



Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy

Department for Business, Energy &
Industrial Strategy
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FOI2019/05132

21 June 2019

Dear Don Priest,

Thank you for your email of 18 March 2019 where you requested the following information:

- 1 What security rules, codes, protocols, procedures and precautions are taken to ensure that the CIA, GCHQ /Cabinet office are not eavesdropping / spying on staff, officials and ministers in your Department with social media media eg Google, Facebook as a conduit?*
- 2 What summaries / reports does the department have about its cyber security? Please indicate the public facing reports.*
- 3 Has the Department risk assessed the threat posed by social media, especially that owned by foreign corporations and countries and especially US and CIA? What summaries does the department have of this information, including any public facing ones?*
- 4 What social media apps are allowed on the Departments phones and computers? Which are installed?*
- 5 Are Facebook, Google and Twitter apps allowed to be installed and or used on Department computers and mobile phones?*
- 6 Are private, ie individually owned, mobile phones and computers with social media apps installed such as Facebook, Google and Twitter allowed in Department meetings, committees, and in the office environment?*
- 8 If the answer to Qu 5 and Qu 6 are yes, how does the Department stop companies / CIA spying utilising microphones, cameras, and GPS data on those devices?*
- 9 Has the department informed staff of the risk of spying and eavesdropping via social media apps? If so please send a copy of the memo / paper.*
- 10 Has the Department contributed material to the Cabinet Office as part of the cyber security strategy? If so what?*

Questions on Q sometimes written as QAnon, #Q #QAnon

(Background information on Q follows the questions)

11 Has the Secretary, Ministers or the top 3 civil servants in the Department been briefed about QAnon?

12 If so please indicate the date and the type of recorded information that has been briefed so that any future request may be narrowed down, as per Section 16 of the UK freedom of Information Act and Information Commissioner Guidance.

13 Has the Department any other recorded information on Q / QAnon ? If so please indicate the date and the type of recorded information that has been briefed so that any future request may be narrowed down, as per Section 16 of the UK freedom of Information Act and Information Commissioner Guidance. (If there is a mass of information that will take the request over the time limit, please disregard this question)

Under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 ('the Act'), you have the right to:

- know whether we hold the information you require
- be provided with that information (subject to any exemptions under the Act which may apply).

1. BEIS takes the security of our information assets seriously and complies with the Security Policy Framework and the Minimum Cyber Security Standard published by the Cabinet Office. Details of rules, codes, protocols, procedures and precautions are being withheld.

2. The Department does not publish any reports regarding its cyber security. Details of internal reports are being withheld.

3. The Department performs risk assessments on all the services it uses. Details of these assessments are being withheld

4 & 5. Social media apps are installed where there is a good business reason to do so.

6. Personal devices are permitted within most of the Department's premises. There are certain areas and/or meetings where specific restrictions are in place.

8. Details of configuration of Departmental devices being withheld. The Department hold no information with regard to personal devices.

9. The Department holds no information regarding the specific request you have made.

10. Along with all Government Departments, BEIS provides the Cabinet Office with such input as it may request from time to time. Details of the information provided is being withheld by virtue Section 24(2) (National Security) of the FOI Act. The exemption in s.24 is a qualified exemption and is subject to a public interest test.

We acknowledge that there is a general public interest in openness and transparency. However, these public interests have to be weighed against a stronger public interest in the effectiveness of national security. Releasing this information could reveal detail of cyber

security procedures and tactics which could undermine national security. Our judgement is that it would not be in the interest of the UK's national security to provide information on this, and on balance we have concluded that this outweighs the public interest in disclosure. The Department's decision is therefore to withhold the information.

11, 12 & 13. The Department holds no information in scope of this request.

The details in answer to questions 1, 2, 3 and 8 are being withheld by virtue of Section 31(3) (Law enforcement) and Section 24(2) (National Security) of the FOI Act. The exemptions in s.31 and s.24 are qualified exemptions and are subject to a public interest test. We acknowledge that there is a general public interest in openness and transparency. However, these public interests have to be weighed against a stronger public interest in the effectiveness of law enforcement and national security. It would not be in the interest of the Department to provide the specific information requested as this could enable individuals to deduce how vulnerable or otherwise UK Government offices are to criminal cyber-attacks and to those wishing to harm the Department's IT systems. This may enable them to continue their cyber-attacks or may damage any attempt to identify them via law enforcement agencies. Any attempt to gain unauthorised access to an IT system is a criminal offence. We consider that it is not in the public interest to release this information, and our decision is to withhold the information.

Appeals procedure

If you are dissatisfied with the handling of your request, you have the right to ask for an internal review. Internal review requests should be submitted within two months of the date of receipt of the response to your original request and should be addressed to the Information Rights & Records Unit:

Information Rights & Records Unit
Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy
1 Victoria Street
London
SW1H 0ET
Email: FOI.Requests@beis.gov.uk

Please remember to quote the reference number above in any future communications.

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review, you have the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at: Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF

Yours sincerely,

Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy