

# COVID-19 DISINFORMATION AND MISINFORMATION DAILY REPORT

COVID-19 COMMUNICATIONS HUB  
28 MAR 20 0545

SW1  
CITY OF WESTMINSTER

**PRODUCT GUIDANCE**

**DEFINITIONS**

**DISINFORMATION**

Information which is created or disseminated with the deliberate intent to mislead; this could be to cause harm, or for personal, political or financial gain.

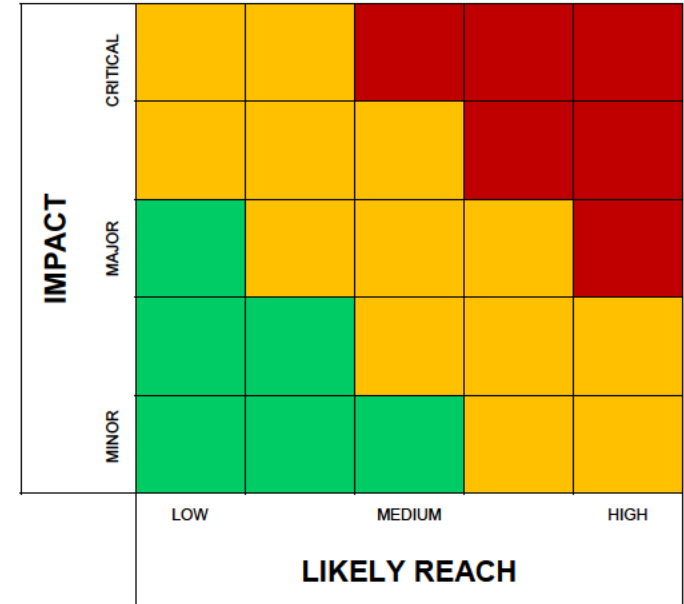
**MISINFORMATION**

The inadvertent sharing of false information.

**TRACKED NARRATIVE THEMES**

1. Extensive focus on morgues in NHS “Nightingales”.
2. PM contracting COVID-19 – Who is running the Government?
3. ‘Brexit over Breathing’ – Ventilator procurement.
4. NHS procurement of PPE.
5. Malign activity that targets minority groups.
6. BBC claim to have seen leaked MOD temporary hospital plans.

**RISK HEAT MAP**



The Risk Heat Map is a visual representation of the predicted IMPACT and REACH of a piece of disinformation/misinformation. Risk is coded **RED**, **AMBER** or **GREEN**.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- For the second day running, there has been misinformation surrounding the Government **procurement of ventilators** and extensive **focus on morgues when talking about new “Nightingale” hospitals**. Social media discussion around the ‘Brexit over Breathing’ tagline has gained 150k engagements, up from 75k yesterday. Social media discussion exaggerating the size of planned morgues has gained 24k engagements.
- Following the announcement that the Prime Minister has been diagnosed with COVID-19, there has been misinformation in the public sphere with regards to who is now running government. Social media discussion has been focused around **Dominic Raab** now running the government, not the PM.
- Malign social media activity that targets **minority groups** has been identified. This has received limited (<500) engagements, but is an area for continued monitoring.

MISINFORMATION 1


Extensive focus on morgues in NHS “Nightingales”.

sky Sky News @SkyNews  
 BREAKING: Sky News understands a temporary mortuary site has been announced at Birmingham Airport to cope with a possible rise in deaths following the #coronavirus pandemic.

For the latest breaking news on #COVID19, head here: [trib.al/nQaLEfy](http://trib.al/nQaLEfy)



TOTAL ENGAGEMENT 150k

PREDICTED TREND 

MISINFORMATION 2

Dominic Raab is acting PM

████████████████████ 4h  
 With Johnson ill, Dominic Raab is going to be in charge of the country. This is not a drill.

472 711 4.5K

TOTAL ENGAGEMENT 15k

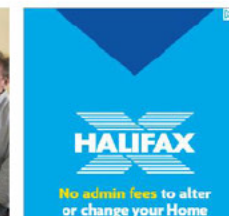
PREDICTED TREND 

MISINFORMATION 3

‘Brexit over breathing’ – ventilator procurement

NEWS  
 9 hrs ago  
 Worcester's Gtech told not to produce much-needed ventilators by the government, chief executive says

By Christian Barnett | @cbarnettW  
 Local Democracy Reporter



TOTAL ENGAGEMENT 21k

PREDICTED TREND 



MISINFORMATION 1: Extensive focus on morgues in NHS “Nightingales”

**EVENT SUMMARY**

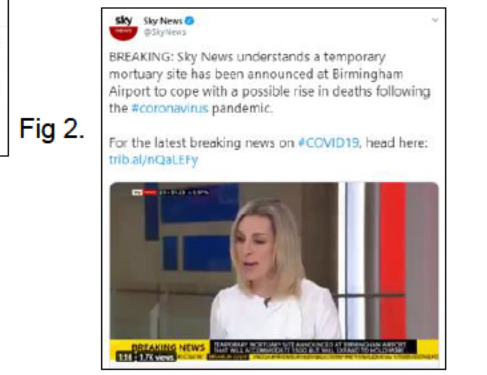
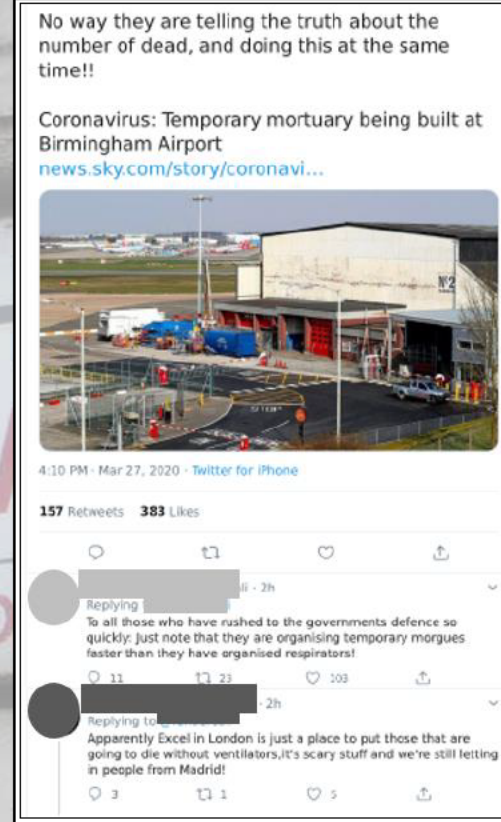
- DISMIS Daily Report from 27 Mar identified social media activity [exaggerating the size of planned morgues](#). This stemmed from a layout plan of NHS Nightingale in London from the Metro newspaper.
- Sky News [reported](#) at 1535hrs on 27 Mar that Birmingham Airport was to house a temporary mortuary site (Fig 3).
- Discussion on social media has debated the size of the mortuary and the accuracy of death toll reporting by the government (Fig 2).

**KEY INSIGHTS**

- The [Sky News article](#) has had 18k engagements since its release. This has steadily increased over time, generating more SM conversation.
- [Articles](#) are focussing specifically on morgue capacity rather than the repurposing of buildings as hospitals.
- This narrative has potential to spread as the death toll increases and the new hospitals start being used.

**NARRATIVE ASSESSMENT**

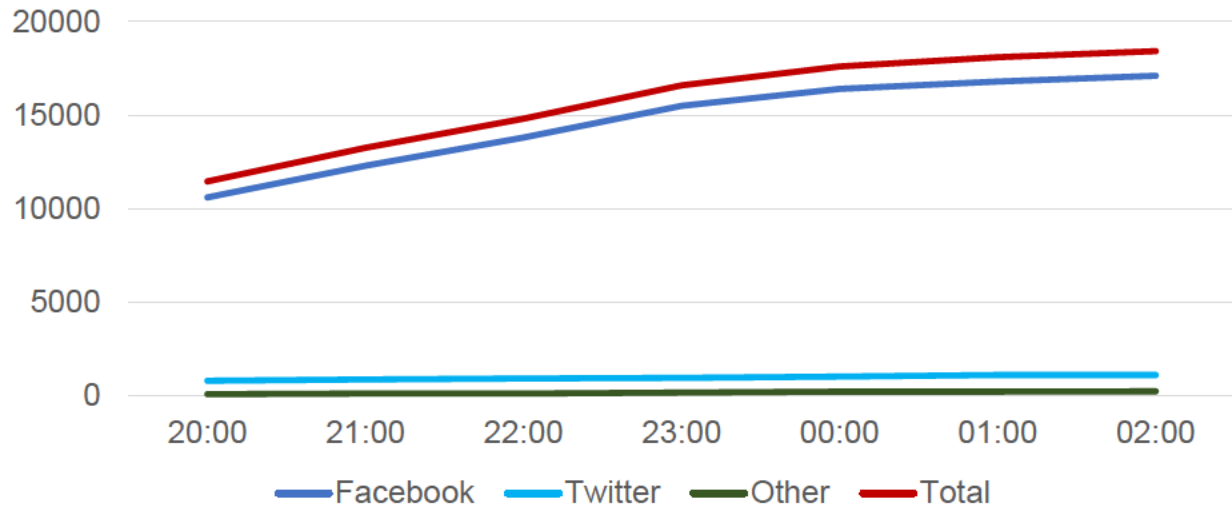
- Discussion around morgue capacities and the number of predicted deaths could cause unfounded alarm and reduce trust in the government.
- There is misinformation suggesting focus is being placed on dealing with rising death toll numbers rather than saving lives. Exaggerating capacity of morgues has led to people overstating the severity of the disease.
- Lack of information regarding the form and purpose of NHS Nightingale hospitals is leading to rumour and misinformation.





**MISINFORMATION 1: Extensive focus on morgues in NHS “Nightingales”**

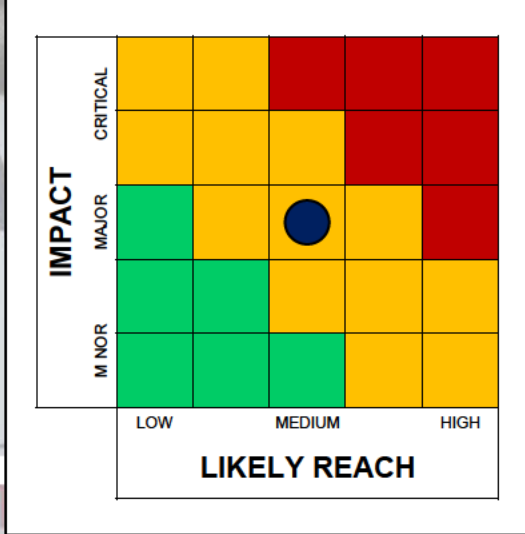
Sky News Article – Number of Engagements



**REACH ANALYSIS**

Twitter Shares	1k
Facebook Engagement	17k
YouTube Views	N/A
Total Engagement	18k
Next 24h Trend	

**RISK HEAT MAP**



**RECOMMENDED RESPONSE OPTION**

AUDIENCE	BEHAVIOURAL CHANGE	ACTIVITY TO BE CONDUCTED	MEASUREMENT OF EFFECT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Vulnerable people.</li> <li>Family members of vulnerable people.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reassure families, who will be unable to visit the hospitals, that the repurposed buildings are fully fledged hospitals designed to treat family members.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A video showcasing the form and purpose of NHS Nightingale hospitals, celebrating the combined efforts of the NHS and UK Military.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase in positive media stories/social media discussion around NHS Nightingale/other repurposed public buildings.</li> </ul>

## MISINFORMATION 2: Dominic Raab is acting PM

### EVENT SUMMARY

- At 1119hrs on 27 MAR the BBC tweeted that PM Boris Johnson had tested positive for COVID-19.
- A mix of serious and [humorous](#) misinformation is being spread that Dominic Raab has taken the place of the PM, despite the PM releasing a video statement explaining how he will continue to run government from isolation.
- [Previous political statements](#) made by Dominic Raab are being shared on social media to suggest he has little sympathy for vulnerable people.

### KEY INSIGHTS

- [REDACTED], a prominent political commentator (448k followers), has promoted [this story](#) to his large following, suggesting that it is a threat to the country (Fig 4.)
- This tweet alone has gained 8k engagements and wider discussion across social media is continuing.

### NARRATIVE ASSESSMENT

- The PM's statement explaining the situation has not been sufficient to discourage misinformation surrounding who is running government whilst he is suffering from COVID-19.
- During the government evening brief, Michael Gove was questioned as to who would take over from the PM should he become incapacitated. The answer was perceived as lacking clarity, doing little to limit the spread of misinformation.
- Negative sentiment towards Dominic Raab has likely fuelled this spread of misinformation in order to further party-political agendas in the public / social media sphere.



Fig 4.



Fig 5.



Fig 6.

MISINFORMATION 2: Dominic Raab is acting PM

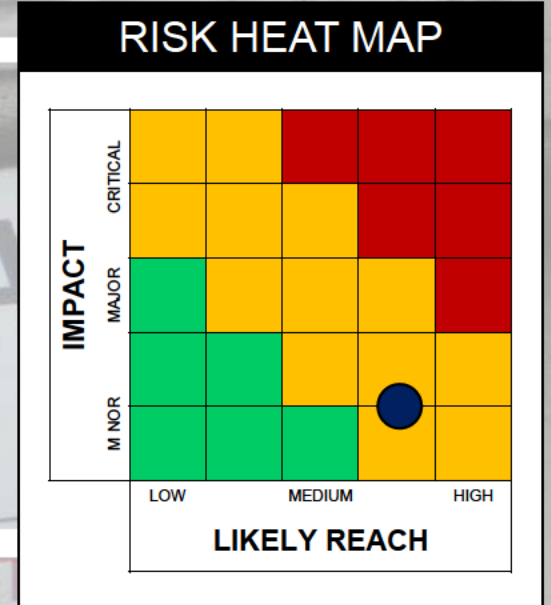
**Replies**

Replying to [redacted]  
 Yes Raab for pm, is this the same Raab who didnt know there was the English Channel between Dover Calais, is this the same Raab who thought Lima was in the Philippines ,

16m  
 So they tell us if Boris is sick we get **Dominic Raab**.  
 Days later Boris is sick and we get **Dominic Raab**.  
 We are getting played. This whole thing is bollocks.  
 I'm going out.

Replying to [redacted]  
 Whishing PM fast recovery contains TWO sets of double British standards:  
 1: 50% don't wish him all the best at all  
 2. the other 50% wish him all the best only because his stand-in is Raab.  
 ps. those who think he's lying abt contracting corona, can be right too.  
 12:16 pm - 27 Mar 2020 - Twitter Web App  
 2 Likes

REACH ANALYSIS	
Twitter Shares	15k
Facebook Engagement	No data
YouTube Views	N/A
Total Engagement	15k
Next 24h Trend	▼



RECOMMENDED RESPONSE OPTION

AUDIENCE	BEHAVIOURAL CHANGE	ACTIVITY TO BE CONDUCTED	MEASUREMENT OF EFFECT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>British public</li> <li>UK Social Media users</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Audiences reassured that the PM is continuing to run the government and that government is continuing to function as normal.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>PM to release another statement to demonstrate his continued capacity to run government.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Decrease in SM activity related to Raab taking over from the PM.</li> </ul>



MISINFORMATION 3: 'Brexit over breathing' – ventilator procurement

**EVENT SUMMARY**

- 1825hrs 26 Mar 20 – Guardian article accuses government of rejecting offer to join EU bulk-buying of ventilators (75k social media engagements). A similar article in the Mirror was released at the same time.
- During 27 Mar 20 and overnight, social media users have continued to highlight this narrative despite government clarification, and suggest the government have rejected EU offers to assist with ventilator procurement due to Brexit ideology.
- The narrative has been further supported by [an article](#) in the Worcester News about a manufacturer that has been “told not to produce much needed ventilators” (Fig 10.)

**KEY INSIGHTS**

- ‘Brexit Over Breathing’ is a phrase that has gained traction when discussing the way that the government has purchased medical equipment to cope with the pandemic, and specifically which businesses it has bought them from.
- Total engagements around ‘Brexit over breathing’ have now reached 150k.
- Acting leader of the Liberal Democrats Ed Davey (44k followers) has [furthered discussion](#) around the topic on social media.

**NARRATIVE ASSESSMENT**

- The discussions (Fig 8) around the purchase of medical equipment by the UK government are being presented as inaccurate or misleading. There are also suggestions that Brexit had an impact on which businesses the UK chose to deal with.
- Although much of the [discussion](#) is party political it is likely to cause concern about government priorities and handling of the pandemic. (Fig 11.)
- There are allegations that the UK government cares more about [business deals](#) and Brexit ideology than correctly equipping the NHS and protecting the British people.



Fig 7.



Fig 8.



Fig 9.

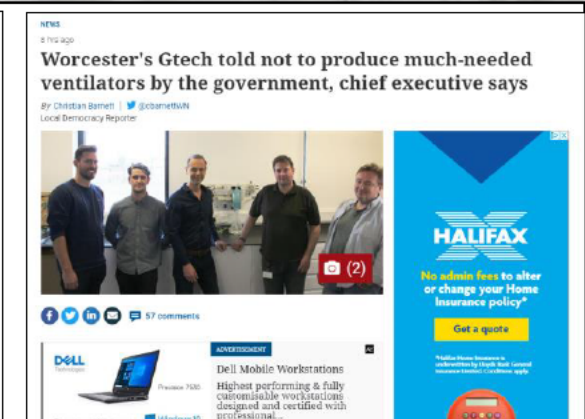


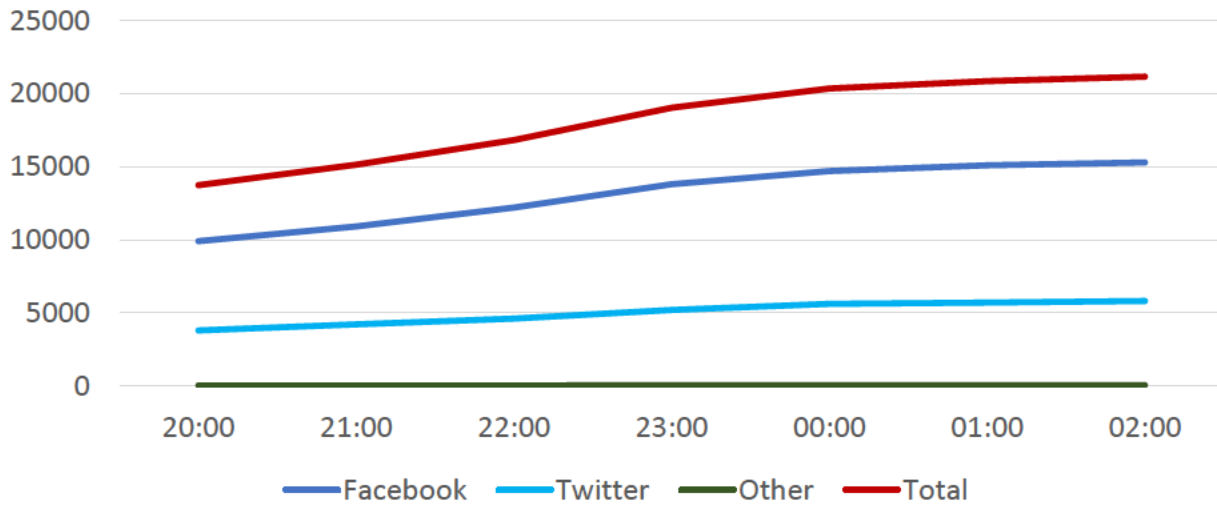
Fig 10.




Fig 11.

MISINFORMATION 3: 'Brexit over breathing' – ventilator procurement

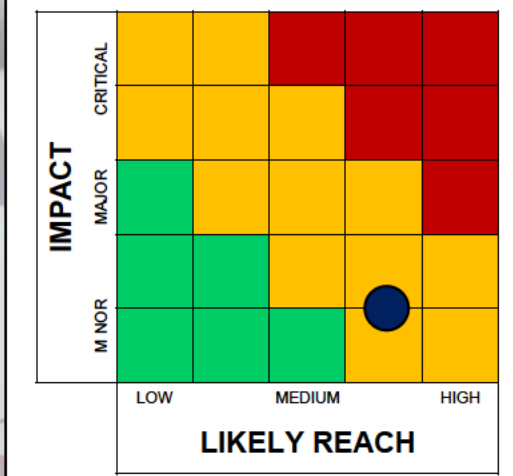
Worcester News Article – Number of Engagements



REACH ANALYSIS

Twitter Shares	5.8k
Facebook Engagement	15.3k
YouTube Views	N/A
Total Engagement	21.1k
Next 24h Trend	

RISK HEAT MAP



RECOMMENDED RESPONSE OPTION

AUDIENCE	BEHAVIOURAL CHANGE	ACTIVITY TO BE CONDUCTED	MEASUREMENT OF EFFECT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>British public</li> <li>UK Social Media users</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reassured that the government is acting in the public interest, is not putting Brexit ideology above the need to save lives.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Amplify positive messaging around UK Government co-ordination with international partners in relation to COVID-19 responses.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Decrease in negative media commentary surrounding procurement of ventilators.</li> </ul>



LOW ENGAGEMENT DISINFORMATION AND MISINFORMATION

MISINFORMATION 4

NHS not procuring PPE to protect against COVID-19 because of cost

**EVENT SUMMARY**

- At 1504hrs on the 27 Mar 20, The Guardian posted [an article](#) suggesting that the NHS rejected procurement of PPE in 2017 owing to high costs.
- This is steadily drawing attention (36k engagements).

**RECOMMENDATION**

- Continue to monitor NHS PPE stories.
- Amplify releases and stories about provision of new PPE to NHS workers.
- Amplify newly released [Coronavirus support from business](#) initiative encouraging businesses to assist with PPE provision

REACH ANALYSIS

Twitter Shares	7k
Facebook Engagement	29k
YouTube Views	N/A
Total Engagement	36k
Next 24h Trend	▲



Fig 12.

MISINFORMATION 5

Malign activity that targets minority groups

**EVENT SUMMARY**

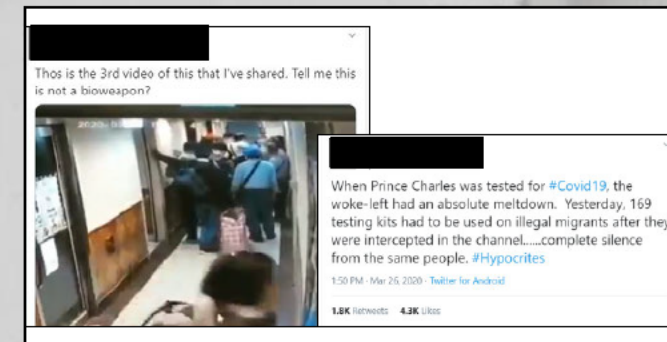
- At 1350hrs on 26 Mar Neil Hamilton, a UKIP and Welsh Assembly member, [tweeted](#) saying that illegal migrants had been tested for COVID-19. This triggered comments suggesting migrant groups should not receive treatment for COVID-19 ahead of the British public. This tweet had 6k total engagements.
- At 1412hrs on 27 Mar 20 a video was [published](#) on Twitter showing an Asian woman spitting on a wall alongside the caption “tell me this isn’t a bio weapon”.
- This is steadily drawing attention (Less than 500 engagements).
- The video has no timestamp or obvious location but it is broadcast by a right-wing, pro-Western, UK account. The same video was [posted](#) on Stormfront, a neo-Nazi website, three days previously.

**RECOMMENDATION**

- Continue to monitor closely for signs of increased engagement.

REACH ANALYSIS

Twitter Shares	6k
Facebook Engagement	N/A
YouTube Views	N/A
Total Engagement	6k
Next 24h Trend	▶





## LOW ENGAGEMENT DISINFORMATION AND MISINFORMATION

## POSSIBLE MISINFORMATION 6

## BBC claims to have seen leaked military planning documents

**EVENT SUMMARY**

- On 27 Mar 20, the BBC [claimed](#) to have seen internal MOD documents with 'military plans' to build temporary hospitals in Birmingham and Manchester. The article does not include copies or images of these plans.
- Defence has supplied a set of images, reportedly leaked to news outlets, which match the description of the article. Preliminary analysis shows that it is unlikely the documents are formal military planning documents. However, there is a realistic possibility they represent informal briefing tools, for example drawn up between the military and a local authority.
- There are no verifiably false claims about temporary hospital plans in the BBC article or related articles in the [Manchester Evening News](#), or in the supplied 'leaked' images.

**RECOMMENDATION**

- Continue to monitor for future claims of leaked military documents.



Fig 13.

WHITEHALL  
SW1  
CITY OF WESTMINSTER