



Foreign &  
Commonwealth  
Office

**National Security Directorate**  
Foreign and Commonwealth Office  
King Charles Street  
London SW1A 2AH

Website: <https://www.gov.uk>

26 April 2017

**FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000 REQUEST REF: 0312-17**

Thank you for your email of 29 March 2017 asking for information under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) 2000. You asked:

*I am writing to you to request any information you have concerning the internal procedures the Foreign and Commonwealth Office have in authorising a cyber offensive operation against either another state actor or a non-state actor.*

*The fact that the United Kingdom launches cyber offensive operations is not a secret. In the Intelligence and Security Committee of Parliament Annual Report 2015–2016 it was stated that GCHQ conducts such operations (see page 15).*

*Further, it is no secret that GCHQ would report to you about these operations. The Intelligence Service Act 1994 states that 'The Director shall make an annual report on the work of GCHQ to the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State and may at any time report to either of them on any matter relating to its work' 4(4).*

*I am not asking for any information about particular operations as this would be damaging to national security. I am asking for the internal procedures that the Foreign Office uses to access whether an operation should be authorised.*

*In addition, this is request is not asking about GCHQ as they are exempt from the legislation but the internal procedures of the Foreign Office.*

I am writing to confirm that we have now completed the search for the information which you requested.

I can confirm that the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) does hold information relevant to your request.

As HM Government stated in the National Cyber Security Strategy 2016-2021, the UK will ensure that we have at our disposal appropriate offensive cyber capabilities that can be

deployed at a time and place of our choosing, for both deterrence and operational purposes, in accordance with national and international law. Should HMG seek to deploy such capabilities operationally, FCO would seek supporting information and advice from a range of policy and legal officials from across Whitehall departments, including to ensure that any such action is lawful. Authorisations, if required, may then be sought under relevant legislation.

Yours sincerely,

Cyber and National Security Capabilities Department



We keep and use information in line with the Data Protection Act 1998. We may release this personal information to other UK government departments and public authorities.