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26 January 2011

Susan Viscuso
Acting Information and Privacy Coordinator
Central Intelligence Agency
Washington, DC 20505

Re: FOIA Request – IMS search tools and indices

Dear Ms. Viscuso:

This is a request on behalf of National Security Counselors (“NSC”) under the Freedom of Information Act (“FOIA”), 5 U.S.C. § 552, *et seq.*, for a copy of **all Central Intelligence Agency (“CIA”) records pertaining to the search tools and indices available to the Office of Information Management Services (“IMS”) for conducting searches of its own records in response to FOIA requests.**

Almost every sworn declaration signed by the CIA Information and Privacy Coordinator in a FOIA case contains the following standard language:

Because CIA’s records systems are decentralized and compartmented, each component must then devise its own search strategy, which includes identifying which of its records systems to search as well as *what search tools, indices, and terms to employ.*

This request is for records that describe or discuss the search tools and indices that the IMS (as a CIA component) can choose between when devising a search strategy for IMS records. This is limited to *only* those search tools and indices that would be *personally used by IMS personnel* to search *IMS records systems.*

Two types of records will be responsive to this request:

1. Records which *describe* the search tools and indices.
2. The actual contents of the indices. I.e., if an index contains 1000 terms that can be used in a search, then we seek a list of those 1000 terms.

When processing this request, please note that the DC 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. 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 Department of Justice (“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. Finally, please consider this letter an affirmative rejection of any limitation of your search 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).

Lastly, the CIA is specifically prohibited from adopting an overbroad interpretation of the terms “relating to,” “related to,” or “pertaining to” with respect to the scope of this request; an interpretation that “a request for all documents ‘relating to’ a subject is overbroad because all documents ‘relate to’ others in some remote fashion” is specifically rejected. Therefore, in conclusion, the CIA is hereby instructed to interpret the scope of this request in the most liberal manner possible short of an interpretation that would lead to a conclusion that the request does not reasonably describe the records sought. If, even given these restrictions, the CIA still determines that this request does not reasonably describe the records sought, it is instructed to contact NSC pursuant to 32 C.F.R. § 1900.12(c) to discuss reformulation of the request before rejecting the request as overbroad, vague, or unduly burdensome.

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.” To permit us to reach an intelligent and informed decision whether or not to file an administrative appeal of any denied material, please describe any withheld records (or portions thereof) and

explain the basis for your exemption claims. This description should include a list of the withheld documents, pursuant to *Shermco Indus. v. Sec’y of the U.S. Air Force*, 452 F. Supp. 306, 317 n.7 (N.D. Tx. 1978) (“A person cannot effectively appeal a decision about the releasability of documents . . . if he is not informed of at least a list of the documents to which he was denied access . . . and why those decisions were made. Denial of this information would in all likelihood be a violation of due process as well as effectively gutting the reasons for applying the exhaustion doctrine in FOIA cases.”).

We are hereby requesting classification as a representative of the news media. NSC is a non-profit organization under Virginia law, has the ability to disseminate information on a wide scale, and intends to use information obtained through FOIA in original works. According to 5 U.S.C. § 552(a)(4)(A)(ii), codifying the ruling of *Nat’l Security Archive v. Dep’t of Defense*, 880 F.2d 1381 (D.C. Cir. 1989),

the term ‘a representative of the news media’ means any 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.

NSC has clear intent to “publish[] or otherwise disseminate[] information to the public.” *Id.* at 1386 (quoting the following legislative history: 1) “It is critical that the phrase ‘representative of the news media’ be broadly interpreted if the act is to work as expected. . . . In fact, *any person or organization which regularly publishes or disseminates information to the public . . . should qualify for waivers as a ‘representative of the news media.’*” 132 Cong. Rec. S14298 (daily ed. Sept. 30, 1986) (emphasis in original quotation); 2) “A request by a reporter or other person affiliated with a newspaper, magazine, television or radio station, *or other entity that is in the business of publishing or otherwise disseminating information to the public* qualifies under this provision.” 132 Cong. Rec. H9463 (Oct. 8, 1986) (emphasis in original quotation)). Our website, where much of the information received through our FOIA requests is posted for all to review, can be accessed at <http://www.nationalsecuritylaw.org>. In addition, we also intend to use information obtained through FOIA in our own published opinion editorials, journal articles, and the like. I personally have already published information received through FOIA in this manner (Kel McClanahan, *A Perception Based Model for Comparing Intelligence Communities*, 25(2) AMER. INTELLIGENCE J. 46 (Winter 2007/2008) (includes material obtained through a CIA FOIA request)), and our Document Vault contains summaries of the records we have obtained, as well as analyses of their relevance. Therefore, in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act and relevant case law, NSC should be considered a representative of the news media.

We are also requesting a public interest fee waiver. 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. As noted above, almost every time the CIA appears in a FOIA lawsuit, it mentions the “search tools [and] indices” that are available to each component. However, no further information regarding these search tools and indices is ever forthcoming. To better understand what types of resources the CIA uses when processing its FOIA requests, we chose the component simplest to search by FOIA analysts—their own. Once more is known about how IMS conducts searches of its own records, requesters can begin to make educated guesses about how other CIA components conduct their searches, which will allow any informed

member of the public to couch future requests in terms most likely to fit within the configuration of the CIA's records systems. After all, any frequent requester has been told at least once by the CIA that "CIA records systems are not configured in a way that would allow us to perform a search reasonably calculated to lead to responsive records." Armed with the information responsive to this request, requesters will be able to avoid this response through careful phrasing and language choices.

In addition, with respect to the specific requirement that NSC must demonstrate an expertise in the subject area in order to satisfy the fee waiver criterion that disclosure of the requested information must contribute to the understanding of the public at large, I personally have worked as a national security and information and privacy lawyer for three years, have litigated several FOIA/PA cases, teach National Security Law at the University of the District of Columbia, and recently received an LLM in National Security Law from Georgetown University Law Center.

We also specifically state for the record our unwillingness to pay any fees for this request. Please do not delay the processing of this request by needlessly requesting further confirmation of our unwillingness to pay fees or terminate the processing of this request for failure to provide you with such confirmation. This statement is a full and unequivocal refusal to pay *any* fees for this request.

Please ensure that, in accordance with the DC Circuit's ruling in *Chambers v. Dep't of the Interior*, 568 F.3d 998 (D.C. Cir. 2009), all records potentially responsive to this FOIA request are immediately preserved from destruction until the final resolution of this FOIA action. Destruction of potentially responsive records after the receipt of a FOIA request is considered "contumacious conduct" by the DC Circuit. *See id.* at 1004.

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 a United States District Court.

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, .doc, .jpg, .gif, .tif. Please provide soft-copy records by email or on a CD if email is not feasible. However, NSC does not agree to pay an additional fee to receive records on a CD, and in the instance that such a fee is required, NSC will accept a paper copy of responsive records.

Your cooperation in this matter would be appreciated. If you wish to discuss this request, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,



Kel McClanahan
Executive Director