



Foreign &  
Commonwealth  
Office

Commercial & Procurement Group  
Foreign and Commonwealth Office  
Old Admiralty Building  
London SW1A 2PA

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

13 April 2016

Dear

**FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000 REQUEST REF: 1190-15**

Thank you for your email of 11<sup>th</sup> December 2015 asking for information under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) 2000. You asked:

*Please disclose information relating to the following transaction numbers published in the FCO "spend over £25,000" transparency data:*

5,163,483	August 2015	Supplier - <b>Adam Smith Intl</b>
5,170,974	August 2015	
5,145,712	August 2015	
5,135,893	July 2015	
5,132,025	July 2015	
5,141,255	July 2015	Supplier - <b>ARK</b>
5,141,250	July 2015	
4,948,184	February 2015	
4,821,093	September 2015	
4,603,233	February 2015	
5,072,820	May 2015	Supplier - <b>Aktis Strategy</b>
5,072,799	May 2015	
4,819,717	September 2015	
4,888,948	September 2015	
4,664,463	April 2015	

*For each transaction, please disclose:*

- the description of the service purchased;*
- the contract notice under which the service was purchased. To clarify, I'd like the contract itself, redacted as appropriate if necessary*

I am writing to confirm that we have now completed the search for the information which you requested and can confirm that the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) does hold information relevant to your request.

We are unable to provide details of the services purchased; your part a); this information is exempt under Section 24 (1) [National Security] and Sections 38 (1) (a) and (b) [Health and Safety] of the Freedom of Information Act.

You have requested redacted copies of the contracts under which the services were purchased. These contain information that is exempt under Section 24 (1) [National Security], Section 27 (1) (d) [International Relations], Sections 38 (1) (a) and (b) [Health and Safety] and Section 43 (2) [Commercial Interests] of the Freedom of Information Act.

Given the large amount of sensitive information we believe that the most appropriate way to protect it is to withhold the contracts in their entirety. However we are providing you a copy of the over-arching framework some of these services were contracted under (attached) and a list of the contract details that we can provide to you.

<b>Supplier</b>	<b>Contract Description</b>	<b>Start Date</b>	<b>End Date</b>
<b>Aktis Strategy</b>	CSSF: FOR THE PROVISION OF STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS; RESEARCH, MONITORING AND EVALUATION SERVICES; AND OPERATIONAL SUPPORT IN [REDACTED]	Feb 2014	Mar 2015
<b>Adam Smith International</b>	CAPACITY BUILDING IN [REDACTED]	Feb 2015	Apr 2015
<b>Adam Smith International</b>	CSSF [REDACTED] ADVISORY SERVICES ON EMPLOYMENT AND LABOUR (DISPUTE MITIGATION)	May 2015	May 2016
<b>Ark Group DMCC</b>	CIVIL DEFENCE PROJECT: [REDACTED]	Jun 2012	Jun 2017

Section 24 is a qualified exemption, which means that it is subject to a public interest test. We acknowledge that disclosing the information requested would increase transparency, and inform public debate, but we consider that there is also a public interest in the FCO protecting national security. Having reviewed the requested material, we are concerned that its release would undermine effective operation of the relevant contracts and consequently adversely impact on the UK's security. We have concluded that the exemption applies and that withholding the material serves the public interest better than release in this instance.

We have withheld information that could prejudice the interests of the UK abroad under Section 27 (1) (d). In applying the public interest test we took into consideration the factors in favour of disclosure; in this case that releasing such information would demonstrate openness and public accountability. Against this is the need for the FCO to maintain effective international relations based on trust and confidence with other States. This relationship of trust allows for the free and frank exchange of information on the understanding that it will be treated in confidence. If the UK does not respect such confidences, its ability to protect and promote UK interest through international relations will be prejudiced. States and international organisations may be reluctant to share sensitive information with the UK Government in future and less likely to respect the confidentiality of information supplied by the UK Government, to the detriment of UK interests. For all these reasons, we consider that in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining this exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information covered by section 27 (1)(d).

In addition releasing the information could endanger the safety of individuals and has therefore been withheld under Sections 38(1) (a) and (b). In applying the public interest test we again took into consideration the factors in favour of disclosure; demonstrating openness and public accountability. However, against this is the need for the FCO to ensure the health and safety of our employees and visitors. If this information were released, it could

potentially expose third party providers under contract to the risk of potential attack. We therefore consider that the reasons for withholding this information outweigh those for releasing.

Section 43(2) of FOI holds that information is exempt if its disclosure under the Act would or could prejudice the commercial interests of any person. The use of this exemption has been considered carefully. The factors in favour of disclosing this information include the general public interest and greater transparency and accountability. These were 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 commercially sensitive information.

Once an FOI request is answered, it is considered to be in the public domain. To promote transparency, we may now publish the response and any material released on [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk) in the [FOI releases](#) section. All personal information in the letter will be removed before publishing.

Yours sincerely,

Commercial & Procurement Group



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.