



September 4, 2019

VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL

U.S. Department of State  
Office of Information Programs and Services  
A/GIS/IPS/RL  
SA-2, Suite 8100  
Washington, DC 20522-0208  
[FOIArequest@state.gov](mailto:FOIArequest@state.gov)

**Re: Freedom of Information Act Request**

Dear FOIA Officer:

Pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), 5 U.S.C. § 552, and the implementing regulations of the Department of State (State), 22 C.F.R. Part 171, American Oversight makes the following request for records.

In July 2019, reports emerged that the Trump administration was considering hosting the 2020 G7 Summit at Trump National Doral, one of the president's privately owned golf clubs in Miami, Florida.<sup>1</sup> Further, the White House's official Twitter account recently tweeted a video of President Trump discussing the Doral club, with the caption: "President @realDonaldTrump shares the location of the next @G7 summit, hosted by the United States!"<sup>2</sup> This suggestion has raised concerns<sup>3</sup> that the President's privately owned, for-profit company would financially benefit from hosting a major international diplomatic meeting.

American Oversight seeks records to shed light on whether and to what extent State has considered hosting the 2020 G7 summit at Trump National Doral, or at any other privately owned Trump property.

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<sup>1</sup> Jonathan Swan, *Scoop: Trump Resort in Mix to Host G7*, AXIOS, July 22, 2019, <https://www.axios.com/trump-national-doral-g7-site-2020-252ae9ee-aafc-444a-a8e7-fa041a30f0aa.html>.

<sup>2</sup> The White House (@WhiteHouse), TWITTER (Aug. 26, 2019: 12:57 PM), <https://twitter.com/WhiteHouse/status/1166031887242018816>.

<sup>3</sup> Bernard Condon and Adriana Gomez Licon, *Ethics Outcry as Trump Touts "Magnificent" Doral for Next G7*, WASH. POST, Aug. 27, 2019, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/ethics-outcry-as-trump-touts-magnificent-doral-for-next-g7/2019/08/26/ea53e794-c85f-11e9-9615-8f1a32962e04\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/ethics-outcry-as-trump-touts-magnificent-doral-for-next-g7/2019/08/26/ea53e794-c85f-11e9-9615-8f1a32962e04_story.html).



## Requested Records

American Oversight requests that State Department produce the following records within twenty business days:

All email communications (including email messages, complete email chains, email attachments, calendar invitations, and attachments thereto) sent by (a) the State officials listed below to (b) any email address ending in .com, .net, .org, .mil, .mail, or .edu regarding the location of the 2020 G7 summit.

- a. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, and anyone in the Immediate Office of the Secretary communicating on his behalf, such as assistants, schedulers, and advisors;
- b. Executive Secretary Lisa Kenna, and anyone in her immediate office communicating on her behalf, including deputies, schedulers, and assistants;
- c. Deputy Secretary of State John Sullivan, and anyone serving as his Chief of Staff;
- d. Acting Legal Adviser Marik String, former Legal Adviser Jennifer Newstead, and anyone else serving in the capacity of Legal Adviser;
- e. Assistant Secretary of State for International Organization Affairs Kevin Moley;
- f. Assistant Secretary and Senior Official for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs Michelle S. Giuda;
- g. Department Spokesperson Heather Nauert;
- h. White House Liaison Carrie Cabelka, and anyone else serving as White House Liaison or Advisor, including any deputies;
- i. Chief of Protocol Cam Henderson, former acting Chief of Protocol Mary-Kate Fisher, former Chief of Protocol Sean Lawler, and anyone else serving in the capacity of Chief of Protocol, including any deputies.

For this request, American Oversight believes that records containing the term “G7” or “2020” in conjunction with “Doral,” “Trump International,” “Trump club,” “Trump hotel,” “Miami,” or “Florida” are likely to be responsive records, and American Oversight requests that State, at a minimum, employ these search terms to identify responsive records.

In an effort to accommodate the Department of State and reduce the number of potentially responsive records, American Oversight agrees that the search for responsive email communications may be limited to emails sent by State officials. Despite this search accommodation, American Oversight still requests that complete email chains be produced, displaying both sent and received messages.

Please provide all responsive records from March 1, 2019, through the date the search is conducted.

## Fee Waiver Request

In accordance with 5 U.S.C. § 552(a)(4)(A)(iii) and your agency's regulations, American Oversight requests a waiver of fees associated with processing this request for records. The subject of this request concerns the operations of the federal government, and the disclosures will likely contribute to a better understanding of relevant government procedures by the general public in a significant way. Moreover, the request is primarily and fundamentally for non-commercial purposes.

American Oversight requests a waiver of fees because disclosure of the requested information is "in the public interest because it is likely to contribute significantly to public understanding of operations or activities of the government."<sup>4</sup> The public has a significant interest in whether and to what extent State and White House officials are planning to host an international diplomatic summit at one of the President's privately owned, for-profit properties.<sup>5</sup> Records with the potential to shed light on this question would contribute significantly to public understanding of operations of the federal government, including whether and to what extent a president's private property will be used and potentially enriched by hosting a major diplomatic event in an election year. American Oversight is committed to transparency and makes the responses agencies provide to FOIA requests publicly available, and the public's understanding of the government's activities would be enhanced through American Oversight's analysis and publication of these records.

This request is primarily and fundamentally for non-commercial purposes.<sup>6</sup> As a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, American Oversight does not have a commercial purpose and the release of the information requested is not in American Oversight's financial interest. American Oversight's mission is to promote transparency in government, to educate the public about government activities, and to ensure the accountability of government officials. American Oversight uses the information gathered, and its analysis of it, to educate the public through reports, press releases, or other media. American Oversight also makes materials it gathers available on its public website and promotes their availability on social media platforms, such as Facebook and Twitter.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> 5 U.S.C. § 552(a)(4)(A)(iii).

<sup>5</sup> See Patricia Mazzei et al., *Trump Has Just the Place for the Next G7 Meeting: His Own Golf Resort*, N.Y. TIMES, Aug. 26, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/08/26/world/europe/trump-doral-g7.html>; see also Caitlin Oprysko, "Each Country Can Have Their Own Villa": Trump Promotes His Doral Resort For Next G-7, POLITICO (Aug. 26, 2019: 12:00 PM), <https://www.politico.com/states/florida/story/2019/08/26/trump-gives-mini-ad-for-miami-resort-in-talking-up-doral-as-site-of-next-g-7-1153781>.

<sup>6</sup> See 5 U.S.C. § 552(a)(4)(A)(iii).

<sup>7</sup> American Oversight currently has approximately 12,400 page likes on Facebook and 54,500 followers on Twitter. American Oversight, FACEBOOK, <https://www.facebook.com/weareoversight/> (last visited Aug. 26, 2019); American

American Oversight has also demonstrated its commitment to the public disclosure of documents and creation of editorial content through numerous substantive analyses posted to its website.<sup>8</sup> Examples reflecting this commitment to the public disclosure of documents and the creation of editorial content include the posting of records related to an ethics waiver received by a senior Department of Justice attorney and an analysis of what those records demonstrated regarding the Department's process for issuing such waivers;<sup>9</sup> posting records received as part of American Oversight's "Audit the Wall" project to gather and analyze information related to the administration's proposed construction of a barrier along the U.S.-Mexico border, and analyses of what those records reveal;<sup>10</sup> posting records regarding potential self-dealing at the Department of Housing & Urban Development and related analysis;<sup>11</sup> posting records and analysis relating to the federal government's efforts to sell nuclear technology to Saudi Arabia;<sup>12</sup> posting records and analysis regarding the Department of Justice's decision in response to demands from Congress to direct a U.S. Attorney to undertake a wide-ranging review and make recommendations regarding criminal investigations relating to the President's political opponents and allegations of misconduct by the Department of Justice itself and the Federal Bureau of Investigation.<sup>13</sup>

Accordingly, American Oversight qualifies for a fee waiver.

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Oversight (@weareoversight), TWITTER, <https://twitter.com/weareoversight> (last visited Aug. 26, 2019).

<sup>8</sup> News, AMERICAN OVERSIGHT, <https://www.americanoversight.org/blog>.

<sup>9</sup> *DOJ Records Relating to Solicitor General Noel Francisco's Recusal*, AMERICAN OVERSIGHT, <https://www.americanoversight.org/document/doj-civil-division-response-noel-francisco-compliance>; *Francisco & the Travel Ban: What We Learned from the DOJ Documents*, AMERICAN OVERSIGHT, <https://www.americanoversight.org/francisco-the-travel-ban-what-we-learned-from-the-doj-documents>.

<sup>10</sup> *See generally Audit the Wall*, AMERICAN OVERSIGHT, <https://www.americanoversight.org/investigation/audit-the-wall>; *see, e.g., Border Wall Investigation Report: No Plans, No Funding, No Timeline, No Wall*, AMERICAN OVERSIGHT, <https://www.americanoversight.org/border-wall-investigation-report-no-plans-no-funding-no-timeline-no-wall>.

<sup>11</sup> *Documents Reveal Ben Carson Jr.'s Attempts to Use His Influence at HUD to Help His Business*, AMERICAN OVERSIGHT, <https://www.americanoversight.org/documents-reveal-ben-carson-jr-s-attempts-to-use-his-influence-at-hud-to-help-his-business>.

<sup>12</sup> *Investigating the Trump Administration's Efforts to Sell Nuclear Technology to Saudi Arabia*, AMERICAN OVERSIGHT, <https://www.americanoversight.org/investigating-the-trump-administrations-efforts-to-sell-nuclear-technology-to-saudi-arabia>.

<sup>13</sup> *Sessions' Letter Shows DOJ Acted On Trump's Authoritarian Demand to Investigate Clinton*, AMERICAN OVERSIGHT, <https://www.americanoversight.org/sessions-letter>.

## Guidance Regarding the Search & Processing of Requested Records

In connection with its request for records, American Oversight provides the following guidance regarding the scope of the records sought and the search and processing of records:

- Please search all locations and systems likely to have responsive records, regardless of format, medium, or physical characteristics. For instance, because this request seeks “communications,” please search all locations likely to contain communications, including relevant hard-copy files, correspondence files, appropriate locations on hard drives and shared drives, emails, text messages or other direct messaging systems (such as iMessage, WhatsApp, Signal, or Twitter direct messages), voicemail messages, instant messaging systems such as Lync or ICQ, and shared messages systems such as Slack.
- In conducting your search, please understand the term “record” in its broadest sense, to include any written, typed, recorded, graphic, printed, or audio material of any kind. We seek records of any kind, including electronic records, audiotapes, videotapes, and photographs, as well as letters, emails, facsimiles, telephone messages, voice mail messages, and transcripts, notes, or minutes of any meetings, telephone conversations, or discussions.
- Our request for records includes any attachments to those records or other materials enclosed with those records when they were previously transmitted. To the extent that an email is responsive to our request, our request includes all prior messages sent or received in that email chain, as well as any attachments to the email.
- Please search all relevant records or systems containing records regarding agency business. Do not exclude records regarding agency business contained in files, email accounts, or devices in the personal custody of your officials, such as personal email accounts or text messages. Records of official business conducted using unofficial systems or stored outside of official files are subject to the Federal Records Act and FOIA.<sup>14</sup> It is not adequate to rely on policies and procedures that require officials to move such information to official systems within a certain period of time; American Oversight has a right to records contained in those files even if material has not yet been moved to official systems or if officials have, by intent or through negligence, failed to meet their obligations.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> See *Competitive Enter. Inst. v. Office of Sci. & Tech. Policy*, 827 F.3d 145, 149–50 (D.C. Cir. 2016); cf. *Judicial Watch, Inc. v. Kerry*, 844 F.3d 952, 955–56 (D.C. Cir. 2016).

<sup>15</sup> See *Competitive Enter. Inst. v. Office of Sci. & Tech. Policy*, No. 14-cv-765, slip op. at 8 (D.D.C. Dec. 12, 2016).

- Please use all tools available to your agency to conduct a complete and efficient search for potentially responsive records. Agencies are subject to government-wide requirements to manage agency information electronically,<sup>16</sup> and many agencies have adopted the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) Capstone program, or similar policies. These systems provide options for searching emails and other electronic records in a manner that is reasonably likely to be more complete than just searching individual custodian files. For example, a custodian may have deleted a responsive email from his or her email program, but your agency’s archiving tools may capture that email under Capstone. At the same time, custodian searches are still necessary; agencies may not have direct access to files stored in .PST files, outside of network drives, in paper format, or in personal email accounts.
- In the event some portions of the requested records are properly exempt from disclosure, please disclose any reasonably segregable non-exempt portions of the requested records. If a request is denied in whole, please state specifically why it is not reasonable to segregate portions of the record for release.
- Please take appropriate steps to ensure that records responsive to this request are not deleted by the agency before the completion of processing for this request. If records potentially responsive to this request are likely to be located on systems where they are subject to potential deletion, including on a scheduled basis, please take steps to prevent that deletion, including, as appropriate, by instituting a litigation hold on those records.

## **Conclusion**

If you have any questions regarding how to construe this request for records or believe that further discussions regarding search and processing would facilitate a more efficient production of records of interest to American Oversight, please do not hesitate to contact American Oversight to discuss this request. American Oversight welcomes an opportunity to discuss its request with you before you undertake your search or incur search or duplication costs. By working together at the outset, American Oversight and your agency can decrease the likelihood of costly and time-consuming litigation in the future.

Where possible, please provide responsive material in an electronic format by email. Alternatively, please provide responsive material in native format or in PDF format on a USB drive. Please send any responsive material being sent by mail to American Oversight,

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<sup>16</sup> Presidential Memorandum—Managing Government Records, 76 Fed. Reg. 75,423 (Nov. 28, 2011), <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2011/11/28/presidential-memorandum-managing-government-records>; Office of Mgmt. & Budget, Exec. Office of the President, Memorandum for the Heads of Executive Departments & Independent Agencies, “Managing Government Records Directive,” M-12-18 (Aug. 24, 2012), <https://www.archives.gov/files/records-mgmt/m-12-18.pdf>.

1030 15th Street NW, Suite B255, Washington, DC 20005. If it will accelerate release of responsive records to American Oversight, please also provide responsive material on a rolling basis.

We share a common mission to promote transparency in government. American Oversight looks forward to working with your agency on this request. If you do not understand any part of this request, please contact Khahilia Shaw at [foia@americanoversight.org](mailto:foia@americanoversight.org) or at 202.539.6507. Also, if American Oversight's request for a fee waiver is not granted in full, please contact us immediately upon making such a determination.

Sincerely,



Melanie Sloan  
Senior Advisor  
American Oversight