



Foreign Affairs Committee

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Rt Hon Sir Alan Duncan MP
Minister of State for Europe
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Foreign and Commonwealth Office
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8 January 2019

I am writing following your response to the Urgent Question on 12 December concerning the Institute of Statecraft: Integrity Initiative.

In seeking some further information, I should emphasise that the Foreign Affairs Committee is fully alert to the threat posed by Russian disinformation and that we welcome the steps taken by the government to counter it. Such activity does however need to be undertaken within a framework of robust governance, as I am sure you would accept.

You emphasised that the FCO's funding for the Institute of Statecraft may only be used for its activities outside the UK; and that it does not fund the Integrity Initiative's social media account. I would be grateful if you could let the Committee know:

- whether those two conditions are stipulated in any agreement or contract the FCO holds with the Institute of Statecraft and whether you will provide a copy of any such agreement to the Committee;
- what procedures or mechanisms are in place within the Institute to ensure that FCO funding is not used for the prohibited purposes described above; and
- how the FCO ensures that its funding is used appropriately.

A spokesperson for the FCO was reported as saying that the Institute has undertaken to review its social media editorial policy. Are you able to confirm whether that review will report to the FCO and whether it will be made public?

Finally, I would be grateful for your thoughts on whether there are wider lessons to be learned by the FCO in the light of this case. For example, does the FCO expect all organisations to which it provides funds to have an appropriate social media policy and is the implementation of such policies monitored by the FCO?

In the interests of transparency, I should put on record that I have known Chris Donnelly, one of the co-directors of the Institute of Statecraft, for a number of years.

It would be helpful if the Committee could have your response by 25 January. The Committee is likely to publish this letter and your response to it.

Tom Tugendhat MP
Chair



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Minister of State for
Europe and the Americas

11 January 2019

Tom Tugendhat MP
Chair, Foreign Affairs Committee
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

Dear Tom,

Thank you for your letter of 8 January 2019.

As I said in the House of Commons on 12 December, HMG's funding for the Institute for Statecraft's Integrity Initiative is via a grant agreement. Clause 3.3 of our Grant agreement, written into the contract with the Institute for Statecraft, explicitly states that:

"the grant must not be used to support activity intended to influence, or attempt to influence, the UK Parliament, Government or political parties".

We have not seen any evidence that the Integrity Initiative has breached this obligation under any of its HMG-funded activities. In addition, the project indicators in our agreement with the Institute for Statecraft, by which the project is measured, make clear that the project activity is exclusively for overseas purposes. It is standard practice that FCO projects fund specific activities, rather than blanket funding roles or core costs. This is precisely the case with our support for the Integrity Initiative. I therefore stand by my statement in the House on 12 December that the Government does not fund the management of the Integrity Initiative's social media account.

The Government is funding this initiative from the cross-Government Conflict Stability and Security Fund (CSSF). All CSSF supplier agreements include a requirement for robust monitoring of performance and regular reporting. This has been the case with the activities funded under the Integrity Initiative project. It is also considered good practice for individual projects to undergo an informal financial audit during the financial year, to look at the systems they are using and to check they have sufficient evidence to justify their invoicing. A spot check was recently carried out by the HMG project manager responsible for the Integrity Initiative project, and the Institute is deemed to have satisfactory control over its funding from HMG.

The Institute for Statecraft is independent of the government and is non-partisan; we fund them on that basis. However, as I said in the House of Commons, I asked my officials to engage with the Institute for Statecraft to look at its editorial policy. The Institute for Statecraft is currently reviewing its Social Media Policy and my officials understand that the Institute intends to publish it on their website shortly.

It is positive to note that you and the Foreign Affairs Committee are supportive of the government's approach to countering Russian disinformation. The Russian state media launched a campaign against the Institute of Statecraft, following the hack of that organisation. This fits with a wider pattern of Russian disinformation against the UK. The campaign's objective is clear: it is yet another example of Russian disinformation intended to confuse audiences and discredit an organisation that is working independently to tackle the threat of disinformation. In this context, it is important that the FCO continues to ensure through our programmes an appropriate degree of security and transparency and that activity, including on social media, remains consistent with UK values.

Y- ever,
Alan

RT HON SIR ALAN DUNCAN MP