



October 31, 2013

Arnetta Mallory - FOIA Initiatives Coordinator
Patricia Matthews - FOIA Public Liaison
National Security Division
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Room 6150
Washington, DC 20530-0001

BY EMAIL — nsdfoia@usdoj.gov

RE: Freedom of Information Act Request and Request for Expedited Processing

Dear Ms. Mallory and Ms. Matthews:

This letter constitutes an expedited request under the Freedom of Information Act (“FOIA”), 5 U.S.C. § 552, and is submitted to the Department of Justice (“DOJ”), National Security Division (“NSD”) on behalf of the Electronic Frontier Foundation (“EFF”). EFF makes this request as part of its Transparency Project, which works to obtain government records and make those records widely available to the public.

On January 10, 2007, a judge on the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court (FISC) “issued orders authorizing the Government to target for collection international communications into or out of the United States As a result of these orders, any electronic surveillance that was occurring as part of the Terrorist Surveillance Program [was subsequently] conducted subject to approval of the [FISC].” Letter to Sen. Patrick Leahy & Sen. Arlen Specter from Att’y Gen. Alberto Gonzalez (Jan. 17, 2007);¹ *see also* Offices of the Inspectors Gen., *Unclassified Report on the President’s Surveillance Program* 30-31 (July 10, 2009).²

In May 2007, however, a second FISC judge refused to renew the January 2007 FISC order. According to the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence “[a]t the end of May 2007. . . attention was drawn to a ruling of the FISA Court. When a second judge of the FISA Court considered renewal of the January 2007 FISA orders, he issued a ruling that the DNI later described as significantly diverting NSA analysts from their counterterrorism mission to provide information to the Court.” Report on S. Rep. 110-209, *Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act of 1978 Amendments Act of 2007*, Sen. Select Comm. on Intelligence, 110th Cong. (Oct. 26, 2007); *see also* Chris Roberts, *Transcript: Debate On The Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act*, *El Paso Times* at 1 (Aug. 22, 2007) (quoting then-Director of National Intelligence Mike McConnell saying, “[The Program] was submitted to the FISA court and the first ruling in the FISA court was what we needed to do we could do with an approval process that was at a summary level and that was OK, we stayed in business and we’re doing our mission. . . . But the FISA process has a

¹ Available at http://graphics8.nytimes.com/packages/pdf/politics/20060117gonzales_Letter.pdf.

² Available at <https://www.fas.org/irp/eprint/psp.pdf>.

renewal. . . So the second judge looked at the same data and said well wait a minute I interpret the law, which is the FISA law, differently.”).

Accordingly, EFF hereby requests the following records:

1. The January 10, 2007³ order(s) and/or opinion(s) — including, but not limited to, any “foreign content order” or “domestic content order” — of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court, including all legal memoranda, documents, briefings, minimization and targeting procedures, and/or policies incorporated within the Court’s January 2007 order(s) and/or opinion(s); and,
2. Any subsequent order(s) and/or opinion(s) of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court reconsidering, reinterpreting, refusing to renew, or otherwise altering the January 10, 2007 orders, and all accompanying documents, including legal memoranda, documents, briefings, minimization and targeting procedures, and/or policies incorporated within the Court’s order(s) and/or opinion(s).

Request for Expedited Processing

For the reasons discussed below, a “compelling need” exists for the records sought in this request, and, as such, EFF is entitled to expedited processing under 5 U.S.C. § 552(a)(6)(E)(v)(II) and 28 C.F.R. §§ 16.5(d)(1)(ii) and (iv).

Expedited Processing under 28 C.F.R. § 16.5(d)(1)(ii)

EFF is entitled to expedited processing because the request pertains to information about which there is an “urgency to inform the public about an actual or alleged federal government activity,” and the request is “made by a person primarily engaged in disseminating information.” 28 C.F.R. § 16.5(d)(1)(ii). The information we request easily satisfies this standard.

First, the records sought by this request undeniably concern a “federal government activity.” *Id.* The records requested here—FISC opinions and orders concerning electronic surveillance conducted by the NSA—reflect both on the federal government’s operation of domestic electronic surveillance and on the judicial oversight of those surveillance activities.

Second, there is an “urgency to inform the public” about the federal government activity. *Id.* The NSA programs addressed in the requested records are being actively debated by both houses of Congress and are currently subject to at least ten bills pending in the House of

³ EFF is informed and believes the FISC opinions it seeks are dated January 10, 2007 and provides it only as a guide for locating the correct opinions. However, if Attorney General Gonzalez’s letter provided an incorrect or incomplete date for the relevant opinions, EFF asks that the date not be used to restrict or otherwise limit the production of relevant FISC materials.

Representatives⁴ and nine bills pending in the Senate.⁵ With Congressional debate surrounding the FISC the subject of such rigorous debate, the need to inform the public about the law governing the operation of NSA surveillance is imperative. The information we request will help the public and Congress fully understand the current state and legality of FISA surveillance, and to participate in the ongoing debate over whether to expand—or restrict—the oversight capacity of the FISC. Delay in processing this FOIA request could inhibit the ability of Congress and the public to fully analyze and debate the implications of any changes to the statutory authority of the NSA or the FISC proposed in the bills currently being debated.

In two FOIA cases brought by EFF, the court found that requests warranted expedited treatment where Congress is considering legislation “and the records may enable the public to participate meaningfully in the debate over such pending legislation.” *EFF v. ODNI*, 542 F. Supp. 2d 1181, 1187 (N.D. Cal. 2008) (citing *EFF v. ODNI*, 2007 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 89585 (Nov. 27, 2007)). Even though the court could not “predict the timing of passage of the legislation” the court granted expedited processing, holding “that delayed disclosure of the requested materials may cause irreparable harm to a vested constitutional interest in ‘the uninhibited, robust, and wide-open debate about matters of public importance that secures an informed citizenry.’” *Id.* (citing *New York Times Co. v. Sullivan*, 376 U.S. 254, 270 (1964)). Similarly, there is an urgency to inform the public about the information we seek here.

Further, as explained below in support of our request for “news media” treatment, EFF is “primarily engaged in disseminating information” under 28 C.F.R. § 16.11(c)(1)(i).

Therefore, this request meets the standard for expedited processing set forth in 28 C.F.R. § 16.5(d)(1)(ii).

Expedited Processing under 28 C.F.R. § 16.5(d)(1)(iv)

EFF is also entitled to expedited processing under 28 C.F.R. § 16.5(d)(1)(iv) because the subject of the request concerns “a matter of widespread and exceptional media interest in which there exist possible questions about the government's integrity which affect public confidence.”

⁴ H.R. 2399 (LIBERT-E Act), H.R. 2440 (FISA Court in the Sunshine Act of 2013), H.R. 2475 (Ending Secret Law Act), H.R. 2586 (FISA Court Accountability Act), H.R. 2603 (Relevancy Act), H.R. 2684 (Telephone Surveillance Accountability Act of 2013), H.R. 2736 (Government Surveillance Transparency Act of 2013), H.R. 2761 (Presidential Appointment of FISA Court Judges Act), H.R. 2818 (To repeal the USA PATRIOT Act and the FISA Amendments Act of 2008), and H.R. 2849 (Privacy Advocate General Act of 2013).

⁵ S. 1016 (Preserving Freedom from Unwarranted Surveillance Act of 2013), S. 1121 (Fourth Amendment Restoration Act of 2013), S. 1130 (Ending Secret Law Act), S. 1168 (Restore Our Privacy Act), S. 1182 (A bill to modify the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act of 1978), S. 1215 (FISA Accountability and Privacy Protection Act of 2013), S. 1452 (A bill to enhance transparency for certain surveillance programs authorized by the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act of 1978), S. 1460 (FISA Judge Selection Reform Act of 2013), and S. 1467 (FISA Court Reform Act of 2013).

First, the disclosure of other FISC opinions over the past three months has generated “widespread and exceptional media interest.” *See e.g.*, Charlie Savage & Scott Shane, *Top-Secret Court Castigated N.S.A. On Surveillance*, New York Times (August 22, 2013) (page A1);⁶ Ellen Nakashima, *NSA Gathered Thousands of Americans’ E-mails Before Court Ordered it to Revise its Tactics*, Washington Post (August 21, 2013);⁷ Cyrus Farivar, *Judge: NSA “systematically violated” its own privacy requirements*, Ars Technica (August 21, 2013)⁸; *see also Edmonds v. FBI*, 2002 US Dist. LEXIS 26578, *10 (D.D.C. 2002) (noting “extensive media coverage” satisfied by “numerous newspaper articles in the printed press . . . and on TV”), *rev’d on other grounds* 417 F.3d 1319 (D.C. Cir 2005).

Because the requested opinions likely contain substantial interpretations of federal law and the Constitution, the continued secrecy of the opinions necessarily “affect[s] public confidence” in the government’s integrity. 28 C.F.R. § 16.5(d)(1)(iv). Consequently, the records sought in this request satisfy the requirements for expedited processing under 28 C.F.R. § 16.5(d)(1)(iv).

Request for News Media Fee Status

EFF asks that it not be charged search or review fees for this request because EFF qualifies as a representative of the news media pursuant to the FOIA and 28 C.F.R. § 16.11(b)(6). In requesting this classification, we note that the Department of Homeland Security and National Security Agency, among other agencies, have recognized that EFF qualifies as a “news media” requester, based upon the publication activities set forth below (see DHS stipulation and NSA letter, attached hereto). We further note that the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit has stressed that “different agencies [must not] adopt inconsistent interpretations of the FOIA.” *Al-Fayed v. CIA*, 254 F.3d 300, 307 (D.C. Cir. 2001), quoting *Pub. Citizen Health Research Group v. FDA*, 704 F.2d 1280, 1287 (D.C. Cir. 1983).

EFF is a non-profit public interest organization that works “to protect and enhance our core civil liberties in the digital age.”⁹ One of EFF’s primary objectives is “to educate the press, policymakers and the general public about online civil liberties.”¹⁰ To accomplish this goal, EFF routinely and systematically disseminates information in several ways.

First, EFF maintains a frequently visited web site, <http://www.eff.org>, which received 1,314,234 unique visitors in July 2013 — an average of 1,776 per hour. The web site reports the latest

⁶ Available at <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/08/22/us/2011-ruling-found-an-nsa-program-unconstitutional.html>

⁷ Available at http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/nsa-gathered-thousands-of-americans-e-mails-before-court-struck-down-program/2013/08/21/146ba4b6-0a90-11e3-b87c-476db8ac34cd_story.html

⁸ Available at <http://arstechnica.com/tech-policy/2013/08/judge-nsa-systematically-violated-its-own-privacy-requirements/>

⁹ Guidestar Nonprofit Report, Electronic Frontier Foundation, <https://www.guidestar.org/organizations/04-3091431/electronic-frontier-foundation.aspx> (last visited August 22, 2013).

¹⁰ *Id.*

developments and contains in-depth information about a variety of civil liberties and intellectual property issues.

EFF has regularly published an online newsletter, the EFFector, since 1990. The EFFector currently has more than 235,000 subscribers. A complete archive of past EFFectors is available at <http://www.eff.org/effector/>.

Furthermore, EFF publishes a blog that highlights the latest news from around the Internet. DeepLinks (<http://www.eff.org/deeplinks/>) reports and analyzes newsworthy developments in technology. DeepLinks had 116,494 unique visitors in July 2013. EFF also maintains a presence on the social media networks Twitter (more than 150,000 followers), Facebook (more than 67,000 followers), and Google Plus (more than 2,000,000 followers).

In addition to reporting hi-tech developments, EFF staff members have presented research and in-depth analysis on technology issues in no fewer than forty white papers published since 2003. These papers, available at <http://www.eff.org/wp/>, provide information and commentary on such diverse issues as electronic voting, free speech, privacy and intellectual property.

EFF has also published several books to educate the public about technology and civil liberties issues. *Everybody's Guide to the Internet* (MIT Press 1994), first published electronically as *The Big Dummy's Guide to the Internet* in 1993, was translated into several languages, and is still sold by Powell's Books (<http://www.powells.com>). EFF also produced *Protecting Yourself Online: The Definitive Resource on Safety, Freedom & Privacy in Cyberspace* (HarperEdge 1998), a "comprehensive guide to self-protection in the electronic frontier," which can be purchased via Amazon.com (<http://www.amazon.com>). Finally, *Cracking DES: Secrets of Encryption Research, Wiretap Politics & Chip Design* (O'Reilly 1998) revealed technical details on encryption security to the public. The book is available online at <http://cryptome.org/cracking-des.htm> and for sale at Amazon.com.

Request for a Public Interest Fee Waiver

EFF is entitled to a waiver of duplication fees because disclosure of the requested information is in the public interest within the meaning of 5 U.S.C. § 552(a)(4)(a)(iii) and 28 C.F.R. § 16.11(k)(1)(i), (ii). To determine whether a request meets this standard, the agency must assess whether "[d]isclosure of the requested information . . . is likely to contribute significantly to public understanding of the operations or activities of the government," 28 C.F.R. § 16.11(k)(1)(i), and whether such disclosure "is not primarily in the commercial interest of the requester." 28 C.F.R. § 16.11(k)(1)(ii). This request satisfies these criteria.

First, any FISC orders or opinions in the possession of DOJ NSD necessarily implicate "the operations or activities of the government." 28 C.F.R. § 16.11(k)(1)(i). The opinions and orders concern domestic surveillance undertaken by the U.S. intelligence community.

Second, disclosure of the requested information will contribute to a public understanding of government operations or activities. *Id.* EFF has requested information that will shed light on the intelligence community's interaction with the FISC in the implementation and transition of NSA

surveillance activities to FISA Court oversight. This information will contribute not only to EFF's understanding of surveillance activities and law, but also to the understanding of a reasonably broad audience of persons interested in the subject. EFF will make the information it obtains under the FOIA available to the public and the media through its web site and newsletter, which highlight developments concerning privacy and civil liberties issues, and/or other channels discussed more fully above.

Finally, since only limited information has been made available regarding the shift of NSA surveillance activities to FISC oversight, the disclosure will "contribute significantly" to the public's knowledge and understanding of surveillance activities – and the legal basis for that surveillance – undertaken by the federal government. *Id.* Disclosure of the requested information will help inform the public about the legality of the intelligence community's actions, as well as contribute to the public debate about proper reforms to such authority.

Furthermore, a fee waiver is appropriate here because EFF has no commercial interest in the disclosure of the requested records. 28 C.F.R. § 16.11(k)(1)(ii). EFF is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, and will derive no commercial benefit from the information at issue here.

Thank you for your consideration of this request. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me at (415) 436-9333 x146. As the FOIA provides, I will anticipate a determination on this request for expedited processing within 10 calendar days.

I certify that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, all information within this request is true and correct.

Sincerely,

/s/ Mark Rumold

Mark Rumold
Staff Attorney

Enclosure