

An Garda Síochána

Oifig Saorála Fáisnéise
An Garda Síochána
Teach áth Luimnigh
Lárionad Gnó Udáras Forbartha Tionscail
Baile Sheáin
An Uaimh
Contae na Mí
C15 DR90



Freedom of Information Office
An Garda Síochána
Athlumney House
IDA Business Park
Johnstown
Navan
Co Meath
C15 DR 90

Teileafón/Tel: (046) 9036350

Láithreán Gréasain/Website: www.garda.ie

Bí linn/Join us  

Ríomh-phoist/Email: foi@garda.ie

Re: Freedom of Information Request FOI-000321-2016 Partially Granted

Dear Mr

I refer to the Freedom of Information Act 2014 (FOI Act) and your submission to An Garda Síochána dated and received on 1st September, 2016.

Part 1(n) of Schedule 1 of the FOI Act states that An Garda Síochána is listed as a partially included agency “insofar as it relates to administrative records relating to human resources, or finance or procurement matters”. Therefore, only administrative records that relate to human resources, finance or procurement shall be considered.

Your request is shown below:

I wish to make a request – under the Freedom of Information Act 2014 or the following in relation to Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) (also known as Drones or Remotely Piloted Aircraft Systems (RPAS)) :

- (1) The overall amount spent on UAVs procured between 1 January 2015 - 31 August 2016;*
- (2) The amount spent per each individual UAV procured between 1 January 2015 - 31 August 2016;*
- (3) The overall budget for any drone project/team/division for the years 2015 and 2016, and any budget estimation for 2017;*
- (4) The total cost per individual deployment of UAVs in 2015 and 2016, to also include the month of deployment; the deployment type (e.g. search for missing persons; state visits, sporting events, covert surveillance operations); and the location (Region; Division; District; and Sub-District) of UAV deployment;*
- (5) The total cost of staff training and total number of staff trained in 2015 and 2016 in relation to the use of UAVs; and the number of staff currently qualified to operate a UAV;*
- (6) Any documents created from 1 January 2014 which mention the financial costings (or potential costings) of UAVs;*

- (7) Any documents created from 1 January 2014 which mention staff training requirements related to UAV use;*
- (8) Any documents created from 1 January 2014 which mention the recruitment (or potential recruitment) of staff related to UAV use.*

Please find below an additional question which I would like to have included in my Freedom of Information request made this afternoon (see below email). The additional question is as follows:

- (9) The model/name and of each individual UAV procured between 1 January 2015 - 31 August 2016*

I wish to inform you that I have decided to partially grant your request on 27th September, 2016.

The purpose of this letter is to explain that decision.

1. Findings, particulars and reasons for decisions to deny access

On receipt of your request, the Financial Management System (FMS) within the Finance Section, the Garda College and the 29 Garda Divisions (inclusive of Dublin Metropolitan Regional Traffic Division) were queried to provide the relevant records. Following a search of these sections/Divisions, I have been advised that no records are held in respect of parts 1- 4, 6, 8, and 9 of your request above. In this regard, I am therefore refusing these parts under section 15(1)(a) of the FOI Act, which is as follows:

15. (1) A head to whom an FOI request is made may refuse to grant the request where—

- (a) the record concerned does not exist or cannot be found after all reasonable steps to ascertain its whereabouts have been taken,*

In accordance with the requirements of section 15(1)(a), I am satisfied that all reasonable steps have been taken to identify and locate the records requested. As no records exist I must refuse parts 1-4, 6, 8, and 9 of your request on this basis.

Part 5 of your request is seeking *'the total cost of staff training and total number of staff trained in 2015 and 2016 in relation to the use of UAVs; and the number of staff currently qualified to operate a UAV'*. In this regard, a search was conducted at the Office of Assistant Commissioner Roads Policing and Major Event/Emergency Management which has responsibility for a number of units including the Air Support Unit. I have been advised that during Quarter 4, 2015, a number of members of the Air Support Unit completed a Certified Ground School Course in relation to Remotely Piloted Aircraft at a cost of €4,000. The number of members trained is an operational matter and is therefore outside the scope of the FOI Act in so far as it pertains to An Garda Síochána. In this regard, I am refusing this part of your request pursuant to Part 1(n) of Schedule 1 of the FOI Act.

The assistance of the Garda Air Support Unit is regularly sought in relation to the use/misuse of drones. The Air Support Unit also provides information and assistance to members of An Garda Síochána nationally as well as other agencies.

In order to adequately deal with the variety and number of queries, management of the Garda Air Support Unit decided that it would be most beneficial for members of the unit to undertake courses in this area. The RPAS course took sixteen (16) hours to complete and the content included: air law and airspace, drone operating procedures, risk analysis and emergency procedures, operations manual template and IAA recognition.

Part 7 of your request seeks “*Any documents created from 1 January 2014 which mention staff training requirements related to UAV use*”. The requirements for the training of staff in the use of UAVs would arise from operational activities or plans and cannot be considered to fall into the remit of the FOI Act in so far as it pertains to An Garda Síochána under Part 1(n) of Schedule 1 as cited above. I am therefore refusing the release of this information.

2. Rights of appeal

In the event that you are not happy with this decision you may seek an Internal Review of the matter by writing to the address below and quoting reference number **FOI-000321-2016**.

Freedom of Information Office,
An Garda Síochána,
Athlumney House,
IDA Business Park,
Johnstown,
Navan,
Co. Meath
C15 DR90

Please note that a fee applies. This fee has been set at €30 (€10 for a Medical Card holder). Payment should be made by way of bank draft, money order, postal order or personal cheque, and made payable to Accountant, Garda Finance Directorate, Garda Headquarters, Phoenix Park, Dublin 8.

Payment can be made by electronic means, using the following details:

Account Name: Garda Síochána Finance Section Public Bank Account
Account Number: 10026896
Sort Code: 900017
IBAN: IE86B0F190001710026896
BIC: BOFIE2D

You must ensure that your FOI reference number (FOI-000321-2016) is included in the payment details.

You should submit your request for an Internal Review within 4 weeks from the date of this notification. The review will involve a complete reconsideration of the matter by a more senior member of An Garda Síochána and the decision will be communicated to you within 3 weeks. The making of a late appeal may be permitted in appropriate circumstances.

Please be advised that An Garda Síochána replies under Freedom of Information may be released in to the public domain via our website at www.garda.ie.

Personal details in respect of your request will be removed to protect confidentiality where applicable.

Should you have any questions or concerns regarding the above, please contact me by telephone at (046) 9036350.

Yours sincerely,

 SUPERINTENDENT
HELEN DEELY
FREEDOM OF INFORMATION OFFICER.

 **SEPTEMBER, 2016**