



## An Roinn Gnóthaí Eachtracha agus Trádála Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

Our Ref: Fol/Req/18081

27 April 2018

Dear Requester,

I refer to the request which you have made under the Freedom of Information Act 2014 for access to records held by this Department, as follows:

*Copies of all records held relating to the organisation and approval of use of government jet by Minister Simon Coveney for the purposes of a trip to Egypt and the Middle East.  
I would prefer to receive this information electronically, ideally in its original electronic format.*

I refer also to the acknowledgement of your request which was sent to you on 9 April 2018.

I have identified 18 records that fall within the scope of your request. The records are listed in the attached schedule. I have made a decision to grant 16 and part grant 2 of the records. Where access has been refused, the information is exempt from release under Personal information - Section 37 (1) where the right to privacy of the individuals concerned outweighs any public interest in releasing their personal information to the world.

The Middle East Peace Process is a high priority issue for the Government, the Oireachtas and the Irish people. This four-day working visit to the Middle East, with engagements in Cairo, Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, Ramallah and Gaza was an important opportunity for the Tánaiste to engage with the parties to the conflict, reaffirm Ireland's commitment and support to the two-state solution, and discuss ways in which Ireland and our EU partners can help advance the peace process, and improve conditions for the Palestinian people. Egypt is the largest Arab country, and plays a significant role in the Middle East Peace Process, and in the region in general. The visit to Cairo was also an important occasion to develop Ireland's bilateral relationship with Egypt, and to discuss issues of mutual concern and interest.

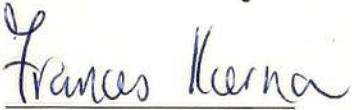
The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade initially sought commercial flight options for this visit. However, two factors complicated the use of commercial flights: firstly, the scarcity of appropriate flights options, especially direct flights, between Cairo and Tel Aviv; and secondly, the constraints of the Tánaiste's programme, in particular early engagements with Israeli and UN officials on Tuesday 9 January. Given this situation, the options were to either cancel a number of the Tánaiste's engagements, or to make use of the government jet, and proceed with the visit as planned. In the interests of maintaining important elements of the programme, and respecting the commitment made to the Tánaiste's counterparts and international partners, the Department decided to request use of the Government jet.

### Right of Appeal

Should you wish to appeal this decision, you may do so in writing to the Freedom of Information Unit, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 76-78 Harcourt Street, Dublin 2 or by email to [foi@dfa.ie](mailto:foi@dfa.ie). A fee applies for an appeal for access to non-personal information; the level of this fee has been set at €30. For methods of payment, please contact FOI Unit at [foi@dfa.ie](mailto:foi@dfa.ie), or 01-4082857.

You should make your appeal within 4 weeks (20 working days) from the date of this notification. However, the making of a late appeal may be permitted in appropriate circumstances. The appeal will involve a complete reconsideration of the matter by a more senior member of the staff of this Department.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Frances Kiernan". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'F'.

Frances Kiernan