

**FCO FOI reference : 0678-17 – Digest of Information to be released**

**Internal E-mail British Embassy Skopje 4 December 2015**

Yesterday [HM Ambassador] and I met Special Prosecutor and her (future) Chief of Cabinet in their temporary premises. [SPO] requested the meeting to discuss opportunities for political and technical assistance to the UK.

[ text withheld under Section 41 information provided in confidence and Section 27 could impact on international relations]

[SPO] is a small town prosecutor that now has a lifetime opportunity to shine. She is proud and happy, but not in an arrogant way. On the contrary, she seems constructive, ready to listen to advices and supportive of her team. The entire team seems energetic, dedicated and determined. There were not many people in the office, but the atmosphere was busy and business-like.

[ remaining text withheld under S27]

**Covering e-mail from British Embassy Skopje to London on SPO Assessment Report – 18 August 2016**

Dear all

Attached you may find the report produced by [name withheld] an UK financial investigation expert, on the viability of UK involvement in providing tailored and targeted assistance to the Special Prosecution Office (SPO) to investigate financial related crime.

Despite all the challenges, the expert suggests couple of actions including hiring Forensic Accountant that could add value to the work of the SPO. This is proved UK best practice when tackling fiscal crime and could contribute to analyse, interpret, summarise and present complex financial and business related issues in a manner which is both understandable and properly supported.

Grateful for your views / comments

**SPO Assessment Report text – UK potential involvement – 18 August 2016**

**GENERAL REPORT**

Macedonia – Special Prosecutor [redacted S27]

This is a general report following a scoping visit to Macedonia 19<sup>th</sup> – 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2016.

The visit was organised and hosted by the British Embassy Skopje, Macedonia. [remainder redacted under S27]

This was the second visit to Skopje, the first being an assessment visit conducted between 29<sup>th</sup> June 2016 and 1<sup>st</sup> July 2016.

[redacted under S27]

Overview

The Special Prosecutors Office (SPO) has been formed by an act of law to tackle the issues surrounding the so called 'Wire Tap Investigation'.

The 'Wire Tap Investigation' relates to the unofficial recording of conversations between individuals, including high ranking public officials and members of political parties involved in criminality and corruption.

Prior to the forming of the SPO, some of the recordings were released into the media for political gains by the main opposition party in Macedonia.

The investigation has and continues to attract significant media and public attention.

The recordings were handed over to the SPO, there are in excess of 500,000 recordings.

Each recording has the potential to be a separate criminal / corruption investigation.

There are financial dimensions to each investigation with criminally obtained financial assets being laundered, moved off shore and around the world to thwart detection.

The provenance of the 'Wire Tap' material is unclear and is a matter of further investigation. The recordings have been ruled as not admissible as evidence in any judicial process but are being used as an intelligence tool and basis for further investigation.

At the time of reporting there are 7 live investigations and [withheld] pre investigations (pre investigations is the term used in Macedonia for what is commonly referred to as an intelligence gathering phase, once evidence of a crime is obtained it becomes a live investigation).

Work is ongoing to transcribe the bulk of the 500,000 recordings. A rough time scale for this to be complete is two years.

The SPO are concentrating on the small number of recordings that have already been released into the public domain.

[Remainder of the report is withheld under Section 41 information provided in confidence]

### **Response from British Embassy Skopje 18 August 2016**

Thanks ,

Good to have this expert view on the proposal for assisting the SPL.

[ remainder withheld under S27 could impact on international relations ]

### **Familiarisation Visit to Macedonia 8-10 February 2016 – some impressions 12 February 2016**

[To Deputy Head of Western Balkans Department]

With thanks again to the Embassy for the excellent programme, I attach a note on my visit to Macedonia this week.

Summary

A country facing a decisive moment. The Special Prosecutor is VMRO's main fear. [remaining paragraphs not in scope]

I visited Macedonia from 8 to 10 February 2016. The excellent programme put together by the Embassy covered the migration crisis, with a visit to the transit camp at Gevgelija on the border with Greece; and the political scene, with meetings with the main political parties...the Special Prosecutor...This note focuses largely on the political scene.

[paragraphs 2-7 not in scope]

Against this background looms the Special Prosecutor. Her office has a notable buzz, and she seems calmly determined to press ahead with her work. She told us that she is not afraid of the obvious intimidation, that she likes her work and that the evidence uncovered had motivated her and her team. .... she wants to restore public trust in institutions. But she has an uphill task. [remainder redacted under S41 and S27]

Kosovo, Albania and Macedonia Team

Western Balkans Department FCO

**E-mail from Desk Officer Albania/Macedonia WBD FCO to Deputy Head WBD 8 September 2016**

You hosted a meeting today with a team from the Special Prosecutor's Office (names withheld) who are in the UK to attend a symposium on economic crime, escorted by BE Skopje.

You began by outlining UK support for the SPO's work and asked about the challenges going forward and how the UK might help.

[remainder of e-mail withheld under S41 information provided in confidence and S27]

**E-mail from British Embassy Sofia to British Embassy Skopje 25 February 2016**

Subject: FW: Meeting with Special Prosecutor

A readout from yesterday's meeting with the Special Prosecutor.

The majority of the meeting was conducted with [member of SPO office], the SPs deputy. The SP popped in and out

[Remainder redacted under S27 International Relations, S31 Law Enforcement and S41 information provided in confidence]

Please feel free to call to discuss further

[British Embassy Sofia]

**E-mail reply from British Embassy Skopje to British Embassy Sofia 25 February 2016**

Thanks very much for having this meeting and taking things forward.

[remainder redacted under S27]

BE Skopje

**Internal e-mail reply from HM Ambassador (HMA) Skopje and British Embassy Sofia 26 February 2016**

Let me add my thanks too. This is important work on several levels, all of them of interest to HMG.

[remainder withheld under S27]

HM Ambassador

**Further e-mail from British Embassy Skopje to British Embassy Sofia 16 March 2016**

Subject: FW: Meeting with Special Prosecutor - follow up

Dear ,

Yesterday I was called for a meeting at the Special Public Prosecutor Office.

I've met with [member of SPO's office] and three other investigators who presented three different cases and asked for operational support.

[remainder redacted under S41 information provided in confidence and S31 Law Enforcement]

Please can you consider between you how best to respond to this request.

Regards,

[BE Skopje]

**E-mail from Desk Officer Albania/Macedonia to Team Leader Arms Export Policy Department FCO 16 March 2016**

You sent me a list of extant arms export licences for Macedonia the other day from AEPD. These I assume would only have been issued in the last year or so. Would it be possible to check if there was an export licence issued for Gamma International UK Limited for the provision of intercept equipment in 2012 – 2013?

[Remainder withheld Section 30 Law Enforcement]

**Reply from Team Leader AEPD FCO 17 March 2016**

A licence was issued to Gamma International UK Limited on 3 October 2012 for six units of their interception equipment, the 3G-N 2F IMSI catcher with 3G Blind Call. This followed a submission to Mr Lidington (attached). According to the manufacturer [withheld S43 commercial] I attach a copy of the technical specification provided by the manufacturer, together with the end user documentation. The licence has expired, which implies it has been used. There were no other licences issued apart from one, which appears to be to enable export of goods under warranty / for repair.

I hope this is helpful

[ Copy of the submission attached with certain paragraphs redacted ]

**Internal E-mail from British Embassy Skopje to HMA Skopje 17 March 2016**

Charles – you may already be aware that the MK Government purchased interception equipment in 2011 from the UK company GAMMA.

[paragraph withheld under S41]

Just flagging up in case you missed this while busy with the ministers visit. [remainder redacted under S27]

**E-mail chain from Macedonian Ministry of Justice for Mutual Legal Assistance received from the Home Office on 20 April 2017 and forwarded to the WBD FCO. Subsequent e-mails between Skopje / WBD and Home Office**

[This correspondence has been withheld under Section 30 – Law Enforcement as this concerns an ongoing case in Macedonia]

**E-mail from British Embassy Skopje to Special Prosecutor's Office 15 July 2016**

Hi [name withheld],

Below is the agenda for [UK contractor] visit next week. Grateful if you could inform your colleagues and organise the meetings at your end.

Wednesday, 20 July

09:15 – 11:30 Meeting with Special Public Prosecutors  
Venue: SPO premises

11:30 – 13:45 Meeting with the Chief Financial Investigator and his team – session I  
Venue: SPO premises

14:00 - 15:00 Lunch  
Venue: tbc

15:15 – 17:00 Meeting with the Chief Financial Investigator and his team – session II  
Venue: SPO premises

17:00 – 17:15 Transportation from SPO to Hotel  
Embassy driver

Thursday, 21 July

08:30 - 10:00 Briefing with SPO Legal Experts on Macedonia's asset recovery legislation  
Venue: SPO premises

10:00 - 11:00 Meeting with the SPO IT Expert to follow up on the use of I2 Software  
Venue: SPO premises

11:15 - 11:30 Transportation to SPO new premises

SPO driver

11:30 – 12:30 Briefing on Security of Financial material  
Venue: SPO new premises

12:30 – 13:00 Wrap up meeting with SPO Team  
Venue: SPO new premises

13:00 – 13:15 Transportation from SPO new premises to UK Embassy  
Embassy driver

If you have any questions or comments please do not hesitate to contact me.

Regards,

**E-mail from SPO to British Embassy Skopje 12 July 2016**

Dear

thank you for your e-mail, we confirm the proposed dates for the follow up visit of [ UK contractor ], and we will organize the requested meetings in order to clarify and address the mentioned issues.

Enclosed, I am sending you the Law on criminal procedure in English, and for anything else I remain at disposal please contact me.

Sincerely,

**E-mail from British Embassy Skopje to SPO office 11 July 2016**

Dear [name withheld]

Following the initial visit of the UK expert [name withheld] to Skopje in June, we would like to propose a follow up scoping visit in the period 20 – 22 July 2016. The purpose of the scoping visit is to cover more specific areas that we would like to consider taking them forward. Therefore we would like to propose :

[ further detail withheld under S27]

If there are other people you may consider he needs to speak to, please do not hesitate to let us know.

Grateful if you could let me know whether the proposed dates are convenient to you, so we can go ahead with the necessary logistics for organising the visit.

Regards

**E-mail British Embassy Skopje to Deputy Head WBD FCO and various others 16 September 2016**

Dear All,

As you know, a team of three prosecutors from the SPO attended the Economic Crime Conference held in the UK last week. In addition to the conference, we have also arranged bilateral meetings with the FCO, CPS and the UK law enforcement agencies.

Summary:

- The FCO representatives expressed their support to the work of the SPO acknowledging the challenging environment and pressure under which the SPO works. They have offered their support at political and technical level stressing that they are open for potential cooperation.

[remainder withheld under S41 and S27]

Details:

- On 15 September the SPO published the second report of its work. They publish the details on number of investigation as well as two official indictments they have submitted to the Court.
- Their International work load is likely to intensify and grow in size as they have started with the listening of the 500,000 recordings.
- The statute of limitation for any crime is clearly prescribed within the Macedonian Criminal Code. For minor crimes the statute of limitation is one to two years whereas for major crimes – such as abuse of official powers, money laundering etc is between 10 to 15 years. Having that in mind, it's difficult to understand why the statute of limitation for alleged involvement of high government officials in many wrongdoings, including election fraud, manipulation of the justice system, media and corruption is only 18 months.

[remainder withheld under S41 and S27]

If you have any questions or comments please let me know.

Best regards,

**Internal e-mail British Embassy Skopje e-mail to HMA Skopje and embassy team 13 October 2016**

I just had a meeting with the SPO

[information withheld under S41]

I am in the process of setting up a meeting between the SPO representatives and [name withheld] meeting from last week was postponed due to SPO commitments, so they could sit together and explore potential cooperation.

If you have any questions or concerns please let me know.

**Internal E-mail British Embassy Skopje to HMA Skopje 13 July 2016**

[name withheld] from the SPO approached me with a request for supporting three people (2 prosecutors and 1 investigator) to attend the 34<sup>th</sup> International Symposium on Economic Crime which runs from 4 - 11 September 2016 in the UK. The event is organised in cooperation with NCA, SFO and City of London Police. [remainder redacted under S27].

I briefly went through the programme and it looks like an academic level event, that provides opportunity to understand the existing as well as new economic crime threats. Not sure how beneficial would be for the SPO people attending this event, having in mind their ongoing challenges, though it might provide an opportunity for them to establish links and contacts with the UK and other international authorities.

The programme covers a range of different areas such as fight against economically motivated crime, media and public accountability, control liability, etc. In addition to the regular sessions there are offering a lot of parallel plenary workshops, evening workshops and alternative plenary programme. Attached you may find the programme for your consideration.

Grateful for your views.

#### **Internal E-mail British Embassy Skopje to HMA Skopje 1 August 2016**

We spoke briefly on Friday, but this is to summarise the key points for [DHM Skopje and UK Delegation to the OSCE]. Special Prosecutor and SPO's chief of cabinet [names withheld] came on Friday to discuss details of their visit to Cambridge. But apart from that we also covered few other aspects of their work.

[remainder withheld under S41. Final para withheld under S35 formulation of HM Government policy]

#### **Mutual Legal Assistance request from Home Office to FCO dated 20 April 2017**

This document is being withheld under Sections 31 (Law Enforcement), 41 (Information provided in confidence) and 27 (bilateral relations with Macedonia).