



Ministry  
of Defence

Ministry of Defence  
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Ref: FOI2019/11996

E-mail: [ISS-SecretariatGpMbx@mod.gov.uk](mailto:ISS-SecretariatGpMbx@mod.gov.uk)

5 December 2019

Dear [REDACTED],

Thank you for your email of 21 October 2019 requesting the following information:

*“The manual, guidelines or other instruction materials provided to MOD employees on the use of WeChat and other messaging apps, including any instructions against the use of such apps.”*

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 all information in scope of your request is held. However, some of the information you have requested falls entirely within the scope of the qualified exemptions provided for at Section 24 (National Security), Section 26 (Defence) and Section 31 (Law Enforcement) of the FOIA and has been withheld.

Section 24, 26 and 31 are qualified exemptions and are subject to public interest testing which means that the information requested can only be withheld if the public interest in doing so outweighs the public interest in disclosure.

Section 24(1) has been applied because releasing specific MOD security processes or guidance could assist a potential adversary whose intent is to cause disruption in a way that would have a harmful effect to MOD computer networks and communication systems. Such disruption would prejudice the capability of the networks which would severely impact on Defence activities being undertaken in support of national security. The release of some information would increase the security risks to our networks and systems.

Section 26(1)(a) and (b) has been applied because disclosure of specific MOD security processes and guidance could provide potential adversaries with valuable intelligence on MOD's processes and policy which in turn could seriously prejudice and compromise the defence of the UK if used by an adversary to circumvent MOD IT and Communication systems.

Additionally, Section 31(1)(a) has been applied because disclosure of security processes or guidance would be seen as useful intelligence to those who may have malicious intent to try to circumvent the MOD's ICT systems and services.

I have set the level of prejudice against release of the exempted information at the higher level of “would” rather than “would be likely to”.

In favour of release is the presumption towards disclosure under the FOIA as answering this question would increase transparency of the level of IT security employed by the MOD and the

guidance received by its employees. Release would also demonstrate that the MOD complies with security best practices. On balance, I consider the public interest favours maintaining the exemptions and withholding some of the information you have requested.

Please find enclosed with this correspondence the information you have requested which can be released.

20180130-YoC-Location-Services-Handout

Under Section 16 of the FOIA (duty to provide help and assistance), please be reassured that we regularly advise staff on security issues which may impact them both at work and at home, including safe use of social media, through security briefs and training. See, for example:-

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/think-before-you-share>  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/cyber-primer>

You may also find the Defence Cyber Protection Partnership document of interest. This document has been published and can be accessed using the following link:-

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/defence-cyber-protection-partnership>

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](mailto: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