



Information Rights Unit
PO Box 57192
London
SW6 1SF
United Kingdom

Our Ref: 01/FOI/19/001216

Date: 26/02/2019

Dear Ms Butlin,

Freedom of Information Request Reference No: 01/FOI/19/001216

I write in connection with your request for information which was received by the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) on 09/02/2019. I note you seek access to the following:

“I have a request for information with regards the Met press releases below.

<http://news.met.police.uk/news/covert-plan-at-ecuadorian-embassy-strengthened-after-removing-dedicated-guards-132799>

<http://news.met.police.uk/news/statement-on-julian-assange-242877>

1. I would like to request that the two press releases relating to the stated URL's are released to me.
2. I would like to request for all correspondence and documents that you hold relating to the removal of the two press releases from the Metropolitan Police website in 2018.”

SEARCHES TO LOCATE INFORMATION

To locate the information relevant to your request searches were conducted by DMC. The searches located some information relevant to your request.

DECISION

I have today decided to disclose the located information to you in full.

Please find below the two press releases requested:

“12 October 2015

Metropolitan Police Service strengthens covert plan at Ecuadorian Embassy after removing dedicated 24/7 guards

Since Julian Assange entered the Ecuadorian Embassy in June 2012, the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) has maintained a police presence at the Embassy.

Julian Assange was arrested on a European Arrest Warrant (EAW) in December 2010 and his extradition ordered him to answer serious criminal allegations in Sweden. He is subject to arrest under Section 7 of the Bail Act, for failing to surrender to custody on 29 June 2012 for removal to Sweden.

Whilst the MPS remains committed to executing the arrest warrant and presenting Julian Assange before the court, it is only right that the policing operation to achieve this is continually reviewed against the diplomatic and legal efforts to resolve the situation.

As a result of this continual review the MPS has today Monday, 12 October withdrawn the physical presence of officers from outside the Embassy.

The operation to arrest Julian Assange does however continue and should he leave the Embassy the MPS will make every effort to arrest him. However it is no longer proportionate to commit officers to a permanent presence.

The MPS will not discuss what form its continuing operation will take or the resourcing implications surrounding it.

Whilst no tactics guarantee success in the event of Julian Assange leaving the embassy, the MPS will deploy a number of overt and covert tactics to arrest him.

This decision has not been taken lightly, and the MPS has discussed it with the Home Office and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

A significant amount of time has passed since Julian Assange entered the Embassy, and despite the efforts of many people there is no imminent prospect of a diplomatic or legal resolution to this issue.

The MPS has to balance the interests of justice in this case with the ongoing risks to the safety of Londoners and all those we protect, investigating crime and arresting offenders wanted for serious offences, in deciding what a proportionate response is.

Like all public services, MPS resources are finite. With so many different criminal, and other, threats to the city it protects, the current deployment of officers is no longer believed proportionate.”

“19 May 2017

Following today's decision by the Director of Public Prosecution, Ms Marianne Ny, in relation to the Swedish authorities investigation into Julian Assange the Metropolitan Police Service's position is:

Westminster Magistrates' Court issued a warrant for the arrest of Julian Assange following him failing to surrender to the court on the 29 June 2012. The Metropolitan Police Service is obliged to execute that warrant should he leave the Embassy.

Whilst Mr Assange was wanted on a European Arrest Warrant (EAW) for an extremely serious offence, the MPS response reflected the serious nature of that crime. Now that the situation has changed and the Swedish authorities have discontinued their investigation into that matter, Mr Assange remains wanted for a much less serious offence. The MPS will provide a level of resourcing which is proportionate to that offence.

The MPS will not comment further on the operational plan.

The priority for the MPS must continue to be arresting those who are currently wanted in the Capital in connection with serious violent or sexual offences for the protection of Londoners.”

In relation to question two, there is no information held. This is because every story on our news website drops off the system after three months as a matter of course so the deletion of the stories are consistent with all stories and not specific to these ones.

Should you have any further enquiries concerning this matter, please contact me quoting the reference number above.

Yours sincerely

Shannon Stroud
Information Rights Unit

In complying with their statutory duty under sections 1 and 11 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 to release the enclosed information, the Metropolitan Police Service will not breach the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988. However, the rights of the copyright owner of the enclosed information will continue to be protected by law. Applications for the copyright owner's written permission to reproduce any part of the attached information should be addressed to MPS Directorate of Legal Services, 10 Lamb's Conduit Street, London, WC1N 3NR.

COMPLAINT RIGHTS

Are you unhappy with how your request has been handled or do you think the decision is incorrect?

You have the right to require the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) to review their decision.

Prior to lodging a formal complaint you are welcome to discuss the response with the case officer who dealt with your request.

Complaint

If you are dissatisfied with the handling procedures or the decision of the MPS made under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (the Act) regarding access to information you can lodge a complaint with the MPS to have the decision reviewed.

Complaints should be made in writing, within forty (40) working days from the date of the refusal notice, and addressed to:

FOI Complaint
Information Rights Unit
PO Box 57192
London
SW6 1SF
foi@met.police.uk

In all possible circumstances the MPS will aim to respond to your complaint within 20 working days.

The Information Commissioner

After lodging a complaint with the MPS if you are still dissatisfied with the decision you may make application to the Information Commissioner for a decision on whether the request for information has been dealt with in accordance with the requirements of the Act.

For information on how to make application to the Information Commissioner please visit their website at www.ico.org.uk. Alternatively, write to or phone:

Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF
Phone: 0303 123 1113