



Ministry
of Defence

Ministry of Defence
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United Kingdom

Ref: FOI2019/04589

E-mail: ISS-SecretariatGpMbx@mod.gov.uk

14 May 2019

Dear [REDACTED],

Thank you for your email of 10 April 2019 requesting the following information:

“Please provide details of any action taken or policies adopted by the Ministry of Defence with regards to the potential of location tracking mobile apps to compromise national security by revealing the locations and movements of troops.

I refer to the concerns over the fitness tracking App Strava, which revealed the location of secret US army bases, and concerns over the dating app Grindr, which has been labelled a national security concern by the US Government.

<https://eur01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.theguardian.com%2Fworld%2F2018%2Fjan%2F28%2Ffitness-tracking-app-gives-away-location-of-secret-us-army-bases&data=02%7C01%7Ccio-foi%40mod.gov.uk%7C2d97dbc32ac24aa0593f08d6bde39928%7Cbe7760ed5953484bae95d0a16dfa09e5%7C0%7C1%7C636905182555855477&reserved=0>

<https://eur01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.theverge.com%2Finterface%2F2019%2F3%2F28%2F18285274%2Fgrindr-national-security-cfius-china-kunlun-military&data=02%7C01%7Ccio-foi%40mod.gov.uk%7C2d97dbc32ac24aa0593f08d6bde39928%7Cbe7760ed5953484bae95d0a16dfa09e5%7C0%7C1%7C636905182555855477&reserved=0>

If no actions have been taken, please explain why.”

I am treating your correspondence as a request for information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA).

A search for the information has now been completed within the Ministry of Defence, and I can confirm that some information in scope of your request is held.

The fitness app referred to is one of a number of devices which use location data (geotagging). While the Department has no objection to the personal use of fitness apps, the sharing of personal data (including geotagging) can present a risk to personal and operational security. Personnel must follow the direction of Heads of Establishment and Commanding Officers who will assess the security risks and provide local direction.

Following the news coverage concerning the Strava heatmap, the Departmental Chief Security Advisor wrote to Principal Security Advisors in each of MOD's business areas to remind all staff of their responsibility to ensure the security of themselves, their colleagues and Defence assets, and accompanied this with guidance on cyber security relating to location services which had previously been circulated. This guidance is attached.

Under Section 16 of the Act (Advice and Assistance) you may find it helpful to note that individual business areas may well have taken this guidance and produced their own versions, more tailored to their specific circumstances. While it would exceed the cost limit for an FOI response to trawl the whole of Defence to identify all local versions, the attached indicates the central direction on which this would build.

If you have any queries regarding the content of this letter, please contact this office in the first instance.

If you wish to complain about the handling of your request, or the content of this response, you can request an independent internal review by contacting the Information Rights Compliance team, Ground Floor, MOD Main Building, Whitehall, SW1A 2HB (e-mail CIO-FOI-IR@mod.gov.uk). Please note that any request for an internal review should be made within 40 working days of the date of this response.

If you remain dissatisfied following an internal review, you may raise your complaint directly to the Information Commissioner under the provisions of Section 50 of the Freedom of Information Act. Please note that the Information Commissioner will not normally investigate your case until the MOD internal review process has been completed. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at: Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF. Further details of the role and powers of the Information Commissioner can be found on the Commissioner's website at <https://ico.org.uk/>.

Yours sincerely,

Information Systems and Services (ISS) Secretariat