

## DIGEST OF RESPONSES – RT/Ofcom

**“Please could you disclose to me any communications between the FCO and Ofcom, relating to the Russia Today broadcaster, sent or received after January 1 2010”.**

From: [OFFICIAL]

Sent: 21 September 2015 12:23

To: [FCO OFFICIAL]

Subject: Re: Ofcom Broadcast Bulletin - RT investigations OFFICIAL

CLASSIFICATION: OFFICIAL

Dear [FCO Official],

Following your call this morning - the bulletin and decisions can be found here:

[http://stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/binaries/enforcement/broadcast-bulletins/obb288/Issue\\_288.pdf](http://stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/binaries/enforcement/broadcast-bulletins/obb288/Issue_288.pdf) [note - it is a fairly large bulletin]

For information – this bulletin contains several in breach decisions including four breaches by RT, covering three current affairs programmes, as summarised below.

- The Truthseeker: Media ‘Staged’ Syria Chem Attack – broadcast 23/24 March 2014:
  - o The programme stated that the BBC had been subject to a “massive public investigation which had made some extremely disturbing findings”, including that the BBC had fabricated a chemical weapons attack in Syria and used actors in its report.
  - o The BBC complained to Ofcom that the programme presented information in an inaccurate and misleading way.
  - o Ofcom concluded the statement that the BBC had been subject to a “massive public investigation which had made some extremely disturbing findings” incorrectly implied that the BBC had been subject to a significant, official and detailed independent investigation to uncover wrongdoing on its part, when in fact this had not happened. This was materially misleading and had the potential to cause harm to viewers.
  - o Breach of Rule 2.2 of the Broadcasting Code: factual programmes or portrayals of factual matters must not materially mislead the audience.
  - o Ofcom also found a second breach as the programme treated its subject, the BBC, unfairly and did not give the opportunity to respond to the allegations made.

Given the seriousness of this breach, Ofcom is directing RT to broadcast an on-air statement on the decision to correct these failures.

- The Truthseeker: Genocide of Eastern Ukraine (13/14 July 2014)
  - o The programme broadcast specific allegations that the Ukrainian government and its military forces had committed atrocities and were attempting to commit genocide against the population of eastern Ukraine.

- o The programme then included a brief caption stating the Ukrainian government denied committing genocide. The programme also included interviews with third party contributors and referred to statements made by the Ukrainian government.
- o Ofcom concluded that the interviews with third parties were highly critical of the Ukrainian government and that the Ukrainian government statements referred to were presented in a way that reinforced the criticisms contained in the programme.
- o Ofcom considered that the impact and prominence of the caption stating that the Ukrainian government denied committing genocide was not sufficient to preserve due impartiality.

Given the seriousness of this breach, Ofcom is directing RT to broadcast an on-air statement on the decision.

- Ukraine's Refugees (18/19/20 July 2014)

- o The programme broadcast allegations that the Ukrainian government and its military forces had committed atrocities against the population of eastern Ukraine and these allegations were accompanied by emotive and graphic footage of warfare.
- o At the end of the programme a "full-screen" slate was broadcast which stated that the Ukrainian government denied the claims.
- o Ofcom concluded that the slate's impact was limited, and in the context of the programme as a whole, it was not sufficient to preserve due impartiality.

Given our investigation findings we are not giving specific directions to RT in relation to this programme.

If there is any additional detail that you need relating to these investigations please let me know and I can arrange a discussion with colleagues from our Content Standards, Licensing and Enforcement team.

Many thanks,

[Official]

From: [OFFICIAL]

Sent: 21 September 2015 12:33

To: [FCO OFFICIAL]

Cc: [OFFICIAL]

Subject: Ofcom press contact

[FCO OFFICIAL],

[OFFICIAL] is handling the press on the Broadcast Bulletin this morning so if the FCO press team want to talk through it she's the best person to contact.

[OFFICIAL]

[REDACTED]

Best,

[OFFICIAL]

From: [OFFICIAL]

SENT: 02 March 2015 11:04

To: [FCO OFFICIAL]

Subject: Broadcast Bulletin - 2/3/15

Hi [OFFICIAL],

Just to let you know that the Broadcast Bulletin published this morning includes confirmation of a new RT (Russia Today) investigation (see page 38).

<http://stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/binaries/enforcement/broadcast-bulletins/obb274/Issue274.pdf>

Let me know if you have any queries.

Many thanks,

[OFFICIAL]

From: [OFFICIAL]

Sent: 21 September 2015 09:13

To: [FCO OFFICIAL]

Subject: Ofcom Broadcast Bulletin - RT investigations

Dear [FCO OFFICIAL],

This morning, at 11.30am (GMT), Ofcom will publish its latest Broadcast Bulletin which contains its decisions on a number of programmes broadcast on RT (formerly Russia Today).

The details of the investigations and Ofcom's decisions will be published on our website here: <http://stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/enforcement/broadcast-bulletins/>

We understand from previous discussions with officials at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) that there is likely to be significant interest in Russia about any regulatory action taken by Ofcom against RT.

Given this, as well as alerting officials at the Department for Culture, Media and Sport to the timing of this morning's publication, we have also alerted the Ambassador in Russia as well.

Following publication, please do get in touch if you require further details about the decisions we have made today.

Yours sincerely,

[OFFICIAL]

From: [OFFICIAL]

Sent: 30 July 2014 18:50

To: [FCO OFFICIAL]

CC: [Official]; [FCO Official]; [Official]; [Official]; [Official]

Subject: RE: RE: Russia Today - Ukraine

Dear [FCO Official],

Thanks for your email. I have tried ringing you a couple of times today to follow up on your query. Is there a good time that we could talk tomorrow (Thursday)?

Thanks,

[Official]

From: [FCO Official]

Sent: 29 July 2014 13:28

To: [Official]

Cc: [Official]; [Official]; [Official]; [FCO Official]

Subject: RE: Russia Today - Ukraine

[Official],

We were in correspondence some time ago regarding complaints about Russia Today's coverage of Syria on which you and your team were extremely helpful.

[REDACTED] met the Russian Ambassador on Friday where he raised further concerns regarding complaints about Russia Today's coverage of Ukraine.

Could you keep me updated on these complaints please and whether there will be any further process? It would also be very helpful to have your advice on what we might tell the embassy at this stage about the process. Preferably something about the objectivity/neutrality of the process and how it works in practice.

Many thanks,

[FCO Official]

From: [Official]

Sent: 16 December 2013 13:33

To: [FCO Official]

Cc: [Official]; [Official]; [Official]

Subject: RE: Russia Today Decision

Dear [FCO Official]

Further to [Official's] email, the Decision on the documentary Syrian Diary broadcast on Russia Today was published in our Broadcast Bulletin today, which can be viewed at: <http://stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/enforcement/broadcast-bulletins/obb244/> (please see pages 6 to 25).

Best

[Official]

From: [Official]

Sent: 13 December 2013 12:33

To: [FCO Official]

Cc: [Official]; [Official]; [Official]

Subject: Russia Today Decision

Dear [FCO Official],

It was good to talk just now. Just to confirm, on Monday 16 December 2013, we are intending to publish our decision on the documentary Syrian Diary broadcast on Russia Today in March 2013. This relates to a breach of our due impartiality rules.

As I said, I will be on leave next week, so I will leave it to my colleagues, [Official] and [Official] (whom I have copied to this email), to send you a link to the decision, when it is published.

If you should have any further queries, please call (today only) me on [REDACTED] or (next week) [OFFICIAL] on [REDACTED].

Best Wishes,

[OFFICIAL]