



Cabinet Office

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Christopher Whitmey

By email: [request-660760-df284d0b@whatdotheyknow.com](mailto:request-660760-df284d0b@whatdotheyknow.com)

FOI Reference: FOI2020/04858

12/05/2020

Dear Christopher Whitmey

*I refer to your request where you asked:*

*"Freedom of Information request - Copy of the redacted ISC Special Report on Russia*

*Dear Cabinet Office,*

*Please will you send me a copy of the redacted ISC 'Special Report on Russia' which you hold.*

*As you may be aware the ISC, and members of both Houses of Parliament, were most anxious it was in the public domain. For a summary please see <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/sn02178/> at 4.5 Russia.*

*From the evidence in SN02178 it is plainly apparent that, now it is fully redacted, it is in the public interest that it is in the public domain.*

*Due to the large public interest in this matter, please can this FOIA request be expedited."*

I am writing to advise you that following a search of our paper and electronic records, I have established the information you requested is held by the Cabinet Office.

Information you have requested is being withheld as it is exempt under section 22(1) of the Freedom of Information Act. Section 22(1) protects information intended for future publication. Section 22 is a qualified exemption and I have considered whether the balance of the public interest favours maintaining the exemption in section 22(1) or disclosing the information.

In accordance with the Justice and Security Act 2013 the careful consideration of the impact of releasing sensitive information, on the advice of civil servants, is a vital and statutory obligation held by the Prime Minister. This is to ensure that the release of information will not undermine the work of those who protect our national security. The process cannot be rushed. There is no set timeline within the memorandum of understanding with the Intelligence and Security Committee for the Government to clear such reports for publication, and under the same memorandum there is no set timeline for a response, nor are any such deadlines set out in the governing legislation.

The report itself is the property of the independent Intelligence and Security Committee of Parliament (ISC), and as such it is not for the Government to publish ISC reports; it is for the ISC to lay them before Parliament. Once a new Committee has been established, it will be up to them to choose when they wish to publish it. The process to establish a new Committee has already begun. You may also wish to be aware that the Intelligence and Security Committee of Parliament is a named body under section 23(3) of the FOI Act, and therefore all information provided by the ISC is exempt information under section 23, which is an absolute exemption.

Defending democracy is of paramount importance to the Government and during the General Election, steps were taken to safeguard that vital democratic process. The Government has said previously that there is no evidence of any successful foreign interference in UK democratic processes. This remains the case.

If you have any queries about this letter, please contact the FOI Team quoting the reference number above.

If you are unhappy with the service you have received in relation to your request or wish to request an internal review, you should write to:

Eirian Walsh Atkins  
Cabinet Office  
70 Whitehall  
London  
SW1A 2AS

email: [foi-team@cabinetoffice.gov.uk](mailto:foi-team@cabinetoffice.gov.uk)

You should note that the Cabinet Office will not normally accept an application for internal review if it is received more than two months after the date that the reply was issued. If you are not content with the outcome of your internal review, you may apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. Generally, the Commissioner cannot make a decision unless you have exhausted the complaints procedure provided by Cabinet Office. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

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

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'A. B. M.', written over a light blue rectangular background.

FOI Team  
Cabinet Office