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13 May 2010

Patrick Scholl
Chief, Requester Liaison Division
Office of Information Programs and Services (A/ISS/IPS)
U.S. Department of State, SA-2
Washington, DC 20522-8100

Re: FOIA Request – “First Contact” contingency plans

Dear Mr. Scholl:

This is a request on behalf of National Security Counselors (“NSC”) under the Freedom of Information Act, 5 U.S.C. § 552, *et seq.*, for copies of **all Department of State (“DOS”) records discussing contingency plans for a “first contact” scenario with extraterrestrials.** A “first contact” scenario is defined as any situation in which the U.S. government learns of the existence of extraterrestrial life (most likely because said extraterrestrials have announced their presence to the government) and has the capability to communicate with the extraterrestrials. This scenario would cover the situation of extraterrestrials attacking the United States, however unlikely that may be.

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. Please also consider this letter an affirmative rejection of any limitation of your search to DOS-originated records or exclusion of correspondence sent to third parties.

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 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)). 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. This request presupposes, unlike many UFO enthusiasts, that the U.S. government is not currently aware of the existence of sentient extraterrestrial life. The purpose of this request is to study the degree to which the U.S. government develops contingency plans for unpredictable or even unlikely scenarios, and the responsive records will be analyzed as part of an organizational psychology research project along with records obtained through other FOIA requests for contingency plans for other scenarios of a similar "unpredictable and/or unlikely" quality (e.g. imminent catastrophic asteroid impact, collapse of the nation's cyber-infrastructure, creation of a true artificial intelligence, etc.). Therefore, these records, once examined and analyzed, have a great potential for contributing to the public's understanding of how and why the government plans for certain contingencies and not others.

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 received my Masters degree from Georgetown University in Security Studies with a

concentration in Leadership Analysis and Political Psychology, have been published in the Organizational Psychology field (see above), have worked for two national security law firms, 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.

The DOS 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 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,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kel McClanahan", written in a cursive style.

Kel McClanahan
Executive Director