



July 15, 2021

VIA EMAIL

Brandon Gaylord
Freedom of Information Officer
Hubert H. Humphrey Building, Room 729H
200 Independence Avenue SW
Washington, D.C. 20201
FOIARequest@hhs.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 your agency, American Oversight makes the following request for records.

Over the past decade, the U.S. government has spent nearly half of the Strategic National Stockpile (SNS)'s half-billion-dollar annual budget on Emergent BioSolutions' anthrax vaccines.¹ As COVID-19 spread across the country last year, the U.S. government entered into contracts with Emergent worth \$626 million for medical products and therapeutics, including those for biodefense purposes, unrelated to the pandemic.² Under Former Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response (ASPR) Robert Kadlec, ASPR awarded roughly \$3 billion in contracts to Emergent in the months before the COVID-19 crisis, and last year, bought an unlicensed anthrax vaccine developed by the company.³

Last year, Emergent won a contract to manufacture COVID-19 vaccines in its Baltimore plant, despite Johnson & Johnson and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) identifying serious risks of contamination at the plant as early as June 2020.⁴ In

¹ Chris Hamby & Sheryl Gay Stolberg, *How One Firm Put an 'Extraordinary Burden' on the U.S.'s Troubled Stockpile*, N.Y. Times, updated Jul. 6, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/03/06/us/emergent-biosolutions-anthrax-coronavirus.html?action=click&module=RelatedLinks&pgtype=Article>.

² *Id.* (reporting that Robert Kadlec, a former consultant for Emergent and former Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response (ASPR), stated after leaving his position: "If I could spend less on anthrax replenishment, I could buy more N95s [...] I could buy more ventilators. I could buy more of other things that quite frankly I didn't have the money to buy.")

³ *Id.*

⁴ See, e.g., Christopher Rowland, *Baltimore Plant with Contaminated Johnson & Johnson Vaccines Had Multiple Failures, Unsanitary Conditions, FDA Says*, Wash. Post (April 21,



March 2021, Emergent’s Baltimore plant accidentally ruined 15 million Johnson & Johnson vaccine doses after contaminating these doses with the active ingredient in AstraZeneca’s vaccine.⁵

American Oversight seeks records with the potential to shed light on contracts awarded to Emergent.

Requested Records

American Oversight requests that the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) produce the following records within twenty business days:

All email communications (including emails, complete email chains, email attachments, calendar invitations, and calendar invitation attachments) **between** (a) any of the individuals listed in Column A below and (b) any of the individuals or entities listed in Column B below, containing any of the following terms:

| Column A: HHS Employees | Column B: Emergent BioSolutions |
|---|---|
| a. Xavier Becerra (Secretary) | a. Anyone with an @ebsi.com email address |
| b. Alex Azar (Former Secretary) | b. Fuad El-Hibri |
| c. Sean McCluskie (Chief of Staff) | c. Robert G. Kramer |
| d. Brian Harrison (Former Chief of Staff) | d. Christopher (Chris) W. Frech |
| e. Peter Urbanowicz (Former Chief of Staff) | e. Grant Barbosa |
| f. Andrea Palm (Deputy Secretary) | f. Katherine Getty |
| g. Eric Hargan (Former Deputy Secretary) | g. Jill Hamaker |
| h. Rachel Levine (Assistant Secretary for Health) | h. Adam R. Harvey |
| | i. Dino S. Muzzin |
| | j. Sean M. Kirk |
| | k. Atul Saran |

2021, 5:39 PM), <https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2021/04/21/fda-johnson-johnson-vaccine-inspection/>; Jon Swaine, *CEO of Vaccine Maker Emergent Sold \$10 Million in Stock Before Company Ruined Johnson & Johnson Doses*, Wash. Post (April 25, 2021, 8:48 PM), https://www.washingtonpost.com/investigations/emergent-robert-kramer-stock-sales/2021/04/25/de151434-a2b6-11eb-a7ee-949c574a09ac_story.html; Christopher Rowland, *Johnson & Johnson Documented Contamination Risks at Baltimore Plant Months Before Vaccine was Ruined*, Wash. Post (May 19, 2021, 11:34 AM), <https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2021/05/19/emergent-johnson-johnson-vaccine-congress/>.

⁵ See, e.g., Noah Weiland et al., *Ejected from a Troubled Plant, AstraZeneca is in Talks About Producing Vaccine for U.S. Government at Another Site*, N.Y. Times, June 2, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/06/02/us/politics/astrazeneca-covid-vaccine.html>; Erin Banco, *Biden Admin Probes Risk of Low-Level Contamination in Vaccines Made at Troubled Plant*, Politico (June 2, 2021, 6:47 PM), <https://www.politico.com/news/2021/06/02/contamination-vaccines-emergent-biosolutions-491652>.

| | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Brett Giroir (Former Assistant Secretary for Health) j. John Brooks (Former Senior Advisor to the Secretary for Drug Pricing Reform and Principal Deputy Director for the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services) k. John O'Brien (Former Senior Advisor to the Secretary for Drug Pricing Reform) l. Nikki Bratcher-Bowman (Acting Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response (ASPR)) m. Robert (Bob) Kadlec (Former Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response (ASPR)) n. Gary Disbrow (Acting Director, Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Authority (BARDA)) o. Rick Bright (Former Director, Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Authority (BARDA)) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> l. Karen L. Smith m. Chris Cabell n. Laura Seward o. Louis W. Sullivan p. Sue Bailey q. Jerome M. Hauer r. George A. Joulwan s. Kathryn C. Zoon |
|--|--|

Key Terms

- i. "SARS-CoV-2"
- ii. "COVID"
- iii. coronavirus
- iv. "Johnson & Johnson"
- v. "Johnson and Johnson"
- vi. "J&J"
- vii. "J and J"
- viii. Janssen
- ix. "JNJ-78436735"
- x. "Ad26.COV2.S"
- xi. AstraZeneca
- xii. "Astra Zeneca"
- xiii. "AZD"
- xiv. Pfizer
- xv. BioNTech
- xvi. "Bio N Tech"
- xvii. "BNT"
- xviii. Moderna
- xix. "Operation Warp Speed"

- xx. “OWS”
- xxi. anthrax
- xxii. smallpox

Please provide all responsive records from August 1, 2017, through the date of the search.

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.”⁶ The public has a significant interest in COVID-19 vaccine development, contracts awarded for its development, and potential deficiencies or mismanagement associated with vaccine manufacturing.⁷ Records with the potential to shed light on this matter would contribute significantly to public understanding of federal government operations. 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.⁸ 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.⁹

⁶ 5 U.S.C. § 552(a)(4)(A)(iii).

⁷ See, e.g., *supra* notes 1-5.

⁸ See 5 U.S.C. § 552(a)(4)(A)(iii).

⁹ American Oversight currently has approximately 15,652 page likes on Facebook and 106,000 followers on Twitter. American Oversight, Facebook, <https://www.facebook.com/weareoversight/> (last visited June 29, 2021); American Oversight (@weareoversight), Twitter, <https://twitter.com/weareoversight> (last visited June 29, 2021).

American Oversight has also demonstrated its commitment to the public disclosure of documents and creation of editorial content through regular substantive analyses posted to its website.¹⁰ Examples reflecting this commitment to the public disclosure of documents and the creation of editorial content include the posting of records related to the Trump Administration's contacts with Ukraine and analyses of those contacts;¹¹ posting records and editorial content about the federal government's response to the Coronavirus pandemic;¹² 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;¹³ 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;¹⁴ and posting records and analysis of federal officials' use of taxpayer dollars to charter private aircraft or use government planes for unofficial business.¹⁵

Accordingly, American Oversight qualifies for a fee waiver.

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:

¹⁰ See generally *News*, American Oversight, <https://www.americanoversight.org/blog>.

¹¹ *Trump Administration's Contacts with Ukraine*, American Oversight, <https://www.americanoversight.org/investigation/the-trump-administrations-contacts-with-ukraine>.

¹² See generally *The Trump Administration's Response to Coronavirus*, American Oversight, <https://www.americanoversight.org/investigation/the-trump-administrations-response-to-coronavirus>; see, e.g., *CDC Calendars from 2018 and 2019: Pandemic-Related Briefings and Meetings*, American Oversight, <https://www.americanoversight.org/cdc-calendars-from-2018-and-2019-pandemic-related-briefings-and-meetings>.

¹³ 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>.

¹⁴ *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>.

¹⁵ See generally *Swamp Airlines: Chartered Jets at Taxpayer Expense*, American Oversight, <https://www.americanoversight.org/investigation/swamp-airlines-private-jets-taxpayer-expense>; see, e.g., *New Information on Pompeo's 2017 Trips to His Home State*, American Oversight, <https://www.americanoversight.org/new-information-on-pompeos-2017-trips-to-his-home-state>.

- Please search all locations and systems likely to have responsive records, regardless of format, medium, or physical characteristics.
- 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.¹⁶ 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.¹⁷
- 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,¹⁸ 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

¹⁶ 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).

¹⁷ See *Competitive Enter. Inst. v. Office of Sci. & Tech. Policy*, No. 14-cv-765, slip op. at 8 (D.D.C. Dec. 12, 2016).

¹⁸ 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>.

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, 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 Emma Lewis foia@americanoversight.org or by phone at (202) 919-6303. 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,

/s/ Emma Lewis
Emma Lewis
on behalf of
American Oversight