

**IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA**

JUDICIAL WATCH, INC.,)	
425 Third Street, S.W., Suite 800)	
Washington, DC 20024,)	
)	
Plaintiff,)	
)	Civil Action No.
v.)	
)	
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE,)	
The Executive Office)	
Office of the Legal Adviser, Room 5519)	
2201 C Street, N.W.)	
Washington, DC 20520,)	
)	
Defendant.)	
)	

COMPLAINT

Plaintiff Judicial Watch, Inc. brings this action against Defendant U.S. Department of State to compel compliance with the Freedom of Information Act, 5 U.S.C. § 552 (“FOIA”). As grounds therefor, Plaintiff alleges as follows:

JURISDICTION AND VENUE

1. The Court has jurisdiction over this action pursuant to 5 U.S.C. § 552(a)(4)(B) and 28 U.S.C. § 1331.
2. Venue is proper in this district pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1391(e).

PARTIES

3. Plaintiff Judicial Watch, Inc. is a not-for-profit, educational organization incorporated under the laws of the District of Columbia and headquartered at 425 Third Street S.W., Suite 800, Washington, DC 20024. Plaintiff seeks to promote transparency, integrity, and accountability in government and fidelity to the rule of law. As part of its mission, Plaintiff

regularly requests records from federal agencies pursuant to FOIA. Plaintiff analyzes the responses and disseminates its findings and the requested records to the American public to inform them about “what their government is up to.”

4. Defendant U.S. Department of State is an agency of the United States Government and is headquartered at 2201 C Street N.W., Washington, DC 20520. Defendant has possession, custody, and control of records to which Plaintiff seeks access.

STATEMENT OF FACTS

5. On June 13, 2014, Plaintiff submitted a FOIA request to Defendant, by certified mail, seeking access to the following:

Any and all records concerning, regarding, or related to notes, updates, or reports created in response to the September 11, 2012 attack on the U.S. Consulate in Benghazi, Libya. This request includes, but is not limited to, notes taken by then Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton or employees of the Office of the Secretary of State during the attack and its immediate aftermath.

The request stated, “The timeframe for this request is September 11-15, 2012.”

6. On July 8, 2014, Defendant acknowledged receipt of Plaintiff’s request, assigned it Case Control Number F-2014-11262, and noted that “[u]nusual circumstances ... may arise that would require additional time to process your request.”

7. Pursuant to 5 U.S.C. § 552(a)(6)(A)(i), Defendant was required to determine whether to comply with the request within twenty (20) working days of receipt and to notify Plaintiff immediately of its determination, the reasons therefor, and the right to appeal any adverse determination. Defendant’s determination was due by August 5, 2014.

8. As of the date of this complaint, Defendant has failed to: (i) determine whether to comply with the request; (ii) notify Plaintiff of any such determination or the

reasons therefor; (iii) advise Plaintiff of the right to appeal any adverse determination; and/or (iv) produce the requested records or otherwise demonstrate that the requested records are exempt from production.

9. Because the Defendant has failed to comply with the time limit set forth in 5 U.S.C. § 552(a)(6)(A), Plaintiff is deemed to have exhausted any and all administrative remedies pursuant to 5 U.S.C. § 552(a)(6)(C).

COUNT 1
(Violation of FOIA, 5 U.S.C. § 552)

10. Plaintiff realleges paragraphs 1 through 9 as if fully stated herein.

11. Defendant is unlawfully withholding records requested by Plaintiff pursuant to 5 U.S.C. § 552.

12. Plaintiff is being irreparably harmed by reason of Defendant's unlawful withholding of records responsive to Plaintiff's FOIA request, and will continue to be irreparably harmed unless Defendant is compelled to conform its conduct to the requirements of the law.

WHEREFORE, Plaintiff respectfully requests that the Court: (1) order Defendant to conduct searches for any and all records responsive to Plaintiff's FOIA requests and demonstrate that it employed search methods reasonably likely to lead to the discovery of records responsive to Plaintiff's FOIA requests; (2) order Defendant to produce, by a date certain, any and all non-exempt records responsive to FOIA requests and a *Vaughn* index of any responsive records withheld under claim of exemption; (3) enjoin Defendant from continuing to withhold any and all non-exempt records responsive to Plaintiff's FOIA requests; (4) grant Plaintiff an award of attorney's fees and other litigation costs reasonably incurred in this action pursuant to 5 U.S.C. § 552(a)(4)(E); and (5) grant Plaintiff such other relief as the Court deems just and proper.

Dated: September 3, 2014

Respectfully submitted,

/s/ Paul J. Orfanedes

Paul J. Orfanedes

D.C. Bar No. 429716

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