



An Roinn Gnóthaí Eachtracha
Department of Foreign Affairs

Our Reference: FOI/Req/20/236

12 January 2021

Dear Mr. Cotter,

I refer to the request which you made dated 9th December 2020 under the Freedom of Information Act 2014 for records held by the Department of Foreign Affairs as follows:

“A copy of any correspondence between the Department of Foreign Affairs and bodies or government departments in the Republic of Ireland, Northern Ireland and Great Britain relating to the assistance provided by the Irish Air Corps in the gorse fires on Slieve Gullion in Co Armagh in July 2018, excluding diplomatic clearance forms and internal department correspondence.”

As the decision maker handling your request, I wish to advise you that I have identified eight records pertaining to your request. I have decided to part grant all eight, with redactions made under the following section of the Freedom of Information Act 2014:

Section 37. (1) “Subject to this section, a head shall refuse to grant an FOI request if, in the opinion of the head, access to the record concerned would involve the disclosure of personal information...”

A schedule, which outlines details of the records released, and a copy of the records are attached.

The records relate to the Air Corps providing firefighting assistance to the Northern Irish authorities at the Slieve Gullion fires in Armagh during a period of days in July 2018. The correspondence and clearance forms are part of the agreed upon protocol for this type of mission that must be followed. This means the appropriate forms must be sent in advance, and clearance must be granted prior to the flight/mission etc. However, in some circumstances this can be expedited or done retroactively in emergency situations. In this

instance, flexibility was given in the extension of the clearances for both aircraft involved over the course of the fires.

Under the current Government restrictions on attendance at the workplace, I have not been able to attend my normal place of work. This has made it difficult to carry out redactions in the normal way. Accordingly as per guidance from the Central Policy Unit of the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, I have transcribed copies of the records and deleted the passages that fall to be redacted, marking it clearly with '[Redacted]'.


If there is any aspect of my decision with which you are not satisfied, you may appeal the decision in writing to: Freedom of Information Unit, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 76-78 Harcourt Street, Dublin 2 or by email to foi@dfa.ie.

Please ensure the envelope or email is marked Internal Review of FOI/Req/20/236. You must make your appeal within 4 weeks of the date of this notification, but the making of a late appeal may be permitted in appropriate circumstances.

This appeal process, known as an Internal Review, will involve a complete reconsideration of the matter by a more senior member of staff of this Department and the decision will be communicated to you within 3 weeks.

In accordance with the Freedom of Information Act 2014, the fee for an internal review is now €30 (€10 for medical card holders and their dependents).

Yours sincerely,



Adam Duffy,

Assistant Director,
IUKA Political Section,
Department of Foreign Affairs