

**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT  
ANNUAL REPORT  
FISCAL YEAR 2001**

**I. Basic Information**

In compliance with the Electronic Freedom of Information Act Amendments of 1996 the Department of State submits the attached report on the Freedom of Information Act program. This report addresses the time period for the 2001 fiscal year (October 1, 2000 to September 30, 2001). Questions pertaining to this report may be addressed to:

Margaret P. Grafeld  
Information and Privacy Coordinator  
Office of IRM Programs and Services  
RPS/IPS, SA-2, Room 5073  
Department of State  
Washington, D.C. 20522-8100  
Telephone: (202) 261-8300  
Fax: (202) 261-8590

This report is available on our web site at <http://foia.state.gov/refer.asp>. Paper copies may be requested by contacting RPS/IPS at the above address.

**II. How to Make A FOIA Request**

Freedom of Information Act requests must be made in writing and submitted by mail or fax (not e-mail) to RPS/IPS at the address indicated. Requesters must describe the records sought as clearly and precisely as possible, and state their willingness to pay applicable fees or provide justification to support a fee waiver. Requesters should clearly mark their request "Freedom of Information Act Request" and include a daytime telephone number at which they may be reached.

In order for a request to be processed, it must be "perfected." A request is deemed not perfected when unresolved issues exist, such as when the records sought have not been reasonably described or there are unresolved fee issues. RPS/IPS staff will notify the requester of any deficiencies of the request, and advise the requester how to perfect the request.

The Department will respond to requests within 20 working days of receipt, advising the requester of the date of receipt, the case number assigned to the request, and whether or not the records sought are under the Department's control. Whenever possible, the request will be processed within 20 working days. It is the Department's policy to release information to the maximum extent possible. However, if some information must be withheld, the requester will be notified of the amount of information withheld, the basis for the withholding and the procedures for appealing the withholding. For more information on making a FOIA request, you may visit our web site at <http://foia.state.gov/aboutFOIA.asp> or contact RPS/IPS at the address indicated.

**III. Definitions of Terms and Acronyms Used in the Report**

## A. Agency-Specific Terms

1. RPS/IPS - Deputy Assistant Secretary for Records and Publishing Services, Office of Information Resources Management Programs and Services

## B. Basic Terms

1. FOIA/PA request -- Freedom of Information Act/Privacy Act request. A FOIA request is generally a request for access to records concerning a third party, an organization, or a particular topic of interest. A Privacy Act request is a request for records concerning oneself; such requests are also treated as FOIA requests to afford maximum access. (All requests for access to records, regardless of which law is cited by the requester, are included in this report.)

2. Initial Request -- a request to a federal agency for access to records under the Freedom of Information Act.

3. Appeal -- a request to a federal agency asking that it review at a higher administrative level a full denial or partial denial of access to records under the Freedom of Information Act, or any other FOIA determination such as a matter pertaining to fees.

4. Processed Request or Appeal -- a request or appeal for which an agency has taken a final action on the request or the appeal in all respects.

5. Multi-track processing -- a system in which simple requests requiring relatively minimal review are placed in one processing track, and more voluminous and complex requests are placed in one or more other tracks. Requests in each track are processed on a first-in/first-out basis. A requester who has an urgent need for records may request expedited processing (see below).

6. Expedited Processing -- an agency will process a FOIA request on an expedited basis when a requester has shown an exceptional need or urgency for the records which warrants prioritization of his or her request over other requests that were made earlier.

7. Simple Request -- a FOIA request that an agency using multi-track processing places in its fastest (non-expedited) track based on the volume and/or simplicity of records requested.

8. Complex Request -- a FOIA request that an agency using multi-track processing places in a slower track based on the volume and/or complexity of records requested.

9. Grant -- an agency decision to disclose all records in full in response to a FOIA request.

10. Partial Grant -- an agency decision to disclose a record in part in response to a FOIA request, deleting information determined to be exempt under one or more of the FOIA's exemptions; or a decision to disclose some records in their entirety, but to withhold others in whole or in part.

11. Denial -- an agency decision not to release any part of a record or records in response to a FOIA request because all the information in the requested records is determined by the agency to be exempt under one or more of the FOIA's exemptions, or for some procedural reason (such as - no record is located in response to a FOIA request).

12. Time Limits -- the time period in the Freedom of Information Act for an agency to respond to a FOIA request (ordinarily 20 working days from proper receipt of a "perfected" FOIA request).

13. "Perfected" Request -- a FOIA request for records which adequately describes the records sought, which has been received by the FOIA office of the agency or agency component in possession of the records, and for which there is no remaining question about the payment of applicable fees.

14. Exemption 3 Statute -- a separate federal statute prohibiting the disclosure of a certain type of information and authorizing its withholding under FOIA subsection (b)(3).

15. Median Number -- the middle, not average, number. For example, of 3, 7, and 14, the median number is 7.

16. Average Number -- the number obtained by dividing the sum of a group of numbers by the quantity of numbers in the group. For example, of 3, 7, and 14 the average number is 8.

#### **IV. Exemption 3 Statutes**

**(Statute Cited; Description of type of information withheld; Has use of statute been upheld in court?)**

Statute: 5 USC app. 3 7(B)(Supp. 1993)

Description: Protects the identity of employees who provide a complaint or information to the Inspector General

Upheld in court?: No

Statute: 8 USC 1202(f)

Description: Protects records pertaining to the issuance or refusal of visas to enter the United States

Upheld in court?: Medina-Hincapie v. U.S. Department of State, Docket #82-1202(D.C. Cir February 25, 1983)

Statute: 22 USC 2778

Description: Protects information concerning arms export licensing cases

Upheld in court?: Council for a Livable World v. U.S. Department of State, Docket #96-1807 (D.D.C. November 23, 1998)

Statute: 22 USC 4004

Description: Protects records concerning work performance of Foreign Service members

Upheld in court?: No

Statute: 42 USC 2011

Description: Protects records defining policy for the development, use and control of atomic and nuclear energy in private, peaceful and military matters

Upheld in court?: No

Statute: 50 USC 403-3(c) (6)

Description: Protects material regarding nature of agency functions; prohibits release of documents that would endanger the intelligence gathering process

Upheld in court?: Agee v. CIA, Docket #79-2788 (D.D.C. November 3, 1982)

Statute: 50 USC 1701 Note (PL#99-93 Sec 505)

Description: Protects records on arbitration of claims before the Iran-United States Claims Tribunal

Upheld in court?: No

Statute: 50 USC App. 2411 (c) (1)

Description: Protects confidential information concerning the licensing procedure under the Export Administration Act

Upheld in court?: Africa Fund v. Mosbacher Docket #92-289 (S.D.N.Y. May 26, 1993)

## V. Initial FOIA/PA Access Requests

**N.B.** Statistics reported herein are based on data currently available and are accurate to the extent possible. However, not all data required to prepare this report are currently being collected in the Department's requests tracking system. For example, statistics for the medians (section VII) are based on the dates that acknowledgement letters were sent to requesters, and in some cases the dates that requests were received, not on the dates when the requests were perfected (and thus processable) or when expeditious processing was granted. An asterisk (as in section B. 4) indicates that data were not collected in a particular category and, therefore, no statistics are available. Note also that statistics throughout this report include "non perfected" requests pending resolution (fee issues, scope, etc) as well as perfected requests being processed. Lastly, the Department processes requests incrementally, i.e., segments of a case are processed as they become available. Requests in which there have been incremental releases, but which have not been processed to completion are not reflected in this report. Time is reported in calendar days.

### A. Numbers of Initial Requests

1. Number of requests pending as of end of preceding fiscal year: **5,782**

2. Number of requests received during current fiscal year: **3,761**

3. Number of requests processed during current fiscal year: **3,329**

4. Number of requests pending as of end of current fiscal year: **6,214**

### B. Disposition of Initial Requests

1. Number of total grants: **572**

2. Number of partial grants: **728**

3. Number of denials: **131**

#### a. Number of times each FOIA exemption used

Exemption 1: 383

Exemption 2: 34

Exemption 3: 133

Exemption 4: 30

Exemption 5: 129

Exemption 6: 210

Exemption 7 (A): 13

Exemption 7 (B): 1

Exemption 7 (C): 34

Exemption 7 (D): 13

Exemption 7 (E): 20

Exemption 7 (F): 8

Exemption 8: 0

Exemption 9: 0

4. Other reasons for nondisclosure (total): **1898**

a. no records: 1024

b. referrals: 519

(This statistic reflects cases in which all documents were referred to another agency for response and cases in which the request itself should be directed to another agency)

c. request withdrawn: 35

d. fee-related reason\*: 0

e. records not reasonably described\*: 0

f. not a proper FOIA request for some other reason: 0

g. not an agency record\*: 0

h. duplicate request: 56

i. other (specify): 264

(This statistic reflects requests which were not perfected and/or which were cancelled.)

## **VI. Appeals of Initial Denials of FOIA/PA Requests**

### **A. Number of appeals**

1. Number of appeals received during fiscal year: **166**

2. Number of appeals processed during fiscal year: **91**

### **B. Disposition of Appeals**

1. Number completely upheld: **27**

2. Number partially reversed: **47**

3. Number completely reversed: **6**

### **a. Number of times each FOIA exemption used**

Exemption 1: 54

Exemption 2: 0

Exemption 3: 7

Exemption 4: 5

Exemption 5: 11

Exemption 6: 15

Exemption 7 (A): 0

Exemption 7 (B): 0

Exemption 7 (C): 0

Exemption 7 (D): 0

Exemption 7 (E): 0

Exemption 7 (F): 0

Exemption 8: 0

Exemption 9: 0

4. Other reasons for nondisclosure (total): **11**

a. no records: 2

b. referrals: 0

c. request withdrawn: 9

d. fee-related reason: 0

e. records not reasonably described: 0

f. not a proper FOIA request for some other reason: 0

g. not an agency record: 0

h. duplicate request: 0

i. other (specify): 0

## **VII. Compliance with Time Limits/Status of Pending Requests**

A. Consistent with the amended FOIA, the Department has established multiple tracks for processing Freedom of Information Act requests for the public, so as to distinguish simple requests from more complex requests. At this time, requests can be assigned to one of two tracks, the simple/fast track or the routine/complex track. Requests are assigned to a particular tracking queue contingent upon the level of effort required to complete the request, the number and location of searches/record sources, and the estimated volume of responsive records. It is often difficult to assign a case to an appropriate track during the initial processing stage of a request. Since the Department's search function is decentralized, the number and complexity of responsive documents and the amount of other agency concurrences are unknown until all searches are returned and the review of the documents has been completed. As a result, movement between tracks can become very fluid. A seemingly routine case can quickly become complex as searches are returned with voluminous documents. This type of case activity blurs the line between routine and complex tracks.

Median processing time for FOIA/PA requests processed during the year:

1. Simple Requests - "Fast Track"

a. number of requests processed: 555

b. median number of days to process: 157

2. Routine/Complex Requests

a. number of requests processed: 2,763

b. median number of days to process: 742

3. Requests Accorded Expedited Processing

a. number of requests processed: 11

b. median number of days to process: 252

B. Status of Pending Requests

1. Number of FOIA/PA requests pending as of end of current fiscal year: 6,214

2. Median number of days that such requests were pending: 445

**VIII.** Optional Section not addressed

**IX. Costs/FOIA Staffing**

Data provided in this section reflect only costs and staffing for the Office of IRM Programs and Services, the Department's central office for processing FOIA/PA requests. We are unable at this time to capture data for decentralized offices or for personnel outside of the Office of IRM Programs and Services who have FOIA/PA duties.

A. Staffing levels

1. Number of full-time FOIA/PA personnel: **111**

2. Number of personnel with part-time or occasional FOIA/PA duties (in work-years): **41**

3. Total number of personnel (in work-years): **152\***

B. Totals Costs (including staff and all resources- estimates)

1. FOIA/PA processing (including appeals): **\$12,347,045**

2. Litigation-related activities: **\$ 80,869**

3. Total costs: **\$12,427,914\***

\*These figures represent the total annual resource allotment for the Office of IRM Programs and Services (IPS). IPS is the office within the Department of State which has program responsibility for several statutory and IRM functions in addition to FOIA and Privacy Act implementation, including records management and archiving of State Department central foreign policy files, E.O. 12958 on classification/declassification of national security information, and special document production requests from the President, Congress, or the courts. In addition to staff costs, other resources covered by the figure are several information technology systems that concurrently support multiple functions. These include an on-line 27 million record archive of electronic diplomatic communications, a case tracking/imaging/electronic redaction system which supports information access case processing, and several Internet and Intranet websites. As these resources support many interrelated functions, it is impossible to extrapolate that portion of the costs devoted exclusively to FOIA and Privacy Act case processing.

### C. Statement of Additional Resources Needed for FOIA/PA Compliance

The FOIA Annual Report for FY 2000 addressed the additional personnel and funding resources required by the State Department. The Department, continuing to recognize the need to reduce completion times for pending requests, has initiated an aggressive, on-going program to alleviate this problem. First, we have established a new permanent cadre of mid-level managers for the FOIA program. In addition, the Department has authorized an increase of twenty-three (23) new permanent full-time-employee staff positions for the FOIA program. The Department has also established a recruitment program directed at former Foreign Service Officers (FSO). This effort has generated positive responses and resulted in the hiring of approximately 30 retired FSOs as part of our expert consultant corps. Once the security clearances and administrative status of these new personnel and FSOs have been updated and their training successfully completed, they will be assigned to FOIA reviewing activity. Finally, to reinforce and expand our support capability, the Department also initiated an extensive recruitment effort for more than 50 university students from local universities for part-time assistance in request processing and backlog reduction activities. Pending actual hiring of these recruits (dependent upon completion of their security clearances), the Department is committed to dedicating additional resources for temporary staffing and technology infrastructure to address the existing caseload.

### X. Fees

- A. Total amount of fees collected for processing requests: \$ **6,351.77**
- B. Percentage of total costs: **.05%**

### XI. FOIA Regulations

The Department's FOIA regulations are located at 22 CFR 171. These can be found directly at the Government Printing Office's (GPO) website at <http://www.gpo.gov/nara/cfr/index.html> or from links at our website at <http://foia.state.gov>. The Department's search and review fees are assessed at the following rates:

Administrative/Clerical (GS-1 through GS-8; or FS-9 through FS-6): \$8.00/hour  
Professional (GS-9 through GS-13; or FS-5 through FS-3): \$17.00/hour  
Executive (GS-14 and above; or FS-2 and above): \$30.00/hour