



Home Office

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Chris Jones
Director
Statewatch

By Email: chris@statewatch.org

FOI Reference: 70426

Date: 26 July 2022

Dear Mr Jones,

Thank you for your e-mail of 15 June 2022, in which you ask for information in relation to the Joint Action Plan by the UK and Greece on migration and the Organised Immigration Crime (OIC) Taskforce. Your request has been handled as a request for information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA).

I am able to disclose some of the information that you have requested, as follows.

Joint Plan by the UK and Greece on migration

On 22 April 2020, the Minister for Immigration Compliance and the Courts and his Greek counterpart, Georgios Koumoutsakos signed the UK-Greece Action Plan to take forward cooperation on tackling irregular migration in the Eastern Mediterranean and joint action to improve overall management of migration.

The UK-Greece Action Plan on migration can be found at Gov.uk:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-greece-migration-action-plan/joint-action-plan-by-the-uk-and-greece-on-migration>

Regarding the first part of your request, no country-specific technical workshops on returns have yet taken place between UK and Greek officials.

Regarding the second part of your request, there are no UK vessels or staff currently deployed in search and rescue operations in the Aegean.

Regarding the third part of your request, a virtual meeting of the UK-Greece Strategic Dialogue took place on 26 March 2021. The meeting was attended by Chris Philp MP, then Minister for Immigration Compliance and the Courts, alongside his Greek counterparts Panagiotis Mitarakis, Minister for Migration

and Asylum, and Sophia Voultepsi, Under-Secretary for Migration Policy and Asylum (Integration). The agenda focussed on irregular migration priorities, bilateral cooperation between the UK and Greece, and the EU's New Pact on Migration and Asylum.

Organised Immigration Crime Taskforce

I can confirm that the Home Office holds the information that you have requested regarding the OIC Taskforce. However, after careful consideration we have decided that the information is exempt from disclosure under section 23(1) of the FOIA. This provides that information held by a public authority is exempt information if it was directly or indirectly supplied to the public authority by, or relates to, any of the bodies specified in subsection (3).

As the exemption at section 23(1) is both class-based and absolute, no evidence of harm or assessment of the balance of the public interest is required to support its application.

If you are dissatisfied with this response you may request an independent internal review of our handling of your request by submitting a complaint within two months to foirequests@homeoffice.gov.uk, quoting reference 70426. If you ask for an internal review, it would be helpful if you could say why you are dissatisfied with the response.

As part of any internal review the Department's handling of your information request would be reassessed by staff who were not involved in providing you with this response. If you were to remain dissatisfied after an internal review, you would have a right of complaint to the Information Commissioner as established by section 50 of the FOIA.

A link to the Home Office Information Rights Privacy Notice can be found in the following link. This explains how we process your personal information: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/information-rights-privacy-notice>

Yours sincerely

R Tarver

Migration and Borders Group