



Ref No: FOI2014/26660
11th December 2014

Thank you for your email of 24th November 2014 where you requested the following information.

1. How many times have your websites, social media and IT systems or phone systems been successfully hacked/broken in to, or information copied or stolen from digital information storage centres, over the last three years (using the most up-to-date data available)? Please give details of each incident.
2. How many attempts have there been to hack/break in to the same systems over the same time period (by attempts, I mean unsuccessful efforts or those that you may have thwarted)? Please give details of each incident.
3. If you do not know the answers to questions 1 and 2, why not?
4. How many of these successful or unsuccessful/thwarted attempts (as outlined in questions 1 and 2) were by individuals, groups or organisations that you know or suspect to be terror related or have links to terror organisations? Which terror related individuals, groups or organisations were they?
5. How many of these successful or unsuccessful/thwarted attempts were by individuals, groups or organisations that you know or suspect to be illegal or carrying out illegal activities (other than the hacking)? Can you please reveal their identities?
6. What was the impact of any successful hacks/interference and what impact did it have for the public?
7. Was personal data of any member of the public at risk, or copied, or stolen? If yes, please provide specific details.
8. Please provide details of what happened in each successful or attempted hack or break-in – for example, the alteration or removal of information on/from a website, the “downing” of a website or phones, or the theft or cloning of information from any digital information storage centres such as hard drives or servers.
9. Can you please send us any footage/screen grabs of any hacked websites etc?
10. What actions have you since taken to increase your security?

Under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 ('the Act'), you have the right to:

- know whether we hold the information you require
- be provided with that information (subject to any exemptions under the Act which may apply).



DECC confirms that it holds some information falling within the description specified in your request. However the information requested is withheld under Section 24 [National security] and Section 31 [Law enforcement] of the FOI Act. The exemptions in S31 and s24 are qualified and are subject to the balance of the public interest. This means that a public interest test must be carried out to determine whether the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information, as set out below.

Section 24(1) exempts information for the purpose of safeguarding national security. It would not be in the interest of the UK's national security for departments to provide information about the number and types of attacks against their IT systems as this would enable individuals to deduce how successful the UK is in detecting these attacks. Confirming what information is held could assist someone in determining the effectiveness of the UK in detecting such attacks. This is not in the public interest.

Also, any attempt to gain unauthorised access to an IT system is a criminal offence, so the information you have requested is also withheld under Section 31(1)(a) (prevention or detection of crime). In favour of release, we acknowledge that disclosure of information regarding the detection of hacking and other computer-related attacks on government assets would provide assurance that the Department is protecting its IT systems appropriately, and does not leave them unnecessarily vulnerable to attack. However, in favour of not providing the information requested we consider that public confirmation of any successful attacks would provide information useful to those wishing to harm the Department's IT systems. This may enable them to continue their attacks or may damage any attempt to identify them via law enforcement agencies.

Appeals Procedure

If you are dissatisfied with the handling of your request, you have the right to ask for an internal review. Internal review requests should be submitted within two months of the date of receipt of the response to your original letter and should be sent to the Information Rights Unit at:

Information Rights Unit (DECC Shared Service)
Department for Business, Innovation & Skills
1 Victoria Street
London
SW1H 0ET
E-mail: foi@decc.gsi.gov.uk

Please remember to quote the reference number above in any future communications.



Department
of Energy &
Climate Change

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review, you have the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at: Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF

Yours sincerely,

Infrastructure & Information Services
DECC, (Department of Energy and Climate Change),
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