



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

**Eastern Europe and Central Asia
Department**

Foreign and Commonwealth Office
King Charles Street
London SW1A 2AH

Website: www.gov.uk

04 June 2015

Your Freedom Of Information Request: 0180-15

Thank you for your request for information which we received on 18 February 2015. In your request you asked for:

Communications to and from the Foreign & Commonwealth Office with BP Plc or persons acting on behalf of BP Plc, concerning economic and/or financial sanctions on citizens, corporations, and entities in the Russian Federation, between March 1, 2014 and February 15, 2015.

-Communications to and from the Foreign & Commonwealth Office with TheCityUK or persons acting on behalf of TheCityUK, concerning economic and/or financial sanctions on citizens, corporations, and entities in the Russian Federation, between March 1, 2014 and February 15, 2015.

I can confirm that the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) does hold information relevant to your request. I am pleased to enclose the material which we can release to you. Some information is being withheld under the following exemptions of the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA):

- Section 27 (1) (a) (b) (c) (d) and 27(2) International relations
- Section 43 Commercial interests

Section 27 (1) (a) (b) (c) and (d) and (2)

Some of the information you have requested is being withheld under section 27 (1) (a) (b) (c) and (d) and (2) of the FOIA. Section 27 (1) provides that information is exempt if its disclosure would or would be likely to prejudice (a) the relations between the UK and any other state or (b) international organisation (c) the interests of the UK abroad or (d) the promotion or protection by the UK of its interests abroad. Section 27(2) of the FOIA recognises the need to protect information provided in confidence to the UK Government by another Government.

In applying section 27 we have had to balance the public interest in withholding the information against the public interest in disclosing it. Factors in favour of disclosure include the strong public interest in transparency and, accountability as well as interest in wider international relations. Factors against disclosure include the strong public interest in ensuring that the FCO are able to conduct the UK's international relations effectively and protect UK interests abroad. The effective conduct of the UK's international relations

depends upon maintaining the trust and confidence of other governments and international organisations. To do this there must be good working relationships with other governments and international organisations (in this case the European Union) based on confidence and trust. This relationship of trust allows for the free and frank exchange of information, both between governments but also between politicians on the understanding that it will be treated in confidence. If the UK does not maintain this trust and confidence, our ability to protect and promote UK interests through international relations will be hampered. Other governments and international organisations may be more reluctant to share information with the UK Government in future, and may be less likely to respect the confidentiality of information supplied by the UK Government to them, to the detriment of UK interests.

For these reasons, we consider that the public interest in maintaining this exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosure.

Section 43 (2) Commercial Interests

Some of the information you have requested is being withheld under Section 43(2) of the FOIA. Section 43(2) protects information which would be likely to, prejudice the commercial interests of any person (including the public authority holding it).

In applying section 43 we have had to balance the public interest in withholding the information against the public interest in disclosing it.

The use of this exemption was carefully considered. The factors in favour of disclosure of this information, including the general public interest and greater transparency and accountability, were carefully weighed against the need to allow business-people and commercial organisations the space to conduct their lawful business competitively and without fear of disclosure of sensitive commercial information. We consider that this transparency also poses risks to the protection of commercially confidential information. Failure to protect such commercially sensitive information would limit the sources of information and interlocutors available to the FCO and limit the FCO's ability to promote the British economy and lobby for the interests of British businesses overseas. In this case after such consideration we believe that the public interest in withholding the redacted information outweighs the public interest in its release.

For these reasons, we consider that the public interest in maintaining this exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing it.

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Please contact me if you have any queries about this letter.

Yours sincerely,

Russia Team



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