

February 1, 2006

Directorate for Freedom of Information And Security Review, Room 2C757 1155 Defense Pentagon Washington, DC 20301-1155

Department of the Army Freedom of Information and Privacy Acts Office TAPC-PDR-PF 7798 Cissna Road, Suite 205 Springfield, VA 22150-3166

Department of the Navy Commandant of the Marine Corps (ARAD) Headquarters U.S. Marine Corps, 2 Navy Annex Washington, DC 20380-1775

Department of the Air Force 11CS/SCSR (FOIA) 1000 Air Force Pentagon Washington, DC 20330-1000

Inspector General of Department of Defense Chief FOIA/PA Office 400 Army Navy Drive, Room 405 Arlington, VA 22202-2884

Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) ATTN: SVI-1 Washington, DC 20340-5100

Re: REQUEST UNDER FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT / Expedited Processing Requested

Attention:

This letter constitutes a Request under the Freedom of Information Act, 5 U.S.C. § 552 ("FOIA"), and the Department of Defense implementing regulations, 32 C.F.R. § 286.1 et seq., by the Maine Civil Liberties Union and the Maine Civil Liberties Union Foundation, on their own behalf, and on behalf of the American Friends Service 401 Cumberland Avenue • Suite 105 • Portland, Maine 04101 • 207 774-5444 • Fax 207 774-

Committee: Maine Program on Youth and Militarism and the Maine Coalition for Peace and Justice (collectively, "the Requesters").

I. The Requesters

1. The Maine Civil Liberties Union and the Maine Civil Liberties Union Foundation (collectively, "MCLU")¹ works to protect civil rights and civil liberties in Maine. It has organized opposition in Maine to the expansion of U.S. government surveillance as part of the war on terrorism and to the secret and unchecked surveillance powers of the USA PATRIOT

Act. The MCLU has provided legal counsel and representation to individuals and groups interested in expressing opposition to Maine and U.S. government action and policy, and the MCLU has brought legal challenges to restrictions on the rights of protesters.

The MCLU represents Timothy Sullivan, organizer of the 2004 March for Peace, and Larry Dansinger, organizer and activist, in their challenge to the City of Augusta's parade- and

demonstration-permit requirements, currently before the U.S. Court of Appeals for the First Circuit: *Sullivan et al. v. City of Augusta*, --- F.Supp.2d ----, 2005 WL 3527275 (D.Me.,2005). In 2003 and 2004, MCLU sponsored and participated in events around the State of Maine to draw attention to threats to civil liberties embodied in the USA PATRIOT Act. With assistance from the MCLU, the Maine State Legislature, as well as the cities of Orono, Mt. Vernon, Bangor, Portland, and Waterville passed resolutions calling for greater civil liberties protection in the face of the USA PATRIOT Act. The MCLU has lobbied both Federal and State officials to

protect religious and racial minorities, including immigrants, and to resist pressure to target minorities with discriminatory and unproductive legislation.

In 2005, the MCLU filed FOIA requests seeking to discover the scope and nature of the surveillance activities of the FBI and the FBI's Joint Terrorism Task Forces.

The MCLU regularly holds public membership meetings at which a wide range of civil liberties issues are discussed and debated. The MCLU also routinely provides information to the public and the media through print and online communications about the erosion of civil rights and civil liberties after September 11, and encourages MCLU members and activists to oppose government anti-terrorism policies that unnecessarily violate civil rights and civil liberties.

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¹ The Maine Civil Liberties Union Foundation is a 501(c)(3) organization that provides legal representation free of charge to individuals and organizations in civil rights and civil liberties cases, and educates the public about civil rights and civil liberties issues. The Maine Civil Liberties Union is a separate non-profit, non-partisan, 501(c)(4) membership organization that educates the public about the civil rights and civil liberties implications of pending and proposed state and federal legislation, provides analyses of pending and proposed legislation, directly lobbies legislators, and mobilizes its members to lobby their legislators.

- 2. The American Friends Service Committee:Maine ("AFSC:Maine") includes the Maine Program on Youth and Militarism.² It is an organization committed to bringing balanced information to Maine high school students concerning military recruitment. AFSC:Maine seeks to educate students about the military, and to participate in open dialogue about militarism and society. AFSC: Maine has helped lead efforts in Maine to help high school students protect private information from recruiters from the Department of Defense by encouraging the prominent placement of "No Child Left Behind" opt-out forms. AFSC:Maine Program on Youth and Militarism meets monthly at the Meetinghouse of the Midcoast Friends.
- 3. The Maine Coalition for Peace and Justice ("MCPJ") is a statewide organization of individual citizens and Maine group representatives working collectively and nonviolently for social equality, economic justice, direct democracy, and regenerative environmental policies. Members of the Maine Coalition for Peace and Justice have organized rallies and marches across Maine in opposition to the war in Iraq. In 2006, in response to an MCLU FOIA request, the FBI revealed that it has conducted surveillance of MCPJ email.

II. The Request for Information

The Requesters³ seek disclosure of any record(s), ⁴ document(s), file(s), communications, memorandum(a), order(s), agreement(s) and/or instruction(s), created from January 1, 2001, to the present, that were prepared, received, transmitted, collected and/or maintained by the Department of Defense ("DoD") or any of its components, including but not limited to the Counterintelligence Field Activity Agency ("CIFA"), its Directorate of Field Activities ("DX"), and their Threat and Local Observation Notice ("TALON") database, ⁵ relating or referring to the following:

1. information collected about any of the Requesters or their activities;⁶

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² This organization is also known as the "American Friends Service Committee: Maine Committee on Youth and Alternatives to the Military".

³ The term "Requesters" as used herein is defined as all of the organizations identified in Section I of this letter, as well as their employees, members, and boards of directors.

⁴ The term "records" as used herein includes all records or communications preserved in electronic or written form, including but not limited to correspondence, documents, data, videotapes, audio tapes, faxes, files, guidance, guidelines, evaluations, instructions, analyses, memoranda, agreements, notes, orders, policies, procedures, protocols, reports, rules, technical manuals, technical specifications, training manuals, or studies.

⁵ The term "TALON database" as used herein includes any database in which TALON reports are kept, including the "Cornerstone" database, the Joint Protection Enterprise Network ("JPEN"), all other databases created or controlled by CIFA, and database projects outsourced to private firms – which include, according to an NBC News report, "Person Search" (Northrup contract) and "The Insider Threat Initiative" (Computer Sciences Corp. contract), among others. *See* Lisa Myers et al., "Is the Pentagon Spying on Americans?," msnbc.com, December 14, 2005.

⁶ The term "activities" as used herein includes, but is not limited to, any advocacy, provision of services, litigation, lobbying, organizing, fundraising, meetings, marches, rallies, protests, conventions, or

- 2. orders or instructions to collect information about any of the Requesters or their activities;
- 3. the inclusion of any of the Requesters or their activities in a TALON database;
- 4. how, why or when any of the Requesters or any of their activities was selected as a target for DoD information-gathering or for inclusion in a TALON database;
- 5. the means by which information about any of the Requesters or their activities was or will be collected, including but not limited to any instances in which DoD personnel gathered information via informants, by collecting information from websites, by infiltrating any of the Requesters in an undercover capacity, or by attending rallies, protests, demonstrations, organizational meetings or other gatherings organized by any of the Requesters or in which any of the Requesters participated;
- 6. how records about any of the Requesters or their activities have been, are being, will be, or might be used, shared with another agency, or disseminated;
- 7. the retention of records about any of the Requesters or their activities;
- 8. the destruction of records about any of the Requesters or their activities, including any policies, orders, or directives requiring, permitting or prohibiting the destruction of such records;
- 9. policies or procedures in place to protect the privacy of records that refer or relate to the employees, members, and/or board of directors of any of the Requesters; and
- 10. how, why or when the collection of information about any of the Requesters or their activities, or the inclusion of any of the Requesters or their activities in a TALON database, was or will be suspended or terminated.

III. Limitation of Processing Fees

The MCLU requests a limitation of processing fees pursuant to 5 U.S.C. § 552(a)(4)(A)(ii)(II) ("[F]ees shall be limited to reasonable standard charges for document duplication when records are not sought for commercial use and the request is made by . . a representative of the news media . . .") and 32 C.F.R. § 286.28(e)(7) (search and review fees shall be limited to duplication fees for the first 100 pages for "representatives of the news media"). As a "representative of the news media," the MCLU fits within this

campaigns, and any media or communications to, from or about the Requesters in any form (including any oral, written, electronic or online communications, including but not limited to any books, pamphlets, brochures, newsletters, fundraising letters, correspondence, action alerts, e-mail, web communications, discussion groups, or listservs).

statutory and regulatory mandate. Fees associated with the processing of this Request should, therefore, be limited accordingly.

The MCLU meets the definition of a "representative of the news media" because it is "an entity that gathers information of potential interest to a segment of the public, uses its editorial skills to turn raw materials into a distinct work, and distributes that work to an audience." *National Security Archive v. Dep't of Defense*, 880 F.2d 1381, 1387 (D.C. Cir. 1989); *cf. ACLU v. Dep't of Justice*, 321 F. Supp. 2d 24, 30 n.5 (D.D.C. 2004) (finding non-profit public interest group to be "primarily engaged in disseminating information").

The MCLU is an organization dedicated to the defense of civil rights and civil liberties. Dissemination of information to the public is a critical and substantial component of the MCLU's mission and work. Specifically, the MCLU publishes newsletters, news briefings, right-to-know documents, and other educational and informational materials that are broadly disseminated to the public. Such material is widely available to everyone, including individuals, tax-exempt organizations, not-for-profit groups, law students and faculty, for no cost or for a nominal fee through the MCLU's public education department. The MCLU also disseminates information through its heavily visited website: www.mclu.org. The website addresses civil rights and civil liberties issues in depth, provides features on civil rights and civil liberties issues in the news, and contains documents relating to the issues on which the MCLU is focused. The website specifically includes features on information obtained through the FOIA. *See, e.g.*, http://www.mclu.org/Spyfiles.htm. Finally, the MCLU produces an indepth television series on civil liberties.

In addition to the MCLU, there are 53 ACLU affiliate and national chapter offices located throughout the United States and Puerto Rico. These offices further disseminate ACLU material to local residents, schools and organizations through a variety of means including their own websites, publications and newsletters. The ACLU makes archived material available at the American Civil Liberties Union Archives, Public Policy Papers, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Library. ACLU publications are often disseminated to relevant groups across the country, which then further distribute them to their members or to other parties.

Depending on the results of the Request, the MCLU plans to disseminate the information gathered by this Request to the public through these kinds of publications in these kinds of channels. The MCLU is therefore a "representative of the news media." *Cf. Electronic Privacy Information Ctr. v. Dep't of Defense*, 241 F.Supp.2d 5, 10-15 (D.D.C. 2003) (finding non-profit public interest group that disseminated an electronic newsletter and published books was a "representative of the media" for purposes of FOIA).

Finally, disclosure is not in the MCLU's commercial interest. The MCLU is a "non-profit, non-partisan, public interest organization." *See Judicial Watch Inc.* v.

Rossotti, 326 F.3d 1309, 1310 (D.C. Cir. 2003). Any information disclosed by the MCLU as a result of this FOIA Request will be available to the public at no cost.

IV. Waiver of all Costs

The MCLU additionally requests a waiver of all costs pursuant to 5 U.S.C. § 552(a)(4)(A)(iii) ("Documents shall be furnished without any charge . . . if disclosure of the information is in the public interest because it is likely to contribute significantly to public understanding of the operations or activities of the government and is not primarily in the commercial interest of the requester."). Disclosure in this case meets the statutory criteria, and a fee waiver would fulfill Congress's legislative intent in amending FOIA. *See Judicial Watch, Inc. v. Rossotti*, 326 F.3d 1309, 1312 (D.C. Cir. 2003) ("Congress amended FOIA to ensure that it be 'liberally construed in favor of waivers for noncommercial requesters." (citation omitted)).

Disclosure of the requested information is in the public interest. This Request will further public understanding of government conduct: specifically, the DoD's domestic intelligence-gathering activities and its possible targeting of individuals, organizations and groups for surveillance based on their political viewpoints, affiliations, or activities. This type of government activity concretely affects many individuals and groups and implicates basic privacy, free speech, and associational rights protected by the Constitution.

Moreover, disclosure of the requested information will aid public understanding of policy decisions made over the past two months in response to public revelations that CIFA, a DoD component whose size and budget remain secret, has been spying on domestic organizations and their peaceful political activities. See Walter Pincus, "Pentagon's Intelligence Authority Widens," Washington Post, December 19, 2005. After NBC News obtained and reported on a secret 400-page DoD document that included dozens of anti-war meetings or protests as "suspicious incidents" in which the Department had apparently taken an investigative interest, see Lisa Myers et al, "Is the Pentagon Spying on Americans?," msnbc.com, December 14, 2005, DoD officials ordered a review of the information in its TALON intelligence database to determine whether information on subjects that were determined to pose no threat was improperly retained in the system. See Walter Pincus, "Pentagon Will Review Database on U.S. Citizens, Washington Post, December 15, 2005. The administration subsequently initiated the process of setting standards to govern how its agencies collect and maintain reports of activity they consider suspicious. See Walter Pincus, "Corralling Domestic Intelligence," Washington Post, January 13, 2006. And recently, Deputy Secretary of Defense Gordon England directed that DoD intelligence and counterintelligence personnel receive "refresher training" on policies regarding the collection, retention, dissemination and use of intelligence information, and that a TALON database be reviewed to identify reports that should not be in it. See Memorandum from Gordon England, Deputy Sec'y of Defense, to Secretaries of the Military Departments et al., January 13, 2006. Understanding the current scope of the DoD's monitoring of lawabiding individuals, organizations and groups is, therefore, crucial to the public's interest in determining the legality of the Pentagon's domestic intelligence program and in understanding the implications of DoD's recent policy shifts.

As a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization and "representative of the news media" as discussed in Section III, the MCLU is well-situated to disseminate information it gains from this Request to the general public and to groups that protect constitutional rights. Fees associated with responding to FOIA requests are regularly waived for the MCLU's parent organization, the ACLU.⁷

The records requested are not sought for commercial use, and the Requesters plan to disseminate the information disclosed as a result of this FOIA Request through the channels described in Section III. As also stated in Section III, the MCLU will make any information disclosed as a result of this FOIA Request available to the public at no cost.

V. Expedited Processing Request

Expedited processing is warranted because there is an "urgent[] need[]" on the part of an organization "primarily engaged in disseminating information" "to inform the public concerning actual or alleged Federal Government activity." 32 C.F.R. § 286.4(d)(3)(ii).

The MCLU is "primarily engaged in disseminating information" for the same reasons it is a "representative of the news media," as discussed in Section III. This Request clearly relates to activity of the federal government, namely, the collection and retention of information by the Department of Defense.

There is an "urgent need" to inform the public about DoD's extensive monitoring and surveillance of individual citizens, as well as political, religious, and community organizations throughout the nation. Such government activity may infringe upon the public's free speech, free association, and privacy rights, which are guaranteed by the First, Fourth, Fifth, and Fourteenth Amendments to the United States Constitution. Requests for information bearing upon potential constitutional violations require an immediate response so that steps may be taken to ensure any violations cease and future violations are prevented.

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⁷ For example, in May 2005, the United States Department of Commerce granted a fee waiver to the ACLU with respect to its request for information regarding the radio frequency identification chips in United States passports. In March 2005, the Department of State granted a fee waiver to the ACLU with regard to a request submitted that month regarding the use of immigration laws to exclude prominent non-citizen scholars and intellectuals from the country because of their political views, statements, or associations. Also, the Department of Health and Human Services granted a fee waiver to the ACLU with regard to a FOIA request submitted in August of 2004. In addition, the Office of Science and Technology Policy in the Executive Office of the President said it would waive the fees associated with a FOIA request submitted by the ACLU in August 2003. In addition, three separate agencies – the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Office of Intelligence Policy and Review, and the Office of Information and Privacy in the Department of Justice – did not charge the ACLU fees associated with a FOIA request submitted by the ACLU in August 2002.

The possibility that the government is targeting individuals, organizations and groups for surveillance on the basis of their political viewpoints, affiliations, or activities raises fundamental questions about the government's integrity. The government's singling out its political enemies on the basis of their political viewpoint is a critical issue with a long history dating back to the founding of the nation. Questions about the government's integrity in these areas substantially affect the public's confidence in law enforcement and the legal system.

Moreover, the investigation of individuals and organizations because of their political views and expressive or associational activity may have a chilling effect on the exercise of First Amendment rights by others. *See, e.g., Thornhill v. Alabama*, 310 U.S. 88, 97 (1940) ("It is not merely the sporadic abuse of power by the censor but the pervasive threat inherent in its very existence that constitutes the danger to freedom of discussion."). The chilling effect here may be exacerbated by the fact that the public has little information about what policies and procedures govern the DoD's secretive CIFA component and its surveillance activities.

DoD's regulations implementing FOIA specify that information is "[u]rgently needed" where the information "has a particular value that will be lost if not disseminated quickly" – a criterion that is generally met by "a breaking news story of general public interest." 32 C.F.R. § 286.4(d)(3)(ii)(A). Here, there is extensive public and media interest in the use of the military to gather intelligence domestically on anti-war/counterrecruitment demonstrators and others engaging in protected activity. The initial NBC News report disclosing the extent of the Pentagon's surveillance of peaceful demonstrations and organizations, see Lisa Myers et al, "Is the Pentagon Spying on Americans?," msnbc.com, December 14, 2005, generated widespread attention from the news media and public officials both nationally and locally. Since the NBC report, there have been numerous news reports on CIFA, a TALON database and its potential use, and government officials' various responses to the disclosure of the scope of DoD surveillance of domestic political activities. See, e.g., Walter Pincus, "Unverified Reports of Terror Threats Linger," Washington Post, January 31, 2006; Michael Isikoff, "The Other Big Brother," Newsweek, January 30, 2006; "Bad Targeting," Washington *Post*, January 30, 2006 (editorial); Frances Grandy Taylor, "The Pacifist 'Threat'; Disclosure of Recent Government Surveillance of Quaker Activities Doesn't Surprise Members," Hartford Courant, January 16, 2006; Sarah Kershaw, "A Protest, a Spy Program and a Campus in Uproar," New York Times, January 14, 2006; Walter Pincus, "Corralling Domestic Intelligence," Washington Post, January 13, 2006; David Kaplan, "The Eyes Have It," U.S. News & World Report, January 9, 2006; "A Fog of False Choices," New York Times, December 20, 2005 (editorial mentioning Pentagon program); Walter Pincus, "Pentagon's Intelligence Authority Widens," Washington Post, December 19, 2005; "What Can't the Pentagon Understand About American's Right Peaceably to Assemble," Favetteville Observer, December 19, 2005 (editorial); "Big Brother Bush," Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, December 18, 2005 (editorial); David S. Cloud, "Pentagon is Said to Mishandle a Counterterrorism Database," New York Times, December 16, 2005; Arianna Huffington, "It's Dirty Tricks All Over Again," Salt Lake City Tribune, December 16, 2005 (syndicated column appearing in other papers as well);

Chris Matthews, "Update: Pentagon Eyeing Activist Groups?," *Hardball*, December 16, 2005 (interview by Chris Matthews with Lisa Myers of NBC news); Walter Pincus, "Pentagon Will Review Database on U.S. Citizens," *Washington Post*, December 15, 2005; Associated Press, "Pentagon to Review Spy Files After NBC Report," msnbc.com, December 15, 2005 (also printed elsewhere including foxnews.com); Vicky O'Hara, "Pentagon to Probe Abuse of Security Database," *National Public Radio, All Things Considered*, December 15, 2005; Charles Aldinger, "Pentagon Admits Compiling Data on Antiwar Activists," *Capitol Hill Blue*, December 15, 2005 (Reuters article reprinted elsewhere as well including Yahoo! News); Kevin Deutsch, "Pentagon Calls Lake Worth Peace Meeting a 'threat," *Palm Beach Post*, December 15, 2005; Robert Burns, "Pentagon to Review Possible Database Misuse," *boston.com*, December 15, 2005 (Associated Press writer posted on cite that hosts the Boston Globe); Steven Elbow, "Local Anti-War Protest on Pentagon List," *Madison.com*, December 15, 2005.

That there is widespread public concern regarding this program is demonstrated not only by the quantity of news reports it has generated but also by official reaction to these reports, including the initiation of internal review and retraining of intelligence personnel. *See* Memorandum from Gordon England, Deputy Sec'y of Defense, to Secretaries of the Military Departments et al., January 13, 2006; Gerry J. Gilmore, "DOD Orders Review of Anti-Threat Intel-Gathering System," *American Forces Press Service*, December 15, 2005. Just yesterday, DoD officials admitted that "irregularities" continue to plague a certain proportion of entries in its threat database. *See* Walter Pincus, "Unverified Reports of Terror Threats Linger," *Washington Post*, January 31, 2006.

A number of political leaders have questioned and/or spoken out against the inclusion of anti-war and counter-recruitment protests in a TALON database. These statements have also drawn significant media attention. *See, e.g.*, Erica Werner, "Senator Raises Question On Pentagon Program," *sfgate.com*, January 12, 2005 (Associated Press article reprinted in numerous locations); Becky Bartindale, "Lofgren Seeks Probe of Pentagon Activity," *San Jose Mercury News*, January 3, 2006; Jondi Gumz, "Congressman Denounces Pentagon Spying at UCSC," *Santa Cruz Sentinel*, December 17, 2005; Kathryn Casa, "Pentagon Spy Database Includes Vermont Protests," *Vermont Guardian*, December 20, 2005 (indicating concern of Senator Patrick Leahy of Vermont, ranking member of the Senate Judiciary Committee); Lisa Myers, et al., "Senator Demands Investigation of Spy Database," *msnbc.com*, December 15, 2005 (citing letter by Senator Bill Nelson of Florida to Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld).

As these reports illustrate, the DoD's domestic intelligence-gathering program constitutes a breaking and unfolding news story. The requested information is needed to provide the public with a full picture of the extent of the program.

Finally, there is a very real risk that information will be lost if this Request is not expedited. Although news reports indicate serious concern among DoD officials that information about suspected threats has been improperly retained, *see* Walter Pincus, "Pentagon Will Review Database on U.S. Citizens," *Washington Post*, December 15, 2005, the England directive required the identification of reports improperly retained in a

TALON database, see Memorandum from Gordon England, Deputy Sec'y of Defense, to Secretaries of the Military Departments et al., January 13, 2006, and the head of CIFA has recently indicated that the purging of the database is ongoing. See Walter Pincus, "Unverified Reports of Terror Threats Linger," Washington Post, January 31, 2006.

To ensure that the information sought by this Request is not destroyed before it can be disclosed pursuant to this FOIA Request, the Requesters ask that you preserve all information responsive to this Request and that you do not erase it until you have provided the Requesters with copies. Destruction of responsive documents after a FOIA Request is received constitutes an improper withholding of documents. *See, e.g., Judicial Watch v. U.S. Dep't of Commerce*, 34 F. Supp. 2d 28, 43-44 (D.D.C. 1998) (citing *Kissinger v. Reporters Comm.*, 444 U.S. 136, 148-152 (1980)).

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Pursuant to applicable regulations and statute, the MCLU expects the determination of this request for expedited processing within 10 calendar days and the determination of this Request for documents within 20 days. *See* 32 C.F.R. § 286.4(d)(1), (3); 5 U.S.C. § 552(a)(6)(A)(i).

If this Request is denied in whole or in part, we ask that you justify all deletions by reference to specific exemptions to FOIA. The MCLU expects the release of all segregable portions of otherwise exempt material. The MCLU reserves the right to appeal a decision to withhold any information or to deny a waiver of fees.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter. Please furnish all applicable records to:

Zachary L. Heiden, Staff Attorney Maine Civil Liberties Union Foundation 401 Cumberland Avenue, Suite 105 Portland, Maine, 04101.

I affirm that the information provided supporting the request for expedited processing is true and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Sincerely,

Zachary L. Heiden, Esq. Maine Civil Liberties Union Foundation