



Cabinet Office

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Mark Johnson  
By email: [mark.johnson@bigbrotherwatch.org.uk](mailto:mark.johnson@bigbrotherwatch.org.uk)

FOI Reference: FOI2022/16907

22 December 2022

Dear Mark Johnson

We refer to your request where you asked:

*"I write to request information under the FOIA. The information that I request is as follows:*

- Copies of any correspondence between the 77th Brigade and the Cabinet Office's Rapid Response Unit dated during the period 1st-14th June 2020, this includes emails, instant messages, memos etc.*
- Copies of all Tweets brought to the attention of the RRU by the 77th Brigade in the period 1st-14th June 2020.*

*Please get in touch if the request exceeds the cost limit or cannot be answered, in accordance with Section 16 of the FOI Act. I look forward to your response within 20 working days."*

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

Copies of correspondence between the 77th Brigade and the Cabinet Office's Rapid Response Unit dated during the period 1st-14th June 2020 are attached.

Please note, the attachment referenced in the email has not been released. It is related to the government's policy stance on the matter and is being withheld under Section

35(1)(a) of the Freedom of Information Act. Section 35(1)(a) covers information relating to the formulation or development of government policy.

Section 35 is a qualified exemption and I have considered whether the balance of the public interest favours maintaining the exemption under section 35(1)(a). There is a general public interest in the Government being open and transparent. I also recognise that the government's policy stance on the coronavirus pandemic has a significant impact on the lives of citizens and that there are public interests in transparency here.

These public interests have to be weighed against a strong public interest that policy-making and its implementation are of the highest quality. How the government communicates with the public around the coronavirus pandemic is an inherent component of the Government's overall policy stance on the matter. Disclosing information relating to the development and implementation of that stance prematurely could damage future policy making and prevent good government.

After weighing up the competing public interest considerations, we consider it is reasonable in all the circumstances that the information held should be withheld in the interests of good government and to preserve a safe space for the development and implementation of policy.

Some of the information you requested is being withheld under section 40(2) of the Freedom of Information Act. Section 40(2) exempts personal information from disclosure if that information relates to [someone other than] the applicant, and if disclosure of that information would, amongst other things, contravene one of the data protection principles in Article 5(1) of the UK General Data Protection Regulation and section 34(1) of the Data Protection Act 2018. In this case, we believe disclosure would contravene the first data protection principle, which provides that processing of personal data must be lawful, fair and transparent.

We consider that disclosure of the information would contravene principle A under article 5(1)(a) of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) which requires that personal data should be processed lawfully, fairly, and transparently. We have considered the legitimate interests in disclosure and have found that on balance there is no overriding legitimate interest or necessity in disclosure that override the reasonable expectations of privacy of the individual[s] concerned.

Section 40(2) is an absolute exemption and the Cabinet Office is not obliged to consider whether the public interest favours disclosing the information.

Please note that under our Section 16 duty to provide advice and assistance) and

outside the auspices of the Act, I have collated all the Tweets brought to the attention of the RRU by the 77th Brigade that were contained in the withheld document. This is a comprehensive list of all tweets that were brought to the attention of the RRU by the 77th Brigade.

Please see below for the list of tweets:

<https://twitter.com/elemental/status/1267123032117698560/photo/1>

<https://twitter.com/elemental/status/1267119897735290880>

<https://twitter.com/MumOlsson/status/1267163358903615488>

[https://twitter.com/ladyloulou\\_lou/status/1267190075961618432](https://twitter.com/ladyloulou_lou/status/1267190075961618432)

<https://twitter.com/Dits1710/status/1267172226735931395>

[https://twitter.com/em\\_dekker/status/1267238802415915017](https://twitter.com/em_dekker/status/1267238802415915017)

<https://twitter.com/lauriescott99/status/1267222917349289985>

<https://twitter.com/UkFuel/status/1266696868639186944>

<https://twitter.com/Jimcorrsays/status/1267005473926139909>

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:

Head of Freedom of Information  
Cabinet Office  
1 Horse Guards Road  
London  
SW1A 2HQ

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 the 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. C.', written in a cursive style.

FOI Team  
Cabinet Office

Subject: 20200602-DISMIS Daily Report-OS  
From: [Redacted under s40 - personal information]  
Date: 02/06/2020, 05:55  
To: [Redacted under s40 - personal information]

Good morning all,

Please find attached the Disinformation/Misinformation Daily for 02 Jun 20.

Key headlines:

1. Twitter posts share a report stating that COVID-19 may be a blood vessel disease. Some social media users misinterpret the report as claiming it is not also a respiratory disease. Associated comments encourage the use of unapproved treatments (antibiotics and heparin). The broad conversation has approx 20k engagements, with fringe comments making up a small proportion of that.

2. A fringe anti-authority conspiracy video calling for 'lawful rebellion', previously reported on 25 MAY 20, continues to gain traction, now over 120k engagements and 140k views. It makes untrue and misinformed claims regarding UK laws, as well as using misleading footage. The broad and vague nature of the video allows it to be used by groups opposed to lockdown and Government handling of COVID-19.

3. A YouTube video claims that the UK Government has threatened, manipulated and deliberately terrified citizens in regards to the current 'pandemic' despite COVID-19 being "no more dangerous than the flu". This is amplifying a series of narratives, including the suggestion that the UK Government has exaggerated the overall threat posed by COVID-19. It has gained moderate traction (9k engagements, 48k views).

Kind regards,

[Redacted under s40 - personal information]

[Redacted under s40 - personal information] | COVID-19 Communications Hub | Defence LO |  
Phone - [Redacted under s40 - personal information] | [Redacted under s40 - personal information]

Attachments-4/20200602-DISMIS\_Daily\_Report-OS.pdf