



Information Policy & Compliance
bbc.co.uk/foi bbc.co.uk/privacy

25 March 2013

Freedom of Information Act 2000 – RFI20130314

Thank you for your request of 25th February 2013 under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 ('the Act') seeking the following information:

“Total number of recorded cyber-attacks/attempted hacks on your department over the last five years.

Please specify:

- 1. The total number recorded cyber-attacks/attempted hacks on your department over the last five years*
- 2. Detail/nature of each incident (i.e. malware, virus, Trojan/ website hack, etc.)*
- 3. Estimated cost for each incident in terms of repair time/man hours”*

I can confirm under section 1(1) of the Act that we hold information relevant to your request. However we are withholding this information because we consider that the information we hold is exempt from disclosure under section 31 of the Freedom of Information Act, as disclosure would, or would be likely to, prejudice the prevention or detection of crime. Cyber-attacks and attempted hacks are a criminal offence under the Computer Misuse Act, as amended, and releasing information relating to such incidents may undermine our ability to keep the BBC's IT systems secure. This is because disclosure would also provide information of use to those seeking to perform cyber-attacks and/or hacking of the BBC's IT systems and would, or would be likely to, prejudice our ability to prevent such criminal activity.

We are satisfied in terms of section 2(2) of the Act that in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information you have requested. I have considered the public interest test in the section on 'why information has been withheld' below.



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Why information has been withheld

We are required under section 2(2) of the Act to assess whether the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

In favour of disclosure, we understand that there may be a public interest in understanding the volume and nature of 'cyber-crime' encountered by the BBC, and the subsequent cost to the BBC of repair time and man hours lost.

We consider that the above public interest factors in favour of disclosure are outweighed by the public interest in protecting the BBC's systems from 'cyber-crime'. Disclosure of statistics related to the BBC's experiences of 'cyber-crime' could provide those people wanting to attack the BBC's IT systems with additional information to target their attacks better, and result in a weakening of the security of the BBC's IT systems. A successful attack on the BBC's IT systems has the potential to interrupt the BBC's output and is clearly not in the interests of the public.

The above is especially true as you are asking for us to disclose the specific nature of attacks, alongside the financial damage that each such attack caused the BBC; it could easily be implied from such statistics that the BBC is more susceptible to the forms of attacks that have had the greater cost implications, thus encouraging would-be attackers to target the BBC's systems with attacks of a specific nature.

Similarly, in disclosing the number attacks that the BBC has received, alongside the cost each attack has caused the BBC, it could be implied that the BBC is susceptible to the type of attacks that have been recorded in the highest number.

Therefore we consider that disclosure of the information you have requested could undermine the security of the BBC's IT systems by exposing the types of attacks that are most likely to be successful in penetrating/disrupting such systems, with potentially serious consequences.

We consider there to be a greater public interest in ensuring the security of the BBC's IT systems than in disclosing the information you have sought. Therefore we are satisfied, in terms of section 2 of the Act, that in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest (outlined above) in disclosing the information.

Appeal Rights

If you are not satisfied that the BBC has complied with the Act in responding to your request you have the right to an internal review by a BBC senior manager or legal adviser. Please contact us at the address above, explaining what you would like us to review under the Act and including your reference number. If you are not satisfied with the internal review, you can appeal to the Information Commissioner. The contact details are: Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF, telephone 01625 545 700 or see <http://www.ico.gov.uk/>.

Yours sincerely,

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