Saudis face cross-border attacks and have legitimate aims of self-defence)

(Redacted)

I will send a separate email in the morning covering other issues, notably the proposed timetable and plan on: updated briefing on FAC, IHL update, cross-Whitehall handing, and contingency planning.

Neil

Neil Bush | Head of the Arabian Peninsula and Iran Department, Middle East & North Africa Directorate

From: Neil Bush (Sensitive) @fco.gsi.gov.uk>

Sent on: Thursday, October 13, 2016 4:52:54 PM

To: **(Redacted)**@fco.gsi.uk

CC: **(Redacted)**@fco.gsi.gov.uk>; Neil Crompton * (Sensitive) <Neil.Crompton@fco.gsi.gov.uk>; Christian Turner (Sensitive) <christian.turner@fco.gsi.gov.uk>; **(Redacted)**@fco.gsi.gov.uk>; Philip Parham * (Sensitive) <Philip.Parham@fco.gsi.gov.uk>;**(Redacted)**@ fco.gsi.gov.uk>; Simon Collis * (Sensitive) <Simon.Collis4@fco.gsi.gov.uk>; **(Redacted)**@fco.gsi.gov.uk

Subject: RE: Other next steps following Monday's FS meeting on Yemen

(Redacted)

(Redacted)

To incorporate the above issues, we propose sending the IHL update, incorporating AEPD's assessment, by close of play Monday.

Best,

Neil

Neil Bush | Head of the Arabian Peninsula and Iran Department, Middle East & North Africa Directorate

From: Neil Bush (Sensitive)
Sent: 12 October 2016 18:45
To: **(Redacted)**
Cc: **(Redacted)** Neil Crompton * (Sensitive); Christian Turner (Sensitive); Philip Parham * (Sensitive); **(Redacted)** Kim Darroch (Sensitive); Matthew Rycroft (Sensitive); Stephen Hickey (Sensitive); **(Redacted)**Simon Collis * (Sensitive); Martin Reynolds (PPS) (Sensitive); Tim Barrow * (Sensitive); **(Redacted)**
Subject: Other next steps following Monday's FS meeting on Yemen

(Redacted)

Alongside the set of immediate asks of the Saudis stemming from Monday's meeting (being communicated through the Defence Sec-MbS call, follow up by HMA Riyadh/other senior HMG officials, and Mr Ellwood's trip tomorrow to Riyadh) and set out in a previous email, we also discussed the funeral hall airstrike in Sana'a over the weekend and implications for the clear risk test on IHL.

The IHL update was completed last week, incorporating the AEPD working level analysis, and concluded the clear risk threshold had not been reached, but the judgement was becoming increasingly finely balanced. The precise language of that risk assessment was being finalised with legal advisors and then due to be cleared through AEPD's senior officials before submission to the Foreign Secretary's Private Office at noon on Monday.

The incident on 8th October at the funeral hall in Sana'a was an important new development that officials recommended needed to be taken into consideration in our assessment on IHL. The Foreign Secretary agreed and asked for all incidents up to the end of the weekend to be incorporated into an updated assessment.

We are now undertaking the following steps:

1. The update on IHL is currently being redrafted and awaiting comments from post, MoD and legal, before formal submission to AEPD for their assessment of the 2c test. As the investigation has not yet been published, this may need to be updated if results are published (as expected) this week.

2. We are developing in tandem a handling plan as a prudential measure if the clear risk test is considered to be met. This will be ready for next week.

3. We are preparing for the Quadrilateral discussion on Sunday. Neil C will be sending through separate advice.

4. There are ongoing discussions with the US and France about their approaches to the incident. We will continue to update you on any points of substance from these discussions.

5. In parallel, there is pressure in New York for the UK to hold the pen on a UNSCR on Yemen calling for a cessation of hostilities, resumption of political talks, concern over the humanitarian situation, and actions following the airstrike over the weekend. We will submit separate advice on this.

Neil

Neil Bush | Head of the Arabian Peninsula and Iran Department, Middle East & North Africa Directorate

From: **(Redacted)**@fco.gsi.gov.uk
Sent on: Monday, October 10, 2016 3:13:48 PM
To: **(Redacted)**fco.gsi.gov.uk>
CC: **(Redacted)**@fco.gsi.gov.uk Simon Collis * (Sensitive) <Simon.Collis4@fco.gsi.gov.uk>; Jon Wilks (Sensitive) <Jon.Wilks@fco.gsi.gov.uk>
Subject: Re: Airstrike on funeral service in Sana'a - DA Riyadh update on Saudi Statement

(Redacted)

Thanks - and just seen **(Redacted)** separate readout. Copying in HMA for thoughts on a quad/international meeting. Any idea where this would take place?

(Redacted)

From: Grant Calder (Sensitive)
Sent: Monday, October 10, 2016 03:51 PM
To: **(Redacted)**
Cc: **(Redacted)**
Subject: RE: Airstrike on funeral service in Sana'a - DA Riyadh update on Saudi Statement

(Redacted)

Thanks for helping set this up useful call. **(Redacted)** will be seeing out the readout shortly. Two points to feed into to any briefing which goes up to the Foreign Secretary for calls with the Saudis:

(Redacted)

Many thanks,

(Redacted)

-----Original Message-----
From: **(Redacted)**
Sent: 10 October 2016 14:02
To: **(Redacted)**
Cc: **(Redacted)**
Subject: RE: Airstrike on funeral service in Sana'a - DA Riyadh update on Saudi Statement

(Redacted)

That wont work for IOCA as he has another meeting. He could do:

1445
1900 (or after)
0830 tomorrow

Let me know if any of those work

(Redacted)

-----Original Message-----
From: **(Redacted)**
Sent: 10 October 2016 15:32
To: **(Redacted)**
Cc: **(Redacted)**
Subject: RE: Airstrike on funeral service in Sana'a - DA Riyadh update on Saudi Statement

Dear **(Redacted)**

We are going to have to move the phone call to 15.00hrs today. Would you be able to confirm that this will work for IOCA?

Regards,

(Redacted)

-----Original Message-----
From: **(Redacted)**
Sent: 10 October 2016 10:24
To: **(Redacted)**
Subject: Re: Airstrike on funeral service in Sana'a - DA Riyadh update on Saudi Statement
(Redacted)

(Redacted)

Yes they have said 1415 is fine. The number is:

(Redacted)

Copying **(Redacted)** who I presume will be taking the note?

Let me know if you need anything else

(Redacted)

----- Original Message -----
From: **(Redacted)**
Sent: Monday, October 10, 2016 10:09 AM
To: **(Redacted)**
Cc: **(Redacted)**
Subject: RE: Airstrike on funeral service in Sana'a - DA Riyadh update on Saudi Statement

Can we make this call 14.15?

(Redacted)

From: Edmund Fitton-Brown (Sensitive)
Sent: 13 October 2016 07:43
To: Neil Crompton * (Sensitive); Samantha Job (Sensitive)
Cc: (Redacted) Christian Turner (Sensitive); Tim Barrow * (Sensitive); **(Redacted)** Kim Darroch (Sensitive); **(Redacted)** Simon Collis * (Sensitive); Martin Reynolds (PPS) (Sensitive); **(Redacted)** Charles King (Sensitive); **(Redacted)** Stephen Hickey (Sensitive); Ajay Sharma (Sensitive); **(Redacted)** Nigel Casey * (No.10) (Conf)
Subject: RE: Syria - Yemen - US Views: URGENT UPDATE OFFICIAL_SENSITIVE

(Redacted)

From: Neil Crompton * (Sensitive)
Sent: 12 October 2016 20:53
To: Samantha Job (Sensitive)
Cc: (Redacted) Christian Turner (Sensitive); Tim Barrow * (Sensitive); Kim Darroch **(Redacted)** Simon Collis * (Sensitive); Martin Reynolds (PPS) (Sensitive); **(Redacted)** Charles King (Sensitive); **(Redacted)** Stephen Hickey (Sensitive); Ajay Sharma (Sensitive);

(Redacted) Nigel Casey * (No.10) (Conf)
Subject: Syria - Yemen - US Views OFFICIAL_SENSITIVE

Samantha,

1. I spoke to **(Redacted)** about Yemen and Syria ahead of Sunday's planned meetings in London.

Yemen

2. I explained our challenge. The weekend airstrike on the funeral party had compounded UK domestic political concern about coalition military operations. At the same time, we were conscious that the situation on the ground was going in the opposite direction with the Houthis mounting attacks across the border and on shipping in the Red Sea, and the GPC stirring up popular anger about the coalition air-strike. Managing these tensions was becoming more difficult. That was the backdrop to the idea of a Quadrilateral meeting on Sunday.

(Redacted)

Neil Crompton
Director Middle East and North Africa
email: (Redacted)

Document 15: support for investigation into funeral bombing; 10 October 2016

From:	**(Redacted)**
Sent on:	Monday, October 10, 2016 11:40:51 AM
To:	**(Redacted)**
CC:	
Subject:	**(Redacted)**
Urgent:	High

Neil

(Redacted)

Regards

(Redacted)

From: (Redacted)
Sent: 10 October 2016 12:27
To: (Redacted)

Subject: (Redacted)
Importance: High

(Redacted)

(Redacted) seen this and thinks it will need advice to Ministers making a response today unlikely.

Kind regards,

(Redacted)

From: (Redacted)
Sent: 10 October 2016 12:03
To: (Redacted)
Cc: (Redacted)
Subject: Saudi Request for HMG/RAF Assistance with Investigation into Sana'a Wedding Bombing
Importance: High

DG, Colleagues,

(Redacted)

Please let me know if there is anything further we can do to help in consideration.

Regards,

(Redacted)

----- Original Message -----
From: mediapoint.business@pa.press.net [mailto:mediapoint.business@pa.press.net]
Sent: Thursday, October 13, 2016 12:07 AM
To: **(Redacted)**
Subject: Saudi Arabia

UK MINISTER TO RAISE CONCERNS OVER YEMEN AIR STRIKE DURING SAUDI ARABIA
VISIT

PA
POLITICS Yemen
13-Oct-2016 00:01:06
By Gavin Cordon, Press Association Whitehall Editor
Advisory: First issued under embargo

Page 1

A British minister is to raise concerns with senior Saudi figures over the air strike on a Yemeni funeral hall which left at least 140 dead.

Saudi warplanes - operating in support of the Yemeni government in its two-year civil war with Iranian-backed Houthi rebels - have been widely blamed for the attack in the capital Sanaa on Saturday.

The incident led to renewed calls for Britain to halt arms sales to Saudi Arabia amid repeated claims that UK-made munitions have been used in air strikes which have killed thousands of civilians.

Foreign Office minister Tobias Ellwood, in Saudi Arabia for talks with Saudi and Yemeni leaders, will press for the early publication of the findings of a promised investigation into the latest incident.

The inquiry is being conducted by a 14-nation group known as the Joint Incidents Assessment Team, which includes a number of Saudi Arabia's Gulf Arab allies.

A Foreign Office spokeswoman said: "The minister will urge all parties to adhere to a new cessation of hostilities, and come back to the negotiating table.

"The minister will be raising the UK's concerns about the air strike on a funeral hall in Sanaa on Saturday.

"The Joint Incidents Assessment Team has already committed to releasing the findings of their investigation into the incident, and he will press for this to be done as a matter of urgency."

ends

From: **(Redacted)**
Sent on: Wednesday, October 12, 2016 2:35:02 PM
To: Neil Bush (Sensitive) <Neil.Bush@fco.gsi.gov.uk>; Rebecca Stephens * (Sensitive) <Rebecca.Stephens@fco.gsi.gov.uk>
CC: **(Redacted)**

(Redacted)