



Your reference: n/a

Our reference: FOI_25_0082

E-mail: FOI
@gloucestershire.police.uk

Direct dial: 01452 754304

Postal Address: As above

Date: 05/03/2025

Dear

Gloucestershire Constabulary Freedom of Information request FOI_25_0082

On 23/01/2025 you sent an email constituting a request under the Freedom of Information Act asking the following:

1. Have you engaged the services of the AI geolocation company GeoSpy, or any other AI geolocation company?
2. If so, when did you first engage their services and is the engagement ongoing?
3. If the software has been used, what purposes has it been used for?
4. If the software has been used, are identified locations always independently verified by a human to ensure they match?
5. Has anyone been charged with a crime based wholly or in part on evidence gleaned from GeoSpy or other AI geolocation software? If so, how many people, and what crimes were they charged with?

Questions 1-4

Section 1 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) places two duties on public authorities. Unless exemptions apply, the first duty at Section 1(1)(a) is to confirm or deny whether the information specified in a request is held. The second duty at Section 1(1)(b) is to disclose information that has been confirmed as being held. Where exemptions are relied upon s17 of FOIA requires that we provide the applicant with a notice which: a) states that fact b) specifies the exemption(s) in question and c) states (if that would not otherwise be apparent) why the exemption applies.

Gloucestershire Constabulary can neither confirm nor deny that it holds any information as the duty in Section 1(1)(a) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 does not apply, by virtue of the following exemptions:

Section 24(2) National Security
Section 31(3) Law enforcement;

Section 24 and 31 are prejudice based qualified exemptions and there is a requirement to articulate the harm that would be caused in confirming or not that the information is held as well as carrying out a public interest test.

Harm

Any disclosure under FOI is a release to the public at large. Whilst not questioning the motives of the applicant, confirming or denying if Geospy AI is used by Gloucestershire Constabulary could reveal operational tactics linked to policing, compromise police investigations and/or adversely affect the ability of Gloucestershire Constabulary and others to safeguard national security.

It is well established that police forces utilise intelligence gathering techniques in order to counteract criminal behaviour, detect crime, and assist in the apprehension and prosecution of offenders.

Modern day policing is intelligence led and law enforcement depends upon the development of intelligence and the gathering and security of evidence in order to disrupt criminal behaviour and bring offenders to justice. To do this forces rely on access to relevant tools to gather intelligence in a way that would be too resource intensive to do manually. When considered on a Force by Force basis, a malign individual could identify those tactical options most critical to the Law-and-Order sector and specifically target those proving the most assistance. Accordingly, to confirm or deny as to whether any particular software or tool is used by police to gather such intelligence would allow those with malicious intent to target cyber-attacks on those producers, causing disruption or service denial to police forces and thereby preventing intelligence acquisition and undermining law enforcement.

The threat from terrorism cannot be ignored. It is generally recognised that the international security landscape is increasingly complex and unpredictable. Since 2006, the UK Government has published the threat level based upon current intelligence, and that threat is currently judged as "[SUBSTANTIAL](#)", meaning that an attack on the UK is likely. It is well established that police forces use tactics and technology to gain intelligence in order to counteract criminal behaviour, and it has been previously documented in the media that many terrorist incidents have been thwarted due to intelligence gained by these means.

Confirming or denying whether any information is held about the use of specific internet intelligence gathering tools/platforms would limit operational capabilities as criminals/terrorists would gain a greater understanding of the police's methods and techniques, enabling offenders to take steps to counter them. It may also suggest the limitations of police capabilities in this area, which may further encourage criminal/terrorist activity by exposing potential vulnerabilities.

Any information identifying the focus of policing activity could be used to the advantage of terrorists or criminal organisations. Information that undermines the operational integrity of these activities will adversely affect public safety and have a negative impact on both National Security and Law Enforcement.

Public Interest Test

Factors favouring Confirming or Denying for Section 24 - The information, if held, only relates to national security and confirming or denying whether it is held would not actually

harm it. The public are entitled to know what public funds are spent on and what measures are in place. By confirming or denying if business is conducted with Geospy AI, or any other likeminded third-party provider, would lead to a better informed public.

Factors against Confirming or Denying for Section 24 - By confirming or denying whether any information is held would render policing and security measures less effective. This would lead to the compromise of ongoing or future operations to protect the security or infra-structure of the UK and increase the risk of harm to the public.

Factors favouring Neither Confirming or Denying for Section 31 - Confirming or denying whether business is conducted with Geospy AI, or any other likeminded third-party provider, would provide an insight into the Police Service. This would enable the public to have a better understanding of the effectiveness of the police and about how the police gather intelligence. It would greatly assist in the quality and accuracy of public debate, which could otherwise be steeped in rumour and speculation. Where public funds are being spent, there is a public interest in accountability and justifying the use of public money.

Factors against Confirming or Denying for Section 31 - Confirming or denying that any information is held regarding business with Geospy AI, or any other likeminded third-party provider, would have the effect of compromising law enforcement tactics. It has been recorded that FOIA releases are monitored by criminals and terrorists and so to confirm or deny information is held concerning intelligence gathering would lead to law enforcement being undermined. The Police Service is reliant upon all manner of techniques during operations and the public release of any modus operandi employed, if held, would prejudice the ability of the Police Service to perform the functions it exists to provide.

By confirming or denying that a business interest exists would hinder the prevention or detection of crime. The Police Service would not wish to reveal what tactics may or may not have been used to gain intelligence as this would clearly undermine the law enforcement and investigative process. This would impact on police resources and more crime and terrorist incidents would be committed, placing individuals at risk. It can be argued that there are significant risks associated with providing information, if held, in relation to any aspect of investigations or of any nation's security arrangements so confirming or denying that information is held, may reveal the relative vulnerability of what we may be trying to protect.

Decision

The security of the country is of paramount importance and Gloucestershire Constabulary will not divulge whether any information is or is not held regarding business with any company, if to do so would place the safety of an individual at risk, undermine National Security or compromise law enforcement.

Whilst there is a public interest in the transparency of policing operations and providing assurance that Gloucestershire Constabulary is appropriately and effectively engaging with the threat posed by various groups or individuals, there is a very strong public interest in safeguarding the integrity of police investigations and all areas of operations carried out by police forces throughout the UK.

As much as there is public interest in knowing that policing activity is appropriate and balanced this will only be overridden in exceptional circumstances. The use of technology can be a sensitive issue that would reveal police tactics and therefore it is our opinion that

for these issues the balancing test for confirming or denying whether any information is held regarding the police, Geospy AI, or any other likeminded third-party provider, is not made out.

However, this should not be taken as necessarily indicating that any information that would meet your request exists or does not exist.

Question 5

No information held.

GeoSpy AI, or similar products, are geolocation tools that can use artificial intelligence to analyse images and determine where they were taken. Any results generated by the use of such tools would be for that purpose alone, which in and of itself would be useful intelligence, but would not constitute evidence sufficient to result in a criminal charge being brought against any individual.

If you are not satisfied with this response or any actions taken in dealing with your request, you have the right to ask that we review your case under our internal procedure. Please note that a request for an internal review must be made within 20 working days of the response to your original request.

If you decide to request that such a review is undertaken and following this process you are still unsatisfied, you then have the right to direct your complaint to the Information Commissioner for consideration.

The Information Commissioner can be contacted via the following means:

Website - <https://ico.org.uk/>

Call their helpline - 0303 123 1113

Email - casework@ico.org.uk

Post –

Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF

Yours sincerely,

Disclosure Officer
Gloucestershire Constabulary