



Cabinet Office

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Samuel Forster

By email: [request-625501-790a4c3d@whatdotheyknow.com](mailto:request-625501-790a4c3d@whatdotheyknow.com)

FOI Reference: FOI329098

03/01/2020

Dear Samuel Forster

I refer to your request where you asked:

*Dear Prime Minister's Office,*

*I am writing to request information surrounding the 'Russia Report'.*

- 1. Does the report contain any information that could be deemed relevant to the December 12th General Election?*
- 2. Does the report contain any information that could affect the outcome of the 12th December General Election?*
- 3. How is public interest without release vs public interest with the release of the document calculated?*

*If the public interest without the release of the document is chosen as the priority then we (the public) can therefore assume that points 1. and 2. do not come into the equation and the document would not have an influence in the outcome of the election.*

*If however, in due course the document is released and it does contain controversial information that would have influenced the election then we will question whether the Office has acted in the public's best interest.*

*Yours faithfully,*

*John*

Thank you for your request for information, under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 ("FOIA") in relation to the Intelligence and Security Committee ("ISC") of Parliament's Russia Report ("the Report")

Using the numbering of your queries in your email:

**Questions 1 and 2:** In order to respond to Questions 1 and 2 it would be necessary for Cabinet Office to carry out an analysis of the content of the Report to make an assessment as to the relevance to the General Election. That process would result in the creation of new information. FOIA only provides a right of access to information that already exists. It does not require public authorities to create new information in order to respond to a request. There is therefore no obligation, under FOIA, for Cabinet Office to respond to Questions 1 and 2.

**Question 3:** The public interest test is a balancing exercise and it is carried out on a case-by-case basis. As you may be aware, FOIA requires public bodies to disclose information unless there is good reason not to (i.e. exemptions under FOIA). Exemptions can only be maintained if the public interest in doing so outweighs the public interest in disclosure.

Cabinet Office's analysis with regard to the Report is set out below.

Cabinet Office recognises that there is a public interest in release of the Report. However, there is also a public interest in information being released in a timely and orderly manner, in accordance with the relevant and established statutory scheme. The orderly release of information forms part of the important principle of the effective conduct of public affairs. Cabinet Office considers that the public interest in this outweighs the public interest in release of this report under FOIA. The Justice and Security Act 2013 provides for a mechanism which permits the careful consideration of the impact of releasing information, on the advice of civil servants. That is particularly necessary in the national security context in which the ISC operates and it is not considered to be in the public interest to circumvent that carefully established and appropriate mechanism.

The ISC is well informed of this process which is continuing along the normal parameters that apply before every publication. Once the process has been completed the report will be published and laid before Parliament. You will be able to access a copy of the report on the following website: <http://isc.independent.gov.uk/>

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 dark ink, appearing to read 'Eirian Walsh Atkins', is written over a light grey circular stamp. The signature is fluid and cursive.

**FOI Team**  
**Cabinet Office**