



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

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Foreign and Commonwealth Office
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09 March 2016

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000 REQUEST REF: FOI 0199-16

Thank you for your email of 16 February 2016 asking for information under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) 2000. You asked:

I write to request a full breakdown of the cost of renting premises for Embassies, High Commissions and buildings officially used by representatives of the British Government (including DFID, Trade & Investment Bureaus and so forth listed here for the below 15 countries:

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------|
| 1. Eritrea | 2. Libya |
| 3. Uzbekistan | 4. Turkmenistan |
| 5. Sudan | 6. South Sudan |
| 7. North Korea | 8. Somalia |
| 9. Cambodia | 10. Venezuela |
| 11. Angola | 12. Yemen |
| 13. Myanmar | 14. Russia |
| 15. Democratic Republic of the Congo | |

I should like to receive the information electronically, with costs broken down by year and location for the last two financial year, 2013/14 and 2014/15. Please also include the recipient company, individual or organisation for the funds in each instance.

If this information is already in the public domain, please send links to the relevant documents.

I can confirm that the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) does hold information relevant to your request. Please find below the information that the FCO can release to you.

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) works at home and overseas to safeguard Britain's national security and build Britain's prosperity, as well as supporting British Citizens overseas. We operate from our chosen overseas locations to achieve these aims.

Some of the information has been withheld using **Section 43(2)** – Commercial Interests. Section 43 is a qualified exemption and is subject to a public interest test. In applying this exemption, we have had to balance the public interest in withholding the information against the public interest in disclosure.

The factors in favour of disclosure of this information including the general public interest and greater transparency and accountability, were carefully weighed against the general need to allow business-people and commercial organisations the space to conduct their lawful business competitively and without fear of disclosure of sensitive commercial information. The FCO regularly uses commercial property agents, and in order to gain best value for money, we must maintain their confidence and refrain from releasing information that would be likely to prejudice their commercial interest. In this case, after consideration of the arguments, we believe that the public interest in withholding this information outweighs the public interest in its release.

We do not hold details of other Government Departments' official building rental arrangements, only those leased by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO). For other Government Departments' details you will need to make requests directly to them.

However, I can confirm that of the 15 countries detailed in your request, we do not incur official building rental costs for Angola, Burma and Somalia, as these properties are government owned. In Yemen, our Mission has been temporarily closed since February 2015.

Once an FOI request is answered, it is considered to be in the public domain. To promote transparency, we may now publish the response and any material released on gov.uk in the [FOI releases](#) section. All personal information in the letter will be removed before publishing.

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Yours sincerely,

Estates, Estates and Security Dept.



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