

Digest of Information Released in Response to Nicola Beckford's Request under the Freedom of Information Act (2000) to disclose any communications between the British Embassy in Kazakhstan and the Foreign Office in London relating to the actor Sacha Baron Cohen's character Borat and his portrayal of Kazakhstan.

The relevant part of a telegram from Almaty to the FCO dated 1/12/05

MFA complains about British comedian Sacha Baron Cohen.

Sacha Baron Cohen

12. The MFA spokesman has complained about Sacha Baron Cohen's performance on the MTV Europe Music Awards in his role as Kazakh journalist Borat. The spokesman suggested there might be a political agenda behind the performance aimed at presenting a negative image of Kazakhstan, and threatened legal action.
13. There have been constant grumblings about Borat, but it looks like the MFA's patience has finally snapped. They have not yet complained to us, however, and we have received no press enquiries. So far the press have, if anything, questioned the MFA's judgement.

The relevant part of a British Embassy Kazakhstan/FCO e-mail exchange dated 23/6/06

Yes. Could [Name withheld] use the existing (reasonably robust) Borat line, adding a background sentence to the effect that there is a slight possibility that the Kazakhs may complain about the Borat character given publicity surrounding a forthcoming Borat feature film?

The relevant part of a British Embassy Kazakhstan/FCO e-mail exchange dated 23/6/06

Thanks. Indeed, we'll need to thank you for your assistance. The relevant part of the e-mail exchange is as follows: ()1.88494sat ang666(a)14.92

<http://www.popoholic.com/2006/06/21/borat-the-movie-trailer-released/>

The relevant part of an FCO internal minute dated 31/7/06

the 'Borat' TV character (due to return to Channel 4 on Friday 1 September, and a major film of Borat is due for release world wide in November 2006);

The relevant part of an FCO internal minute (Press Lines) dated 15-0 - 06

Borat

Kazakhstan Government has serious concerns about the Borat character. His site is banned by Kazakhstan telecommunication operator. Publicity surrounding the forthcoming (November 2006) Borat Movie may provoke the Kazakh authorities to take up further steps.

Borat representing Kazakhstan in Western people's eyes?

We do understand your concern. However, the aim of this comic act, as I understand it, is not about discrediting Kazakhstan, but about revealing the prejudices of certain people.

Borat is an entirely fictional character that no informed person would see as a representative of Kazakhstan or a Kazakh journalist.

Will HMG do anything about it?

Media in the UK operate in a free and unobstructed way. There is an independent broadcasting commission that considers and rules on complaints about ethical issues in TV and radio programmes. Anybody can make a complaint to the commission.

The relevant part of an FCO internal e-mail dated 27/ /06

Para-8 – After "Borat TV character" replace text in brackets with " a major film or Borat is due for release world wide later this year".

The relevant part of an FCO internal e-mail dated 27/ /06

Borat – agree with [Name withheld] amendment, could I also suggest we amend the first part of sentence 2 to 'However, the aim of this comic act, as I understand it, is not to discredit Kazakhstan, but...' and then in the last sentence 'no informed person would see as a *representative* of Kazakhstan...'

Will HMG do anything about it?

Media in the UK operate in a free and unobstructed way. There is an independent broadcasting commission that considers and rules on complaints about ethical issues in TV and radio programmes. Anybody can make a complaint to the commission.