

F-2009-00490

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5 February 2009

Delores M. Nelson
Central Intelligence Agency
Information and Privacy Coordinator
Washington, DC 20505

APPROVED FOR RELEASE
DATE: 18-Aug-2010

Re: FOIA Request – Congressional National Security Oversight Committees, Part I

Dear Ms. Nelson:

This is a request on behalf of the James Madison Project (“JMP”) under the Freedom of Information Act, 5 U.S.C. § 552, *et seq.*, for copies of all Central Intelligence Agency (“CIA”) records, including cross-references, pertaining to:

- a) Past and present CIA policies and regulations regarding interaction with Congressional Committees or Subcommittees with oversight over national security activities (hereinafter “national security oversight committees”), including *but not limited to* the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence (“HPSCI”), the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence (“SSCI”), and the former CIA Oversight Subcommittees of the Senate and House Armed Services and Appropriations Committees; and
- b) Any other past and present CIA policy memoranda, position papers, articles in agency newsletters, or related official publications regarding national security oversight committees that aren't covered by (a) above.

When processing this request, please note that the D.C. Circuit has previously held that agencies have a duty to construe the subject material of FOIA requests *liberally* to ensure responsive records are not overlooked. *See Nation Magazine, Washington Bureau v. U.S.*

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Customs Service, 71 F.3d 885, 890 (D.C. Cir. 1995). Accordingly, you are hereby instructed that the term "record" includes, *but is not limited to*: 1) all email communications to or from any individual within your agency; 2) memoranda; 3) inter-agency communications; 4) sound recordings; 5) tape recordings; 6) video or film recordings; 7) photographs; 8) notes; 9) notebooks; 10) indices; 11) jottings; 12) message slips; 13) letters or correspondence; 14) telexes; 15) telegrams; 16) facsimile transmissions; 17) statements; 18) policies; 19) manuals or binders; 20) books; 21) handbooks; 22) business records; 23) personnel records; 24) ledgers; 25) notices; 26) warnings; 27) affidavits; 28) declarations under penalty of perjury; 29) unsworn statements; 30) reports; 31) diaries; or 32) calendars, regardless of whether they are handwritten, printed, typed, mechanically or electronically recorded or reproduced on any medium capable of conveying an image, such as paper, CDs, DVDs, or diskettes. Furthermore, in line with the guidance issued by the DOJ on 9 September 2008 to all federal agencies with records subject to FOIA, agency records that are currently in the possession of a U.S. Government contractor for purposes of records management remain subject to FOIA. Please ensure that your search complies with this clarification on the effect of Section 9 of the OPEN Government Act of 2007 of the definition of a "record" for purposes of FOIA. Please also consider this letter an affirmative rejection of any limitation of your search to CIA-originated records or to records created prior to the date of this request. To the contrary, we stipulate that this search should be restricted to records created prior to the date of the first substantive review of this request by CIA FOIA personnel (as opposed to the date that receipt of the request was acknowledged by the CIA).

If you deny all or part of this request, please cite the specific exemptions you believe justify your refusal to release the information or permit the review and notify us of your appeal procedures available under the law. In excising material, please "black out" rather than "white out" or "cut out." In addition, we draw your attention to President Obama's 21 January 2009 *Memorandum for the Heads of Executive Departments and Agencies*, directing federal agencies to adopt a presumption in favor of disclosure and stating that government information should not be kept confidential "merely because public officials might be embarrassed by disclosure, because errors and failures might be revealed, or because of speculative or abstract fears."

We are hereby requesting a waiver of all fees in accordance with our status as a representative of the news media. JMP is a non-profit organization under the laws of the District of Columbia, has the ability to disseminate information on a wide scale, and intends to use information obtained through FOIA in original works. Stories concerning our activities have received prominent mention in many publications including, but not limited to, the *Washington Post*, *Washington Times*, *St. Petersburg Tribune*, *San Diego Union Tribune*, *European Stars & Stripes*, *Christian Science Monitor*, *U.S. News and World Report*, *Mother Jones*, and *Salon*

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Magazine. Our website, where much of the information received through our FOIA requests is or will be posted for all to review, can be accessed at <http://www.jamesmadisonproject.org>, and information published there has previously been used by third parties in published works. In addition, we also intend to use information obtained through FOIA in our own published opinion editorials, journal articles, and the like. JMP's Director of FOIA Operations Kel McClanahan has already published information received through FOIA in this manner. Therefore, according to the ruling of *National Security Archive v. Department of Defense*, 800 F.2d 1381 (D.C. Cir. 1989), codified by the 2008 FOIA amendments, defining a representative of the news media as "a person or entity that gathers information of potential interest to a segment of the public, uses its editorial skills to turn the raw materials into a distinct work, and distributes that work to an audience," JMP should be considered a representative of the news media according to 5 U.S.C. § 552(a)(4)(A)(ii)(II). Similarly, our request for a public interest fee waiver should be granted. Most prior requests submitted by our organization have received fee waivers.

There can be no question that the information sought would contribute to the public's understanding of government operations or activities and is in the public interest. The question of proper Congressional oversight of the Intelligence Community in general and the CIA specifically is an ongoing debate in the public realm. Indeed, for much of the history of the CIA there has been little to no oversight from the Legislative Branch, which is not to say efforts were never undertaken. *See, e.g.,* Loch Johnson, *A Season of Inquiry: The Senate Intelligence Investigation (1985)*; *Alleged Assassination Plots Involving Foreign Leaders: An Interim Report of the United States Senate Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities, Together with Additional, Supplemental, and Separate Views (1976)*.

Recent years have seen the public disclosure of several controversial intelligence programs, ranging from the Terrorist Surveillance Program to "extraordinary rendition" of foreign nationals to unidentified overseas prisons. Such programs have raised public concern regarding whether the U.S. Intelligence Community ("USIC") is operating outside of the law. Indeed, for the first time in six years, the Government Accountability Office ("GAO") was asked last year by a congressional intelligence committee to perform an intelligence oversight-related function. On 11 March 2008, Rep. Silvestre Reyes (D-TX), the HPSCI chairman, and Rep. Anna Eshoo (D-CA), a subcommittee chairwoman, called upon the GAO to review security clearance processes in the intelligence community and to examine the Director of National Intelligence's ("DNI") pilot project on security clearance reform. *See* <http://www.fas.org/irp/news/2008/03/eshoo.html>. The potential role of the GAO in intelligence oversight was also addressed in a 29 February 2008 hearing of the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee chaired by Senator Daniel Akaka. *See* http://www.fas.org/irp/congress/2008_hr/index.html#gao.

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Disclosure of responsive records pertaining to CIA's interaction with Congressional national security oversight committees will demonstrate both the exact relationship between the USIC and its legislative watchdogs and the extent to which the USIC has been complying with Congressionally-mandated oversight of its activities, and thereby would contribute to the public's understanding of government operations and activities.

The CIA is required by law to respond to this request within 20 working days. Failure to timely comply may result in the filing of a civil action against your agency in the United States District Court for the District of Columbia.

We request that any documents or records produced in response to this request be provided in electronic (soft-copy) form wherever possible. Acceptable formats are .pdf, .jpg, .gif, .tif. Please provide soft-copy records by email or on a CD if email is not feasible.

Your cooperation in this matter would be appreciated. If you wish to discuss this request, please do not hesitate to contact my Director of FOIA Operations Kel McClanahan at Kel@JamesMadisonProject.org or 301-728-5908.

Please respond to this request by email to Kel@JamesMadisonProject.org or by fax to 240-681-2189.

Sincerely



Mark S. Zaid
Executive Director

MSZ/km

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