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

JUDICIAL WATCH, INC., 425 Third Street SW, Suite 800	)	
Washington, DC 20024,	)	
	)	Civil Action No.
Plaintiff,	)	
V.	)	
	)	
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE,	)	
The Executive Office	)	
Office of the Legal Adviser, Suite 5.600	)	
600 19 <sup>th</sup> Street, N.W.	)	
Washington, DC 20522,	)	
	)	
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 SW, 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

agencies' responses and disseminates both 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 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 December 2, 2016, Plaintiff submitted a FOIA request to Defendant seeking access to the following records:
  - a) All records that concern or relate to the processing of FOIA Request No. F-2014-08848, served on the State Department by Judicial Watch, Inc. on May 13, 2014. Any and all tasking, tracking, and reporting records for searches conducted in response to the request should be considered responsive. Forms DS-1748 and any "search slips," "search tasker," and "search details," also should be considered responsive.
  - b) All internal State Department communications that concern or relate to the processing of or search for records responsive to FOIA Request No. F-2014-08848, including any directions or guidance about how and where to conduct the searches, whether and how to search the emails of U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, and any issues, problems, or questions regarding the searches and/or search results.
  - c) All records that concern or relate to the State Department's discovery, prior to February 2, 2015, that additional searches for record responsive to FOIA Request No. F-2014-08848 were [sic] necessary. In this regard, the State Department represented in a February 2, 2015 status report filed in litigation regarding FOIA Request No. F-2014-08848 that:

In the course of preparing additional information to provide to Plaintiff for purposes of settlement discussions, Defendant has discovered that additional searches for documents potentially responsive to the FOIA [request] must be conducted.<sup>1</sup>

Any records, including communications, regarding this discovery referenced in the status report should be considered responsive.

d) All records that concern, relate to, or identify the location(s) or source(s) of

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Joint Status Report, *Judicial Watch, Inc. v. U.S. Dep't of State*, Case No. 14-cv-2142 (RCL) (D. District of Columbia) (Dkt. Entry No. 11) at para. 3.

potentially responsive records that necessitated the "additional searches" referenced in the February 2, 2015 status report.

For convenience, Plaintiff attached a copy of Request No. F-2014-08848 with the FOIA request at issue in this lawsuit, as was a copy of the State Department's initial, November 12, 2014 response to the request and the February 2, 2015 status report.

- 6. According to U.S. Postal Service records, the request was delivered to Defendant on December 12, 2016.
- 7. By letter dated December 14, 2016, Defendant acknowledged receipt of Plaintiff's request and advised Plaintiff that the request had been assigned Case Control Number F-2016-17249.
- 8. As of the date of this Complaint, Defendant has failed to: (i) produce the requested records or demonstrate that the requested records are lawfully exempt from production; (ii) notify Plaintiff of the scope of any responsive records Defendant intends to produce or withhold and the reasons for any withholdings; or (iii) inform Plaintiff that it may appeal any adequately specific, adverse determination.

## COUNT I Violation of FOIA, 5 U.S.C. § 552

- 9. Plaintiff realleges paragraphs 1 through 8 as if fully stated herein.
- 10. Plaintiff is being irreparably harmed by reason of Defendant's violation of FOIA, and Plaintiff will continue to be irreparably harmed unless Defendant is compelled to comply with FOIA.
- 11. To trigger FOIA's administrative exhaustion requirement, Defendant was required to determine whether to comply with Plaintiff's request within twenty (20) working days of receiving the request, or on or about January 3, 2017. At a minimum, Defendant was

required to: (i) gather and review the requested documents; (ii) determine and communicate to Plaintiff the scope of any responsive records Defendant intended to produce or withhold and the reasons for any withholdings; and (iii) inform Plaintiff that it may appeal any adequately specific, adverse determination. See, e.g., Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington

v. Federal Election Commission, 711 F.3d 180, 188-89 (D.C. Cir. 2013).

12. Because Defendant failed to determine whether to comply with Plaintiff's request within the time period required by FOIA, Plaintiff is deemed to have exhausted its administrative appeal remedies. 5 U.S.C. § 552(a)(6)(C)(i).

WHEREFORE, Plaintiff respectfully requests that the Court: (1) order Defendant to conduct searches for any and all records responsive to Plaintiff's FOIA request and demonstrate that it employed search methods reasonably likely to lead to the discovery of records responsive to Plaintiff's FOIA request; (2) order Defendant to produce, by a date certain, any and all non-exempt records responsive to Plaintiff's FOIA request 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 request; (4) grant Plaintiff an award of attorneys' 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: January 31, 2017 Respectfully submitted,

/s/ Ramona R. Cotca

Ramona R. Cotca (D.C. Bar No. 501159) JUDICIAL WATCH, INC. 425 Third Street S.W., Suite 800 Washington, DC 20024 (202) 646-5172 rcotca@judicialwatch.org Counsel for Plaintiff

### **CIVIL COVER SHEET**

JS-44 (Rev. 7/16 DC)				I DEFENSION A	N COTTO					
I. (a) PLAINTIFFS		DEFENDANTS LLS DEDARTMENT OF STATE								
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(c) ATTORNEYS (FIRM NA	ME, ADDRESS	, AND TELEPHONE NUMBER)		ATTORNEYS			7,000,000			
Ramona R. Cotca										
JUDICIAL WATCH,										
425 Third Street, S		00								
Washington, DC 200 (202) 646-5172	J24									
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#### Case 1:17-cv-00205 Document 1-1 Filed 01/31/17 Page 2 of 2

O G. Habeas Corpus/ 2255	O H. Employment Discrimination	O I. FOIA/Privacy Act	O J. Student Loan	
530 Habeas Corpus – General 510 Motion/Vacate Sentence 463 Habeas Corpus – Alien Detaince	442 Civil Rights – Employment (criteria: race, gender/sex, national origin, discrimination, disability, age, religion, retaliation)	X 895 Freedom of Information A 890 Other Statutory Actions (if Privacy Act)	152 Recovery of Defaulted Student Loan (excluding veterans)	
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O K. Labor/ERISA (non-employment)  710 Fair Labor Standards Act 720 Labor/Mgmt. Relations 740 Labor Railway Act 751 Family and Medical Leave Act 790 Other Labor Litigation 791 Empl. Ret. Inc. Security Act	L. Other Civil Rights (non-employment)  441 Voting (if not Voting Rights Act)  443 Housing/Accommodations  440 Other Civil Rights  445 Americans w/Disabilities – Employment  446 Americans w/Disabilities – Other  448 Education	M. Contract  110 Insurance 120 Marine 130 Miller Act 140 Negotiable Instrument Enforcement of Judgment 153 Recovery of Overpayment of Veteran's Benefits 160 Stockholder's Suits 190 Other Contracts 195 Contract Product Liability 196 Franchise	○ N. Three-Judge Court  441 Civil Rights - Voting (if Voting Rights Act)	
V. ORIGIN				
O 1 Original O 2 Removed O 3 Remanded O 4 Reinstated O 5 Transferred Proceeding from State from Appellate or Reopened from another Litigation District Judge Court Court district (specify) from Mag. Judge				
VI. CAUSE OF ACTION (CITE THE U.S. CIVIL STATUTE UNDER WHICH YOU ARE FILING AND WRITE A BRIEF STATEMENT OF CAUSE.) 5 U.S.C. Section 552, Freedom of Information Act ("FOIA"). Defendant is unlawfully withholding public records.				
	CHECK IF THIS IS A CLASS ACTION UNDER F.R.C.P. 23  JUI	S Chec RY DEMAND: YES	k YES only if demanded in complaint	
VIII. RELATED CASE(S) IF ANY	(See instruction) YES	NO X If ye	s, please complete related case form	
DATE:January 31, 2017	SIGNATURE OF ATTORNEY OF REC	CORD LO K-6		

## INSTRUCTIONS FOR COMPLETING CIVIL COVER SHEET JS-44 Authority for Civil Cover Sheet

The JS-44 civil cover sheet and the information contained herein neither replaces nor supplements the filings and services of pleadings or other papers as required by law, except as provided by local rules of court. This form, approved by the Judicial Conference of the United States in September 1974, is required for the use of the Clerk of Court for the purpose of initiating the civil docket sheet. Consequently, a civil cover sheet is submitted to the Clerk of Court for each civil complaint filed. Listed below are tips for completing the civil cover sheet. These tips coincide with the Roman Numerals on the cover sheet.

- I. COUNTY OF RESIDENCE OF FIRST LISTED PLAINTIFF/DEFENDANT (b) County of residence: Use 11001 to indicate plaintiff if resident of Washington, DC, 88888 if plaintiff is resident of United States but not Washington, DC, and 99999 if plaintiff is outside the United States.
- III. CITIZENSHIP OF PRINCIPAL PARTIES: This section is completed only if diversity of citizenship was selected as the Basis of Jurisdiction under Section II.
- IV. CASE ASSIGNMENT AND NATURE OF SUIT: The assignment of a judge to your case will depend on the category you select that best represents the <u>primary</u> cause of action found in your complaint. You may select only <u>one</u> category. You <u>must</u> also select <u>one</u> corresponding nature of suit found under the category of the case.
- VI. CAUSE OF ACTION: Cite the U.S. Civil Statute under which you are filing and write a brief statement of the primary cause.
- VIII. RELATED CASE(S), IF ANY: If you indicated that there is a related case, you must complete a related case form, which may be obtained from the Clerk's Office.

Because of the need for accurate and complete information, you should ensure the accuracy of the information provided prior to signing the form.

FOIA Summons 1/13

# UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

	JUDICIAL WATCH, INC.,  Plaintiff  v.  U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE,  Defendant	) ) ) Civil Action No. )
	Defendam	,
	SUMMO	ONS IN A CIVIL ACTION
То:	(Defendant's name and address) U.S. ATTOF 555 Fourth S Washington	
	A lawsuit has been filed against you.	
Civil	on the plaintiff an answer to the attached	nmons on you (not counting the day you received it) you must complaint or a motion under Rule 12 of the Federal Rules of served on the plaintiff or plaintiff's attorney, whose name and
	Ramona R. Cotca 425 Third Street, SW Suite 800 Washington, DC 20024	
comp	If you fail to respond, judgment by defalaint. You also must file your answer or	ault may be entered against you for the relief demanded in the motion with the court.
	e	ANGELA D. CAESAR, CLERK OF COURT
Date:		Signature of Clerk or Deputy Clerk

FOIA Summons 1/13

# UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

JUDICIAL WATCH, INC.,	
Plaintiff	
v.	) Civil Action No.
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE,	
Defendant	
SU	MMONS IN A CIVIL ACTION
To: (Defendant's name and address)	
U.S. A 950 Pe	ATTORNEY GENERAL Jennsylvania Avenue, NW ington, DC 20530
A lawsuit has been filed against y	you.
serve on the plaintiff an answer to the atta	his summons on you (not counting the day you received it) you must eached complaint or a motion under Rule 12 of the Federal Rules of must be served on the plaintiff or plaintiff's attorney, whose name and
Ramona R. Cotca 425 Third Street, SW Suite 800 Washington, DC 20024	4
If you fail to respond, judgment b complaint. You also must file your answ	by default may be entered against you for the relief demanded in the ver or motion with the court.
	ANGELA D. CAESAR, CLERK OF COURT
Date:	
	Signature of Clerk or Deputy Clerk

FOIA Summons 1/13

## UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

	HIDICIAL WATCH INC	
	JUDICIAL WATCH, INC.,  Plaintiff	- ) )
	V.	) Civil Action No.
	U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE,	)
	Defendant	- )
	SUMM	ONS IN A CIVIL ACTION
То:	(Defendant's name and address)	
	U.S. DEPA The Execut Office of the 600 19th St	e Legal Adviser, Suite 5.600
	A lawsuit has been filed against you.	
serve or	n the plaintiff an answer to the attached rocedure. The answer or motion must	mmons on you (not counting the day you received it) you must d complaint or a motion under Rule 12 of the Federal Rules of be served on the plaintiff or plaintiff's attorney, whose name and
	Ramona R. Cotca 425 Third Street, SW Suite 800 Washington, DC 20024	
	If you fail to respond, judgment by defint. You also must file your answer or	fault may be entered against you for the relief demanded in the motion with the court.
		ANGELA D. CAESAR, CLERK OF COURT
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Date: _	<del></del>	Signature of Clerk or Deputy Clerk