United States Department of State

Washington, D.C.   20520

November 30, 2023

Case No. FL-2023-00013

Reed Rubinstein
America First Legal Foundation
611 Pennsylvania Avenue, SE, #231
Washington, DC 20003

Dear Mr. Rubinstein:

As we noted in our letter dated October 31, 2023, we are processing your request for material under the Freedom of Information Act ("FOIA"), 5 U.S.C. § 552. The Department of State ("Department") has identified one additional responsive record subject to the FOIA. Upon review, we have determined that the record may be released in part.

An enclosure explains the FOIA exemptions and other grounds for withholding material. Where we have made redactions, the applicable FOIA exemptions are marked on each record. Where applicable, the Department has considered the foreseeable harm standard when reviewing these records and applying FOIA exemptions. All non-exempt material that is reasonably segregable from the exempt material has been released and is enclosed.

We will keep you informed as your case progresses. If you have any questions, your attorney may contact Pardis Gheibi, U.S. Department of Justice Trial Attorney, at pardis.gheibi@usdoj.gov and (202) 305-3246. Please refer to the case number, FL-2023-00013, and the civil action number, 22-cv-03386, in all correspondence about this case.

Sincerely,

Diamonece Hickson
Chief, Litigation and Appeals Branch
Office of Information Programs and Services

Enclosures: As stated.

The Freedom of Information Act (5 USC 552)

FOIA Exemptions

(b)(1)   Information specifically authorized by an executive order to be kept secret in the interest of national defense or foreign policy. Executive Order 13526 includes the following classification categories:

    1.4(a) Military plans, systems, or operations
    1.4(b) Foreign government information
    1.4(c) Intelligence activities, sources or methods, or cryptology
    1.4(d) Foreign relations or foreign activities of the US, including confidential sources
    1.4(e) Scientific, technological, or economic matters relating to national security, including defense against transnational terrorism
    1.4(f) U.S. Government programs for safeguarding nuclear materials or facilities
    1.4(g) Vulnerabilities or capabilities of systems, installations, infrastructures, projects, plans, or protection services relating to US national security, including defense against transnational terrorism
    1.4(h) Weapons of mass destruction

(b)(2)   Related solely to the internal personnel rules and practices of an agency

(b)(3)   Specifically exempted from disclosure by statute (other than 5 USC 552), for example:

ARMSEXP	Arms Export Control Act, 50a USC 2411(c)
CIA PERS/ORG	Central Intelligence Agency Act of 1949, 50 USC 403(g)
EXPORT CONTROL	Export Administration Act of 1979, 50 USC App. Sec. 2411(c)
FS ACT	Foreign Service Act of 1980, 22 USC 4004
INA	Immigration and Nationality Act, 8 USC 1202(f), Sec. 222(f)
IRAN	Iran Claims Settlement Act, Public Law 99-99, Sec. 505

(b)(4)   Trade secrets and confidential commercial or financial information

(b)(5)   Interagency or intra-agency communications forming part of the deliberative process, attorney-client privilege, or attorney work product

(b)(6)   Personal privacy information

(b)(7)   Law enforcement information whose disclosure would:
    (A) interfere with enforcement proceedings
    (B) deprive a person of a fair trial
    (C) constitute an unwarranted invasion of personal privacy
    (D) disclose confidential sources
    (E) disclose investigation techniques
    (F) endanger life or physical safety of an individual

(b)(8)   Prepared by or for a government agency regulating or supervising financial institutions

(b)(9)   Geological and geophysical information and data, including maps, concerning wells

Other Grounds for Withholding

NR   Material not responsive to a FOIA request excised with the agreement of the requester

From:	"Ice, John T" (b)(6) @state.gov>
To:	Lee, Matthew (b)(6))ap.org>
CC:	(b)(6))state.gov>; (b)(6))state.gov>
Subject:	Re: Response to Taken Questions
Date:	Wed, 4 Nov 2020 22:23:10 +0000

No worries, Matt. Talk to you, then.
J.T.
From: Lee, Matthew <(b)(6))ap.org>
Sent: Wednesday, November 4, 2020 5:18 PM
To: Ice, John T <(b)(6))state.gov>
Cc: (b)(6))state.gov> (b)(6))state.gov>
Subject: Re: Response to Taken Questions

Hey there:
I'm sorry. We're so swamped with election stuff I haven't gotten an answer. Can I get back to
you tomorrow morning?
Thanks,
Matt

On Nov 4, 2020, at 5:14 PM, Ice, John T <(b)(6))state.gov> wrote:

Hi Matt,
Off the record, realizing there is a lot going on, we wanted to touch base on this. Are you still
looking to put something together? If not, let us know and we will begin to look at other
options.
Best,
J.T.
From: Ice, John T (b)(6))state.gov>
Sent: Monday, November 2, 2020 11:34 AM
To: Lee, Matthew (b)(6))ap.org>
Cc: (b)(6))state.gov>;(b)(6))state.gov>
Subject: Re: Response to Taken Questions

Hi Matt,
I hope that you are at least somewhat recovered from the trip. Bumping this up to the top of
your email queue.
Best,
J.T.
From: Ice, John T (b)(6))state.gov>
Sent: Thursday, October 29, 2020 3:35 PM

To: Lee, Matthew [(b)(6)] ap.org>
Cc: [(b)(6)] state.gov>
Subject: Response to Taken Questions

Hi Matt,
Following up on the conversation last week, below are GEC's responses to the two taken questions.
These responses are provided on deep background.

Q1. How are people getting to these sites? Google? Etc

The majority of users accessing these four sites go to the site directly. For greater context, we have outlined the traffic for each of the four sites below. This data captures traffic for the full month of September from SimilarWeb, a publicly available tool.

Definitions:
Direct traffic occurs when a visitor arrives directly on a website by typing in the website's URL, without having clicked on a link on another site or using a search engine.
Referral traffic describes the people who come to a domain from other sites, without using a search engine.
Search traffic refers to the visitors who arrive at a website by clicking search results leading to that particular website (mostly after searching keywords or phrases).
Social traffic is traffic from social media outlets.

- **NEO**: 79% direct traffic; 8.5% referral traffic (mostly from other alternative media); 7.7% traffic from search; 3.7% social traffic (43.6% from Facebook)
- **Oriental Review:** 55.5% direct traffic; 13.3% referral traffic (83% from news aggregator Inoreader); 21.4% from search traffic; 9.7% social traffic (56% from Twitter)
- **News Front:** 63.9% direct traffic; 13.5% referral traffic (33% from Russian search engine Yandex; other traffic from news aggregators and websites); 5.9% from search traffic; 9.8% social traffic (56.8% VKontakte)
- **Rebel Inside:** Not available on SimilarWeb.

Q2. Are we seeing lots of Spanish speaking audiences targeted from these sites?

News Front is the only one of the four entities we outlined that directly targets Spanish speaking audiences. News Front has a dedicated Spanish-language proxy site and claims that the site's   editorial branch is based in Spain. In addition, we see that News Front targets Spanish speaking audiences on the Russian social media platform VKontakte. The page self identifies as being located in Madrid, Spain and has 1,633 followers. News Front's Spanish-language no longer has any pages on Twitter, Facebook and YouTube because they all have been suspended by the platforms.

Happy to discuss any proposal to move something to "on background."
Finally, could you give some idea about when you are looking to publish?
Best,
J.T.

John T. Ice
Deputy Spokesperson
United States Department of State
(b)(6)
✉: (b)(6) @state.gov

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Sender:	"Ice, John T" (b)(6) @state.gov>
Recipient:	Lee, Matthew < (b)(6) @ap.org>;
	(b)(6) @state.gov>;
	(b)(6) @state.gov>