



FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST

FOI Reference number: FOI 37/2013

Date: 9 August 2013

Request:

Question 1

I write with reference to the proposal of the PSNI, approved by the NI Policing Board on 11 April 2013, to purchase and use three Unmanned Aerial Systems (UAS). It was reported that these would be used as a policing resource for the G8 summit on 17th and 18th June 2013 as well as being “used in both urban and rural environments for traffic management, searches for missing or wanted persons, public order situations and for evidence gathering”. Later discussions revealed this increased to nine drones.

(1) Can you confirm the number of drones purchased by the PSNI and whether the same policing purposes, as stated above, are intended for all of these drones.

Answer question 1

The Policing Board understands that each Unmanned Aerial System (UAS) contains 3 Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAV). The 3 UAS would therefore include 9 UAV.

Question 2

An existing Freedom of Information request submitted to the NI Policing Board on 15 May 2013 revealed that the Board was working with regulatory bodies to ensure that regulations, scrutiny and oversight arrangements are in place with the reports to be published as soon as possible. These are not yet publically available.

(2) Please provide the relevant reports or, if not available, an indication of when these can be expected.

Answer question 2

No regulatory reports have been completed as yet. Work remains ongoing to establish what reports are required and when and how these will be published.

Question 3

The minutes from a meeting of the NI Policing Board on 11 April 2013 indicate that there will be retrospective scrutiny of the operation of UAS after one year of operation 'to assess...legal compliance in deployment and oversight by the Office of the Surveillance Commissioner'.

(3) Please publish the applicable regulation, scrutiny and oversight framework as soon as possible or provide the documents of relevant meetings and deliberations on this framework.

Answer question 3

Work remains ongoing to agree the level, scope and other of regulation, scrutiny and oversight required by the Policing Board.

Question 4

The PSNI has confirmed that where images are acquired 'actions will be governed by Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights, the Data Protection Act 1998 and other relevant legislation'. The PSNI has indicated that recorded images which 'are not required for any police purpose' will be retained for 28 days and then destroyed in line with the standard for CCTV systems across the UK.

(4) Please provide the relevant information to demonstrate why the CCTV framework has been deemed appropriate and applicable to the use of drones and the relevant authority for this decision.

Answer question 4

PSNI acquired the UAS in accordance with current Central Procurement Directorate guidance. Prior to PSNI providing a briefing to the NIPB, PSNI sought legal advice. The proposed directions are intended to reflect the current practices in respect of information obtained from the UAS being used as originally intended ie primarily the activities highlighted in question 1 above.

Question 5

The PSNI has confirmed that the use of UAS must comply with existing Civil Aviation regulations. The PSNI has stated that the primary use will be for overt support to

policing but that any assistance with the investigation of crime must comply with the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000.

(5) What is the authorisation process before the UAS is used and who has the authority to authorise covert use?

Answer question 5

The proposed use of UAS for the investigation of crime can be subject to the Regulation of Investigative Powers Act. There are various levels of requesting/recommending and authorising covert use. Normally this requires the authority of a Superintendent.

If you have queries about this request or the decision please contact the Board quoting the reference number above. If you are unhappy with the service you have received and wish to make a complaint or request a review you should write to the Board's Chief Executive at the following address:

Northern Ireland Policing Board
Waterside Tower
31 Clarendon Road
Clarendon Dock
Belfast BT1 3BG

Email: foi@nipolicingboard.org.uk

If you are not content with the outcome of your complaint, you may apply directly to the Information Commissioner. Generally, the Information Commissioner's Office cannot investigate or make a decision on a case unless you have exhausted the complaints procedure provided by the Board. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at:-

The Information Commissioner's Office – Northern Ireland
3rd Floor
12 Cromac Place
Gasworks
Ormeau Road
Belfast
BT7 2JB.

Telephone: - 02890 269 380

Email: - ni@ico.org.uk

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