

Classified Docs Found at UK Bus Stop Reveal Sensitive Defense Plans

Stunning find includes MoD plot to provoke Russia in Ukrainian waters last week and U.S. request to leave troops in Afghanistan.

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In what sounds like a plot turn in one of those Britbox crime-thriller series, a tranche of soggy Ministry of Defence documents ranging from “Official Sensitive” to “Secret UK Eyes Only” were found behind a bus stop in Kent Tuesday morning, according to a [breaking story by the BBC](#) today.

The 50-page bundle of doc provides an unbelievably candid insight into a “wide range of important areas.”

“This is a major embarrassment for the Ministry of Defence, which is currently carrying out a detailed investigation into how the papers came to be lying on a street corner, in the rain, in the early hours of Tuesday morning,” writes BBC diplomatic correspondent Paul Adams, who does not say how they were found or what tipped the news service off, since the finding was several days ago.

But the find is an explosive one. Not only to the docs reveal that the Brits knew very well that the Russians would respond aggressively (and they did, the extent to which is in dispute) when they sailed the HMS Defender 12 miles off the coast of Crimea in the Black Sea this week, they did it deliberately — a case that [British officials have been acknowledging](#) in the last few days.

According to the “Official Sensitive” documents, the case was made to avoid confrontation by taking an alternative route through non-contested waters but that would run the risk of looking “scared/running away.” The Russians said they fired [warning shots and dropped bombs](#) in reaction to their “freedom of navigation” operation, a detail the Brits deny.

But to U.S. readers the most important information taken from this tranche is the most sensitive “Secret UK Eyes Only” one. It details that Washington has asked the UK to leave their own special operations forces behind after the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan. This signals what analysts have been anticipating — that the Biden Administration has not made

a definitive decision on how to deal with counterterrorism issues beyond Sept. 11, and that one of the options still open is leaving a presence behind. Apparently that might include other foreign forces.

The papers do not say whether the Brits will comply (though the BBC article notes that the idea of leaving troops behind after withdrawal has been discussed in media reports); in fact they look dubious at the prospect.

Adams quotes the papers, saying that any UK footprint “that persists...is assessed to be vulnerable to targeting by a complex network of actors,” and that “the option to withdraw completely remains.”

What the heck were these papers doing behind a bus stop and were they meant for the BBC and if so, why? For our purposes, it is clear that the UK seems right in line with Washington, not only in “poking the Russian bear,” but it may be open to staying in Afghanistan for a longer haul than the people (American and British) want. It may also be worth asking whether these “special operators” the U.S. is asking for would be covertly placed in Afghanistan or not.

This is good, but depressing information.

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