

President Ramaphosa- Release the Lady R report!

On 4 September [Open Secrets](#) and the [Campaign for Free Expression](#) lodged an information application with the Office of the President asking for the final report (and additional relevant information) on the docking of the Lady R Russian cargo vessel during December 2022.

The request was made under the Promotion of Access to Information Act (PAIA), which sets out citizens' right to information. It was prompted by the President's 3 September announcement that the Investigative Panel found no evidence that weapons were loaded onto the vessel for export. The President stated that the "entire report" would not be released on the grounds that "classified information" required protection. However, there are a number of unanswered questions which we hope will be put to rest with the release of the report. For example, what evidence was the conclusion based on? And how thorough was the investigation?

Information of this nature should not, as a matter of course, be kept from the public. The overriding public interest in this investigation is clear: all people living in South Africa are entitled to hold the government to account. We cannot exercise this right without there being transparency on the part of the state. Where government operations and the investigations that follow remain secret, the greater the opportunity for corruption and the abuse of power. To the extent that classified information is contained in the report, the Presidency could achieve its protection without imposing a blanket measure that prevents the public from holding its government accountable.

In May and June this year, [Open Secrets sent separate information requests](#) regarding the docking of the Lady R, to the United States institutions tasked with foreign affairs and intelligence. These include the State Department, Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) and National Security Agency (NSA). The NSA and DIA have denied the information requests due to the information pertaining to the "interest of national defense or foreign relations". The State Department has communicated that it is processing our request. We will continue to pursue this matter.

About Open Secrets:

[Open Secrets](#) is a non-profit organisation which exposes and builds accountability for economic crimes through investigative research, advocacy, and the law.

About the Campaign for Free Expression:

The [Campaign for Free Expression \(CFE\)](#) is a non-profit organisation dedicated to protecting and expanding the right to free expression for all, and enabling everyone to exercise this right to the full, whether it by speaking out, by protesting, by revealing information, by blowing the whistle on wrong-doing, by arguing, debating, writing, painting, composing or just by shouting out an opinion.

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