



June 25, 2020

VIA EMAIL & ONLINE PORTAL

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Record/Information Dissemination  
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170 Marcel Drive  
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VIA eFOIA

**Re: Expedited 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 your agency, American Oversight makes the following request for records.

Public reports indicate that President Trump has solicited the service of numerous federal law enforcement agencies to help control the protests incited by the May 25, 2020, killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis.<sup>1</sup> Since the start of the protests, various reports have highlighted the aggressive tactics utilized by uniformed officers.<sup>2</sup> Additional reports have indicated that uniformed officers deployed to the protests have often refused to identify themselves.<sup>3</sup> Such reports have prompted numerous members of Congress to make inquiries concerning which agencies have been involved with recent protest response activities.<sup>4</sup> American Oversight seeks records with the potential to shed light on the decision to deploy federal law enforcement officers in response to protests, the use force on protesters, and the refusal of some federal law enforcement officers to identify themselves.

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<sup>1</sup> Zolan Kanno-Youngs and Katie Benner, *Trump Deploys the Full Might of Federal Law Enforcement to Crush Protests*, N.Y. TIMES, June 2, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/02/us/politics/trump-law-enforcement-protests.html>.

<sup>2</sup> Catherine E. Shoichet, *Police Brutality Prompted the Protests. In Some Cities, the Police Response Only Proved the Protesters' Point*, CNN (June 3, 2020, 10:34 AM), <https://www.cnn.com/2020/06/02/us/police-protests-use-of-force/index.html>.

<sup>3</sup> Dan Friedman, *Trump has Flooded DC with Law Enforcement Officers Who Won't Identify Themselves*, MOTHER JONES, June 3, 2020, <https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2020/06/trump-has-flooded-dc-with-law-enforcement-officers-who-wont-identify-themselves/>.

<sup>4</sup> Sahil Kapur & Garrett Haake, *'I was Horrified': Democrats Seek to Outlaw Unmarked Police as they Patrol D.C. Protests*, NBC NEWS (June 4, 2020, 3:42 PM), <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/white-house/i-was-horrified-democrats-seek-outlaw-unmarked-police-they-patrol-n1225016>.

## Requested Records

American Oversight seeks expedited review of this request for the reasons identified below and requests that your agency produce the following records as soon as practicable, and at least within twenty business days:

1. All records reflecting any order, directive, or guidance (including informal direction distributed to your agency's officers, agents, or members) regarding your agency's use of force guidelines, policies, doctrines, or protocols (including, but not limited to, all records specifying circumstances and limitations for the use of force).
2. All records reflecting any order, directive, or guidance (including informal direction distributed to your agency's officers, agents, or members) regarding your agency's rules of engagement (including, but not limited to, all records specifying intervention criteria).
3. All records reflecting any order, directive, or guidance (including informal direction distributed to your agency's officers, agents, or members) regarding the deployment of your agency's officers, agents, or members (including, but not limited to, all records specifying logistical deployment information).
4. All records reflecting any order, directive, or guidance (including informal direction distributed to your agency's officers, agents, or members) regarding the visual or verbal presentation of law enforcement credentials identifying your agency's officers, agents, or members<sup>5</sup> deployed in response to protests or purported civil unrest (including, but not limited to, all records concerning verbal self-identification to members of the public or press, badge display standards or requirements, or name display standards or requirements).

Please provide all responsive records drafted, revised, finalized, or distributed from May 25, 2020 through June 5, 2020.

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<sup>5</sup> Reports indicate that Military Police Corps, U.S. Park Police, Customs and Border Protection, Bureau of Prisons, National Guard, U.S. Marshals Service, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, Immigration and Customs Enforcement Homeland Security Investigations, Transportation Security Administration, Drug Enforcement Administration, and Federal Bureau of Investigation Hostage Rescue Team officers, agents, and members were so deployed.

## 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>6</sup> The public has a significant interest in the identity of federal law enforcement agencies deployed in response to recent protests. The public also has a significant interest in whether federal police forces are using force lawfully or whether force has been used inappropriately on citizens lawfully gathered to exercise fundamental rights. Records with the potential to shed light on these matters would contribute significantly to public understanding of operations of the federal government, including whether federal law enforcement officials were instructed to limit the amount of identifying information they present to the public and who directed the use of force on protestors gathered throughout the country. 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>7</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>8</sup>

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

<sup>7</sup> See 5 U.S.C. § 552(a)(4)(A)(iii).

<sup>8</sup> American Oversight currently has approximately 12,200 page likes on Facebook and 54,200 followers on Twitter. American Oversight, FACEBOOK, <https://www.facebook.com/weareoversight/> (last visited May 29, 2019); American Oversight (@weareoversight), TWITTER, <https://twitter.com/weareoversight> (last visited May 29, 2019).

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>9</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>10</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>11</sup> posting records regarding potential self-dealing at the Department of Housing & Urban Development and related analysis;<sup>12</sup> posting records and analysis relating to the federal government’s efforts to sell nuclear technology to Saudi Arabia;<sup>13</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>14</sup>

Accordingly, American Oversight qualifies for a fee waiver.

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<sup>9</sup> News, AMERICAN OVERSIGHT, <https://www.americanoversight.org/blog>.

<sup>10</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>11</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>12</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>13</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>14</sup> *Sessions’ Letter Shows DOJ Acted On Trump’s Authoritarian Demand to Investigate Clinton*, AMERICAN OVERSIGHT, <https://www.americanoversight.org/sessions-letter>.

### Application for Expedited Processing

Pursuant to 5 U.S.C. § 552(a)(6)(E)(1), American Oversight requests that your agency expedite the processing of this request.

I certify to be true and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief that the information requested is urgently needed in order to inform the public concerning actual or alleged government activity. There is an urgent need to inform the public about the refusal of some uniformed federal law enforcement officers tasked with protest response to provide identifying information and the federal government's use of force against protestors on American soil, which is a topic of widespread concern.<sup>15</sup>

Moreover, I certify to be true and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief that there is an urgent need to inform the public of which federal law enforcement agencies deployed in response to the protests, about the federal officials directing the concealment of identifying information, and about the federal officials who are responsible for directing intervention criteria and enabling the use of force against domestic protestors. As members of the Trump Administration continue to support the use of force against protestors, there is an urgent need to inform the public about existing use of force standards informing the intervention practices of federal law enforcement agencies deployed in response to recent protests.<sup>16</sup> Additionally, as numerous journalists and members of the public continue to raise concerns and issue complaints over various law enforcement bodies' use of force against protestors, there is an urgent need to inform the public of the identities of the agencies deploying officers to protest sites.<sup>17</sup> Without the ability to identify the federal agencies deploying uniformed officers for protest control, aggrieved parties and their advocates have no way to initiate accountability processes. Numerous members of Congress have now raised urgent concerns about the failure of federal law enforcement officers and other forces to provide appropriate identifying information, both verbally or through the use of appropriate identifying badges and uniforms.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Shoichet *supra* note 2

<sup>16</sup> Josh Gerstein, *Barr Defends Use of Force to Clear Protesters Near White House*, POLITICO (June 4, 2020 4:27 PM), <https://www.politico.com/news/2020/06/04/william-barr-george-floyd-protests-301557>.

<sup>17</sup> Shaila Dewan & Mike Baker, *Facing Protests Over Use of Force, Police Respond with More Force*, N.Y. TIMES, June 2, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/05/31/us/police-tactics-floyd-protests.html>.

<sup>18</sup> Kapur & Haake, *supra* note 3.

I further certify that American Oversight is primarily engaged in disseminating information to the public. 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. Similar to other organizations that have been found to satisfy the criteria necessary to qualify for expedition,<sup>19</sup> American Oversight “gathers information of potential interest to a segment of the public, uses its editorial skills to turn the raw material into a distinct work, and distributes that work to an audience.”<sup>20</sup> American Oversight uses the information gathered, and its analysis of it, to educate the public through reports, press releases, and 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>21</sup> As discussed previously, American Oversight has demonstrated its commitment to the public disclosure of documents and creation of editorial content.<sup>22</sup>

Accordingly, American Oversight’s request satisfies the criteria for expedition.

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<sup>19</sup> See *ACLU v. U.S. Dep’t of Justice*, 321 F. Supp. 2d 24, 30–31 (D.D.C. 2004); *EPIC v. Dep’t of Defense*, 241 F. Supp. 2d 5, 15 (D.D.C. 2003).

<sup>20</sup> *ACLU*, 321 F. Supp. 2d at 29 n.5 (quoting *EPIC*, 241 F. Supp. 2d at 11).

<sup>21</sup> American Oversight currently has approximately 15,500 page likes on Facebook and 102,200 followers on Twitter. American Oversight, FACEBOOK, <https://www.facebook.com/weareoversight>

(last visited June 2, 2020) American Oversight (@weareoversight), TWITTER, <https://twitter.com/weareoversight> (last visited June 2, 2020).

<sup>22</sup> See generally *News*, AMERICAN OVERSIGHT, <https://www.americanoversight.org/blog>; see, e.g., *DOJ Civil Division Response Noel Francisco Compliance*, 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>; *Audit the Wall*, AMERICAN OVERSIGHT, <https://www.americanoversight.org/investigation/audit-the-wall>; *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>; *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>; *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>; *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, if the 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 terms “record,” “document,” and “information” in their 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>23</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

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<sup>23</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).



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>24</sup>

- 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>25</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

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<sup>24</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).

<sup>25</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>.

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, 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 Hart Wood at [foia@americanoversight.org](mailto:foia@americanoversight.org) or (202) 873-1743. Also, if American Oversight's request for expedition is not granted or its request for a fee waiver is not granted in full, please contact us immediately upon making such a determination.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Austin R. Evers", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the left.

Austin R. Evers  
Executive Director  
American Oversight