| 1 | UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF FLORIDA WEST PALM BEACH DIVISION |
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| 3 | CASE NO. 22-MJ-8332-BER |
| 4 5 | IN RE: SEALED SEARCH WARRANT West Palm Beach, FL |
| 6 | . West Pain Beach, Fil . August 18, 2022 |
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| 8 | MOTION to SEAL PROCEEDINGS BEFORE THE HONORABLE BRUCE REINHART UNITED STATES MAGISTRATE JUDGE |
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THE COURTROOM DEPUTY: United States District Court for the Southern District of Florida is now in session. The Honorable Bruce Reinhart presiding.

THE COURT: Good afternoon, everyone. Have a seat, please.

We are here this afternoon in Case Number 22-8332, In Re Sealed Search Warrant.

Let me address four preliminary matters before I turn to the parties. First, I want to remind everyone in the courtroom of the Court's Rule 77.1 which states: "All forms of equipment or means of photography, audio or video recording, broadcasting, or televising within the environs of any place of holding court in the district, including courtrooms, chambers, adjacent rooms, hallways, doorways, stairways, elevators, or offices of supporting personnel, whether the Court is in session or at recess, is prohibited."

That means no one is to be audio recording, video recording, live tweeting, live streaming, or otherwise broadcasting these proceedings outside of the four walls of this courtroom. If the Marshals catch you doing it, you will be escorted out of the courtroom and subjected to prosecution for Contempt of Court.

Second, no one is to leave the courtroom during these proceedings. I have instructed the Marshals to keep the doors closed. We are going to have an orderly proceeding here today

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and I can't have people jumping up and down and walking in and out of the courtroom.

Third, everyone is to wear a mask during these proceedings in the audience and at counsel table except when you come to the lectern to speak. When people come to the lectern to speak, and all speakers should speak from the lectern, you may remove your mask, and you should remove your mask so that we can hear you clearly. That is why I am not wearing a mask. And you should identify yourself for the Court Reporter.

At this time, let me turn to the Government and allow the Government to make its appearance.

MR. GONZALEZ: Good afternoon, your Honor, Tony
Gonzalez, United States Attorney for the Southern District of
Florida, and Jay Bratt of the National Security Division.

THE COURT: Good afternoon to you both.

I will call you collectively the media intervenors. I know some of you are not strictly news or print media, but let me allow counsel to make their appearances and let me know who your clients are.

MR. TOBIN: Good afternoon, your Honor, my name is Charles Tobin with the law firm of Ballard Spahr. I represent the Washington Post, CNN, NBC News, the E. W. Scripps Company, and the Associated Press.

THE COURT: Thank you very much.

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the Court's convenience.

MS. McELROY: Good afternoon, your Honor, my name is Dana McElroy, I'm with the law firm of Thomas & LoCicero. represent the New York Times Company, CBS Broadcasting, Inc., McClatchy Company, doing business as the Miami Herald, and the Times Publishing Company. THE COURT: Thank you very much. MS. SHULLMAN: Good afternoon, your Honor, Deanna Shullman of Shullman Fugate. I am here today on behalf of Dow Jones and Company which publishes the Wall Street Journal, as well as American Broadcasting Company, Inc., which you will know as ABC. THE COURT: Thank you very much. MR. REEDER: Good afternoon, Judge, Martin Reeder representing the Palm Beach Post. I'm with the law firm of Atherton Galardi Mullen & Reeder. MR. MOON: Good afternoon, your Honor, James Moon, M-O-O-N, from Meland Budwick on behalf of Judicial Watch. MS. KING: Good afternoon, your Honor, Nellie King on behalf of the Florida Center for Accountability, Law Offices of Nellie L. King. THE COURT: Good afternoon. Are all of you going to speak today or have you adopted a subset of speakers? Tobin?

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MR. TOBIN: Your Honor, we have herded ourselves for

THE COURT: I appreciate that.

MR. TOBIN: I will be arguing for my clients and I will also be presenting the substantive argument on behalf of Ms. McElroy's clients, that would be the New York Times, CBS Broadcasting, the Miami Herald, and the Tampa Bay Times, as well as on behalf of Mr. Reeder's client, the Palm Beach Post, and then we kind of worked out a batting order after that, if I can help the Court with that.

Each of the other media counsel are going to make a brief statement to the Court and then Ms. King is going to present argument on behalf of her client, and batting cleanup will be Mr. Moon on behalf of his client.

THE COURT: I appreciate that. Thank you very much.

For the Government, will Mr. Bratt or Mr. Gonzalez or both be speaking?

MR. BRATT: Good afternoon, your Honor, Jay Bratt. I will be speaking on behalf of the Government.

THE COURT: Thank you, Mr. Bratt.

A couple of other house cleaning matters, I just want to make sure for the parties. I have received and reviewed a lot of pleadings in this case, but I want to make sure that there is nothing that I have missed.

I have reviewed Docket Entry 4, which was filed by Judicial Watch, Docket Entry 6, which was filed by the Albany Times Union, and I understand I have mooted that out, but I did

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review that, Docket Entry 9 from the New York Times, Docket Entry 20 from CBS Broadcasting, Docket Entry 22 from NBC Universal, Cable News Network, W. P. Company, and E. W. Scripps, Docket Entry 23 from the Palm Beach Post, Docket Entry 30 from the Florida Center for Government Accountability, Docket Entry 31 from the McClatchy Company, Docket Entry 32 from Dow Jones and Company, Docket Entry 33 from the Associated Press, and Docket Entry 49 from ABC. I have also reviewed the Government's response which was filed at Docket Entry 59, and I also reviewed the replies that were filed at Docket Entries 66, 67, and 68. Are there any other filings from the Government that I have not referenced? MR. BRATT: There are not, your Honor. THE COURT: From the media intervenors, are there any other? MR. TOBIN: No, your Honor. THE COURT: One other housekeeping matter, at Docket Entry 59 the Government indicated that it was proposing to unseal redacted copies of the application for the warrant in this case, which is redacted solely to remove the name of the Special Agent who swore the affidavit, the sealing order, which

redacted to remove the identifiers for the specific Assistant

U.S. Attorney who signed that motion, and the criminal cover

would be unredacted, the motion to seal, which would be

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sheet, which would also be redacted to remove the identifiers for the Assistant U.S. Attorney who filed it.

Do any of the media parties object to the unsealing of those documents with those redactions?

MR. TOBIN: We do not at this time, your Honor.

THE COURT: In light of that representation, I will grant the Government's implied motion in their pleading at Docket Entry 59 to unseal what has now been filed under seal at Docket Entry 57. I will direct the Clerk of Court to unseal the application as redacted, the sealing order, the motion to seal as redacted, and the criminal cover sheet as redacted.

My understanding is the Clerk of the Court will make efforts to have that available for everyone after the proceedings and later this afternoon.

All right. Mr. Bratt, I believe -- do you agree the Government has the burden on the motion to seal in this case?

MR. BRATT: We do, your Honor.

THE COURT: All right. Then I will hear from the Government first and last since you have the burden of proof. If you want to come to the lectern, I'd be happy to hear the Government's argument.

MR. BRATT: Thank you, your Honor. I think what is clear is that in many ways there is some level of agreement between the Government and the media intervenors. The Government acknowledges that there is a heightened public

interest in this case and that that heightened interest makes it into a unique and likely unprecedented situation, and as a result of that, the Government has taken steps that it ordinarily never does.

Your Honor, I am sure, sees hundreds of search warrant applications and search warrants over the course of a year, or at least over the course of a couple of years, and I think you know it is the practice of this U.S. Attorney's Office in this district never to seek to unseal anything with respect to them. I oversee cases in the other 92 districts across the country, that never happens.

Attorney in the District of Columbia and we never did that, but in light of the heightened interest in this matter, we took the unusual and really unprecedented step of affirmatively seeking to unseal the items that the Court has just identified and now recently unsealed the other materials that we requested in our motion.

While there is a heightened public interest in this case, and that interest is important, there is another public interest at stake here, and that is the public interest that criminal investigations are able to go forward without being impeded.

It is the Government's position that in the Eleventh Circuit it is the common law right of access that governs

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whether or not -- the Doctrine of Common Law Right of Access to Judicial Records that governs here and that what the Government needs to show is good cause through a balancing of various factors. At the same time, even if the First Amendment compelling interest standard was the one that the Court has to follow, under that standard we would easily meet it as well.

THE COURT: I am sorry, if I can stop you there. Is there really any meaningful distinction between those two standards as they might apply in this case?

MR. BRATT: As they apply to the facts of this case, and even looking at the Bennett case that we cited in our brief that Judge Rosenbaum, when she was a judge here, decided, even though I think she also followed the common law right of access sort of rubric, she found that releasing a search warrant affidavit in the midst of an ongoing criminal investigation did represent a compelling interest on the part of the Government, or the Government's need to keep that sealed was a compelling interest that satisfied the standard.

THE COURT: All right.

MR. BRATT: That is really why we are in the position of not wanting to have this unsealed.

If you look at the factors that the cases have identified and that set out the equities that the Government has in keeping a search warrant affidavit in an ongoing criminal investigation, one that is in its very early stages,

we satisfy those equities across the board.

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I read in the reply, the consolidated reply last night, and is likely to be an argument that you are going to hear after me, that we have not made a sufficient showing as to those factors, and that really is what puts us in a Catch 22 position, because to make the complete showing of the record would be to reveal the contents of the affidavit. I know the Court is very familiar with it.

THE COURT: Yes. Judge Jordan, when he was on the District Court, he noted that the Eleventh Circuit has said in these situations the Court is in a bit of a Catch 22 because in order to articulate the findings that need to be articulated, or in order for the Government to argue what they need to argue, you are choosing between disclosing things that are already under seal.

That is in United States versus Steinger, 626

F.Supp.2d 1231, at 1234, and he noted that the Eleventh Circuit standard is that it's sufficient if the arguments that are made in the public, considered in conjunction with the sealed document itself, are sufficient to meet the burden.

I hear you in the sense that there are things that you know and I know that the media people don't know, and I believe the Eleventh Circuit law allows me to consider those even though the Government hasn't articulated them directly in the public record.

MR. BRATT: Right. To go through those factors, if one reads the affidavit, which is very detailed and is reasonably lengthy, it would provide a road map to the investigation. It would even likely suggest next investigative steps that we reasonably would be about to take.

It does provide an ability to discern the identities of witnesses, and I want to spend some time on that because

of witnesses, and I want to spend some time on that because there certainly is the argument, well, if you anonymize the witnesses, or if you maybe redact dates when they were interviewed, that that would be sufficient protection, but that is not the case here.

The Court is aware of what several witnesses have said that is described in the affidavit and only certain people would have certain knowledge, and those who may be familiar with who those people are would likely be able to discern their identities.

Also, we live in a time when there are many amateur sleuths on the internet, and people could begin to do searches and find even personal information about these witnesses. That is a real significant concern and it's a threat in this case.

As the Court may be aware, there are two FBI agents in this case that since their names became public in the unsealed — the unredacted version of the search warrant affidavit, they have received threats.

THE COURT: You mean the unsealed version of the

warrant itself, not the affidavit?

MR. BRATT: That is right. About an hour before the Court released the slightly redacted version, another version was released I believe to the Wall Street Journal that did not have the names of the agents on the property receipts.

THE COURT: I'm sorry, could you please move the microphone a little closer. We are having a little trouble hearing you.

MR. BRATT: I will move over this way.

THE COURT: Even better. Thank you.

MR. BRATT: And, of course, there was the incident last week in Cincinnati.

This is a volatile situation with respect to this particular search, particularly across the political spectrum, but certainly on one side in particular. There is a real concern not just for the safety of these witnesses, but to chill other witnesses who may come forward and cooperate in the Government's investigation.

The affidavit sets out a number of different investigative techniques that the Government has used in this case and they would be revealed, and it could compromise our ability to use them as the investigation proceeds.

There is substantial Grand Jury information. The affidavit is replete with references to activity that has occurred before the Grand Jury.

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And another factor, sort of the last factor that Courts consider, is the threat of possible obstruction or interference in the investigation. In many cases that is purely a theoretical threat, but in this case, the Court has found probable cause that there was a violation of one of the obstruction statutes, and that evidence of other obstruction would be found at Mar-a-Lago.

A redacted version of the affidavit, given one that would truly redact the information that the Government considers sensitive and that would pose a threat to the investigation, that is not practicable.

We cited several cases that have come to that conclusion and held that principle. There is the Patel case that we cited, there is the World of Islam case that we cited, there is and the Corces case that we cited. Bennett talks about that.

I am certainly more than willing, your Honor, in an in camera session to go through the affidavit paragraph by paragraph with you, and I think the Court would conclude that if the information that needs to be redacted is done so, that there would be very little — there would be nothing of substance that would remain in the affidavit.

THE COURT: Let me talk to you about redactions for a second. It seems to me -- let's assume there are some redactions that the Court agrees needs to be done, perhaps

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extensive redactions that the Court agrees needs to be done, and all that we are left with is essentially meaningless gibberish, but meaningless gibberish that doesn't hurt the Government. Doesn't the balance then tip to the media?

There is a public right of access, it may be meaningless, unhelpful information, but what is the harm to the Government if I redacted everything except the first word on

MR. BRATT: Two responses to that. One, I think the other Courts have come to the conclusion that it doesn't serve the media's interests to give them something that is meaningless.

the first page if that is what I determined? They can have it,

it may not be useful, but why can't they have it?

Second, it imposes a burden on us. We then have to take time away from the investigation itself to make these redactions, and this is a unique case and we certainly would hold it up in the future as a unique case, but this is not a precedent that we want to set, that in other cases people are constantly going to the Courts and then asking us to spend the time to redact numerous search warrant affidavits and leaving in generic descriptions of the statutes or whatever else may remain.

It is not a practice that we endorse and we certainly would object to it very strongly.

THE COURT: Understood. While you are there, that is

sort of what I wanted to talk to you about.

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I happened to review a different search warrant this morning, so it gives me some good examples that have nothing to do with this case. It was a child pornography case, so I am not risking inadvertently disclosing anything that is currently under seal.

I think it is fair to say that in a lot of search warrants that I see, and have seen over the years, there will be, for example, a section at the beginning which describes the agent's background, perhaps the statutes under investigation, maybe even citing verbatim what those statutes are, citing definitions from a statute that are meaningful to the Court as the Court reviews the affidavit so that the Court knows when the affiant is using a particular term — in the one I was looking at today it talked about sexually explicit conduct and there was a definition of that term.

I'm not saying that there is, but assume that sort of information was in the search warrant in this case. Why wouldn't that be something that should be unredacted and disclosed?

MR. BRATT: It goes back to the point I just made. It really serves no purpose. It does not edify the public in any meaningful way. The public now has the search warrant itself, it has the statutes that are cited. Anybody can go to the Code book or go online and find them. And again, to go back to my

earlier point, it sets a difficult precedent.

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THE COURT: I understand the difficult precedent question. I think it is a line drawing exercise. It wouldn't be difficult if the Court concluded that some disclosure in this case were necessary to differentiate this case from essentially every other case that has come before and may come after it, so I am not sure that that is for the Court's concern.

I understand the Government's position, but I am not sure for my purposes in ruling on the motion concern that in the future there will be a distinct burden on the department weighs very heavily, but I hear you on that. I understand.

I could point out to some other things I was going to point to, and maybe your answer would just be the same. There is often in search warrants, as there was in the one I saw today, a description of essentially what I will call a search protocol, you know, in this case we're going to seize computers, and then we are going to copy the entire computer, and then we are going to have a separate team go through the computer and they are going to extract things, and only then will the team that is prosecuting the case get it.

Again, I am not saying that sort of information is in this affidavit, but if something like that were in an affidavit, putting aside the Government's burden, why wouldn't that be something that should be unredacted?

MR. BRATT: I understand the argument that the Court is making, and certainly I don't want to give the ad absurdum argument and be overly rote, so there may be things in the appropriate case of that nature that could be redacted.

Again, I come back to that, while this case is unique, the factors that the Court must weigh, the precedence that the Court must look at, the analysis that the Court must do, those all remain the same.

Just to go back to one of the things that you pointed out that is routinely in affidavits, here we definitely would redact some of the agents' background because, while in many cases that is not something that would be overly -- would draw undue attention, here somebody could look at that and say, oh, this person was at Quantico in this year, and this person specializes in this area. We would ask the Court to redact that sort of information in this particular matter.

THE COURT: I will tell you I would be inclined to do so. I think the identities of the witnesses, the identities of the agents' investigative sources and methods is at the core when you look at all these cases. That is at the core of the Government's legitimate interest here.

Not necessarily the -- there is a lot of information about this case out there, but how the Government got to that information is, I think, at the core of what the cases protect. Whether in this case the media's interest nevertheless

overcomes that is an issue for me to consider today.

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I agree with you in that regard. I think at the core is really sources and methods, and as you get out from that the Government's interests become less acute until you get to a point where some things — if you are citing a statute and just quoting Title 18, Section XYZ says the following, that seems to me to be at the perimeter.

MR. BRATT: In addressing some of the responses that have come in over the last 24 hours, I think it is important to note that the media intervenors have identified no case where a Court has unsealed a search warrant affidavit in an ongoing active criminal investigation, putting aside even one that has national security overtones such as this one.

In the consolidated reply the media intervenors in that matter rely heavily on the In Re Search Warrant case in the Northern District of Georgia which involved an effort to get the affidavit -- which involved the Olympic bombing in 1966, and the security guard, Richard Jewel, who initially was a suspect and then was later cleared.

There was an effort to get that search warrant affidavit, and the Court did permit a redacted version and that was turned over, but to quote from that opinion, what was at stake there was "historical information pertaining only to a known former suspect," and that's at 945 F.Supp. at 1568.

As the Court noted in that opinion, the investigation,

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at least as to Mr. Jewel, was at that point closed. This investigation is open, it is in its early stages. It is still less than two weeks since the Court signed the affidavit.

At pages seven and nine of the consolidated reply there are 13 bullet points of information that the media intervenors say are now out in the public and that that justifies turning over the affidavit.

Aside from the fact that the National Archives and Records Administration, NARA, aside from the fact that NARA made a criminal referral to the Department of Justice, and that the Department of Justice began an investigation, the Department of Justice has not confirmed or denied any of the information that is in there, nor am I going to do so today.

The fact that there may have been other people who have spoken to the press who may or may not have correct information, that should not influence the Court's decision in a matter such as this.

Also, in the four search warrant cases, the Court really discounts the chilling effect on future witnesses, and as I previously said, the Government is very concerned about the safety of the witnesses in these cases, and is very concerned about the impact of all the attention that people would place on those witnesses and other witnesses, not just in this case, but again, in future cases, understanding that this case is unique.

If the Court looks at the factors, if the Court looks at the case law both in this circuit and what other judges in this district or neighboring districts have done at this stage in an ongoing criminal investigation, one that has national security overtones, the public interest that the investigation be able to proceed without any interference outweighs the strong public interest in the historical nature of this case.

THE COURT: Thank you, Mr. Bratt, and I will give you the final word once I hear from the other side.

Who will speak for the media intervenors, Mr. Tobin?

MR. TOBIN: Your Honor, Charles Tobin on behalf of the media intervenors. Your Honor, we appreciate the Court granting us intervention in this case. Obviously it is a case of historic importance, the public interest is not only heightened, as the Government put it in its papers, it is powerful and it is unprecedented here.

We represent not just the interest of the news media, but the American public. We, the people, are the ultimate stake holders in the transparency of our court system and in the administration of justice, particularly in unprecedented and historic cases like this one.

Your Honor, when the FBI persuades you, your Honor, or any Court, that there is probable cause to search the residence of a former president, any former president, the public interest could not be greater in transparency into that

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proceeding. As the Court is well aware, and I know the Court has read the precedent, transparency serves the public interest in understanding and accepting the results. That is good for the Government, that is good for the Court. You can't trust what you cannot see.

We are probably going to be back here again, if matters proceed to a prosecution, making that same kind of argument over and over again. The time, in our view, for us to help everybody get it right is now, at the beginning of the proceeding, when we already have court documents of high public interest that have been filed.

We greatly appreciate Attorney General Garland in his statements last week, and Mr. Gonzalez and Mr. Brown (sic) in understanding that there is sufficient public interest to release some of the documents in this case. Obviously, we think that that public interest carries over into a Fourth Amendment search and seizure warrant application to this Court based on alleged probable cause.

So, your Honor, the presumption --

THE COURT: Not alleged probable cause, I found there is probable cause.

MR. TOBIN: Indeed you did, your Honor. Thank you for that.

Your Honor, the presumption certainly applies with its greatest force to affidavits that you made a basis for that

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finding, your Honor, and so what we are asking the Court to do today — and this is obviously a lot. From our standpoint, our argument is about process more than it is about substance. We are flying blind.

For good and valid reasons there are things that the public and the press probably will not get access to at this stage of the proceeding, but the affidavit and other materials that remain sealed still are part of the presumptive right of First Amendment and common law access.

THE COURT: Let me ask you the same question I asked Mr. Bratt. I am aware of the case law that talks about the two different public rights of access; one is common law and one is constitutional.

My colleagues who had to deal with this issue have usually deftly said, well, I don't have to resolve whether the First Amendment applies because I would find the same result either way.

Do you agree that in this case that I don't need to really resolve that issue, that the application of either test is going to end at the same place?

MR. TOBIN: Yes, except that the words are different.

THE COURT: I understand.

MR. TOBIN: Compelling need, under the strict scrutiny standard, is the highest level of burden of proof that the Government applied, and as long as the Court gets to the right

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result in our view, frankly, we are less interested in the path, but it is important to get it right and it is important to put the Government --

THE COURT: I get it. But is it your position that good cause under the common law standard equates to compelling need under the First Amendment standard?

MR. TOBIN: It does, your Honor, for purposes of this argument.

THE COURT: Do you have any cases that say that? I don't think I found any case that said there is a right of access under the common law, but there is not under the First Amendment, or vice versa. They always seem to land at the same place.

MR. TOBIN: They do, your Honor, and the Eleventh Circuit has never squarely answered the issue in a criminal records motion like this one, but in Newman versus Graddick, Eleventh Circuit, 696 F.2d 796, characterized the Government's opposition to unsealing the document in that case, which was a list of Alabama prison inmates in a class action lawsuit, as Governmental action that potentially infringes on the First Amendment. The Eleventh Circuit found a First Amendment interest that the activity was potentially infringing.

Moreover, your Honor, in the Chicago Tribune case, the Court noted -- and that is the Chicago Tribune Company versus Bridgestone Firestone, that is at 263 F.2d 1304. The Court

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held that the constitutional right of access had -- "a constitutional right of access has more limited application in the civil context than in the criminal context," strongly in both of those cases suggesting that there is a First Amendment interest in access to court records, especially in criminal proceedings.

THE COURT: Right. I will let you address this in time, but I also think the Government makes the distinction between, and some of the cases have made a distinction between pre-indictment and post indictment, that the First Amendment interest or whatever interest may be evaluated differently temporally depending on whether we are pre-indictment or post indictment.

Do you agree with that principle, that the analysis may be different if we are pre-indictment versus post indictment?

MR. TOBIN: The test is the same, what the Government has to establish is the same. To me, the difference is how much information you get, not whether you get no information, not whether everything remains in the dark, but there may be certain types of information, and the Government may have described some of it here, that justifiably can remain sealed under either the First Amendment test or the common law test, but not the overarching application, not the Court's work and mine and the Government's here today on how we approach the

problem solving.

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THE COURT: All right.

MR. TOBIN: Your Honor, the warrant is subject to these presumptions of access. Under either test the Government must articulate some kind of a heightened need, whether it is compelling or good cause, with a multiplicity of factors.

The Government has already told the Court, and the Court has asked Mr. Brown (sic) about that, that there is no compelling need, there is no good cause as to certain material in the affidavit, they said that in their omnibus response, and they just don't think that it is terribly important or terribly useful for the public to have it, but with respect, your Honor, the Court should not let the Government flip the test.

The test is not what information is more valuable to the public determines whether the public is entitled to it; it is up to the public to decide what information that the Court releases is important to it, and under the presumption of access, that argument simply doesn't carry any weight.

Moreover, your Honor, it was rejected specifically in the Commissioner of Alabama v Department of Corrections case where the Eleventh Circuit specifically rejected the argument that the lethal injections formula, the protocols in Alabama, could not be released because some version of it had already been released, it was already in the papers.

So, the Alabama Government made the argument that

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there is really nothing to be gained by releasing it. The Court said that is not the issue, and that is not the issue where they got it from, even if it was from an anonymous or an undisclosed source. The issue is that it appears in a Government record to which the presumption access attaches.

Your Honor, we would ask that as to those items of information that the Court and the Government — the Government, obviously, can make an argument to you, your Honor, if it chooses to, and if the Court chooses to entertain it, but those items that the Court described and any other items in the affidavit or any other materials remaining under seal should be released fairly quickly, if not immediately, your Honor, because there is no compelling interest, there is no good cause, and the Government has already told us there is some information —

THE COURT: What is your position on Mr. Bratt's argument that just the burden on the Government to have to go through the exercise, to go through the affidavit and to extract — or take a position on whether to extract certain information should weigh on my analysis?

MR. TOBIN: I practice in the Washington, D.C. area, I litigate a lot of FOIA cases before the Federal judiciary up there. We are always hearing the burden on the Government. In those cases, it is usually because we are dealing with hundreds of thousands of documents.

Here, principally we are dealing with a single document, obviously I don't know whether it is two pages or 150 pages, but regardless, frankly, of the burden, and I do make this argument in the FOIA cases, that does not overcome the public's right of access to these materials. That is just part of the Government's work-a-day job.

It is unfortunate if it puts a burden on Mr. Gonzalez or Mr. Brown's (sic) office for the employees who have to put that work in, but it is our job to provide the public with as much information under the presumption of access, particularly in a case of high moment like this one.

THE COURT: Let me follow up on another topic I raised with Mr. Bratt, which is, do you concede that, as an abstract matter, maintaining the integrity of the investigation, and particularly the sources and methods of conducting the investigation, can be in the right case a legitimate and sufficient Government interest to overcome the public right of access?

MR. TOBIN: Yes, your Honor, with the caveats that the Court has mentioned, in the right case, at the right moment of the right case. I suspect, your Honor, that whatever the Court decides, we may be back here again on another iteration of this motion later in the proceeding or after there is a prosecution or a nol pros or whatever. Yes, your Honor, I would agree with that principle as a general matter.

THE COURT: Okay.

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MR. TOBIN: Your Honor, in addition to the immediate or near immediate release of the information that we have been discussing, as to the rest, the law requires the Government to asset item by item a compelling interest, line by line, paragraph by paragraph a compelling interest, taking into account the narrowness that the Court is supposed to arrive at in making that decision, and under the common law test, all of the various factors that the Eleventh Circuit has articulated.

As an alternative to the wholesale sealing, the Court is required to strike the balance and then order the release of any additional information where the Government can't meet its burden.

As to what that process looks like, the Court invited the Government to make ex parte submissions on that process. That is not our preference, but it is also not unusual in these circumstances, your Honor. We get it, we can't be in the room when the Government tells you the things that it wants to conceal, but there needs to be a fulsome process and it needs to be on the record from a court reporter and that transcript needs to be preserved so that we can revisit the issue later on in these proceedings.

We did exactly that in Washington in the Muller investigation, in the Comey memos investigation. In each of those other high moment proceedings from the last few years

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there was an iterative process of seeking information at the appropriate time, and the Courts largely reached -- I won't say largely. The Courts reached the right decisions at most steps of the way and released the information in the tranches that were appropriate at that time.

THE COURT: As to that, let me say, all I am dealing with today is what is before me today. If something comes back, and it comes back before me, obviously I will address it in the full context in which it arises.

As to your point -- and I accept your point earlier about the need for a fulsome review.

First of all, I don't think it is inappropriate for me to put on the record that I did invite the Government to file, and they did not file, anything ex parte. So whatever has been filed you know about, especially now that I have unsealed Exhibit 57. There is no other ex parte filing that was made by the Government with regard to this.

Do you also -- the case law and the case I cited from Judge Jordan seems to suggest that the Court can also review the affidavit, and there may be information that is self-evidently so sensitive that the Court can know -- for example, if an affidavit says a person testified to the Grand Jury that, it is pretty easy to figure out that is Grand Jury material and there may be heightened protection to that, or if the affidavit says, we had an undercover agent who spoke to

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such and such a person on such and such a day, the Court -- do you agree that the Court can sua sponte make that assessment?

I am not saying help the Government meet its burden, but don't you agree that in this situation the Court almost has the role of standing in for you in reviewing the affidavit to make sure that anything the Government wants redacted really meets that standard, and the Court can make that sort of independent assessment?

MR. TOBIN: First of all, we would agree that you are standing in for the public, your Honor. You are the gatekeeper, and we have to put, in a blind process like this one, every faith in the good and wise decision-making that we know you — process that we know you will put into this.

As far as the Court doing the Government's work by not asking them to articulate compelling reasons that is self evident from the affidavit, we do not think that that appropriately meets their burden. Again, it is the Government's burden, not the Court's burden.

It is the Court's responsibility, if I may say that, your Honor, to challenge that, to test that, and to test that through the lens of logic, the Court's understanding of the entire context of the investigation, the Court's inquiries of the Government, and we would also argue, in light of the information since part of the test is what information is already public, in light of the information that already is

made public from whatever source.

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We know that over the last two weeks there has been a lot of information that has become public, some of it made public by former President Trump himself. For example, we know about the National Archives referral of this matter, we know that some of the materials recovered by the National Archives were classified, including --

THE COURT: How do we know that? Where is that in the record before me that I can accept that as credible and reliable information that I should rely upon?

MR. TOBIN: These are all footnoted in our brief, your Honor, as the subject of a variety of news reports. Some of them, to be candid, are from high-level sources who are not named in the document. Again, your Honor, in the Alabama Department of Corrections case, the Court noted that the material had been released by an undisclosed source previously and considered that as a factor militating in favor of ordering the Government to --

THE COURT: I understand that, but for example, it is one thing for me to look at what has now been unsealed, which is the inventory which lists what the Government says it took. I can consider that and I would consider that reliable evidence.

No disrespect to your clients, but just because a newspaper reporter says that an anonymous source says that the

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National Archives says such and such, I don't know how much weight I can or should give to that.

MR. TOBIN: Well, if we were having a trial, of course, your Honor, there would be evidentiary problems, but under the test, the test is what information is public as compared to the sealed record. What we are asking the Court to do is to lay that information down by the sealed record and consider that in the weight of the presumption of public access, which is part of the test.

THE COURT: Do you agree that there is a distinction to be drawn between what may have been made public that the Government knows, that the Government knows X fact is now public, but how the Government knows that fact is not yet public. Do you agree there can be a distinction drawn there that may inform the analysis that I have to make?

MR. TOBIN: Well, to give a perhaps real hypothetical, confidential source X at the National Archives told the Department of Justice or the FBI that classified information, including signals intelligence, was found within the boxes.

The identity of the source is one fact, the fact that they reported classified information in the National Archives is another fact. In this hypothetical I would say the Government has a better argument to say that the identity of that source should not be revealed if it would compromise -- if they can satisfy you that at this point in the investigation it

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would cause a significant credible harm, or a credible harm, but not the information that the National Archives had that information in its possession in those boxes. Those are two different things.

THE COURT: Okay. I understand. Thank you.

MR. TOBIN: The same thing, your Honor, for the National Archives and Records Administration found information that was torn up and needed to be taped together, that the Department of Justice served a subpoena on former President Trump, that officials at the Department of Justice, including their chief of counter intelligence and export control, met with President Trump's attorneys Christina Bobb and Evan Corcoran. I believe that is information that Ms. Bobb has provided to the media. If that is in the affidavit, that ought to be unsealed.

During the June meeting, the former president stopped by, but he didn't answer any questions. During the June meeting the group toured the facilities at Mar-a-Lago. The Department of Justice representative subsequently sent Attorney Corcoran an email instructing him to further secure the area.

One of the former president's lawyers made a representation in a letter to the Department of Justice that all materials marked as classified and held in storage at Mar-a-Lago had been turned over. The Department of Justice subpoenaed surveillance footage of the storage area showing

that boxes were being moved.

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The Department of Justice interviewed many current and former Trump employees, and those are just a sampling of the information, your Honor, there is more in our briefing, but that is a sampling of the information that is public, and we believe that the Court needs — ought to take that into account when it goes back and reviews the affidavit and ought to ask the questions of the Government to justify their burden under the compelling needs standard.

Your Honor, I think we have touched on just about everything else that I would argue. I would note that there is no Eleventh Circuit case, Eleventh Circuit case on the unsealing of search warrant affidavits. We would ask the Court to look to the Eighth Circuit for that guidance, your Honor, the Gunn case.

You know, we recognize, your Honor, as I said, that in all likelihood in a line-by-line analysis there is going to be some information that the Government will be able to justify under its compelling needs standard for certain bits of information, but we are confident, in part because the Government has already told the Court, and given the information that is already public, that the Court could apply the rigorous burden on the Government and release portions of those records.

Your Honor, I will conclude and then be happy to

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answer questions. Where I started, the raid on Mar-a-Lago by the FBI is already one of the most significant law enforcement events in the nation's history. The Court could not find more compelling circumstances and the public could not have a more compelling interest in ensuring maximum transparency over this event and any further proceedings in this Court involving the serious allegations against a former president.

THE COURT: Thank you, Mr. Tobin. I think you have answered all of my questions, I appreciate your time.

Who is next, Mr. Moon or Ms. King?

MR. TOBIN: Your Honor, I am sorry, just a brief

statement by other media counsel.

THE COURT: No problem. Come to the lectern, please,

THE COURT: No problem. Come to the lectern, please remove your mask and introduce yourself to the court reporter if you are going to speak.

MS. McELROY: Good afternoon, your Honor, Dana McElroy on behalf of the New York Times, CBS, the Miami Herald, and Times Publishing. We would adopt Mr. Tobin's excellent arguments on behalf of those clients.

THE COURT: Thank you very much, Ms. McElroy.

MS. SHULLMAN: Good afternoon again, your Honor,

Deanna Shullman of Shullman Fugate on behalf of the Wall Street

Journal and ABC. On behalf of those media intervenors I would

also adopt Mr. Tobin's arguments.

I just wanted to make one point of procedure that I

hope doesn't get lost. It's a product of our Local Rules 5.4(c), but in all of these cases, and I practice in this district for 22 years, all we get to know is sealed entry on the docket, and that is consistent with 5.4(c), so that is not a complaint.

I would ask the Court to be mindful of that in this case. For example, there are a number of sealed entries that we don't necessarily know are associated with the warrant application and probable cause affidavit that we have been spending the most time on. So, I would ask the Court, and I think all of the other media intervenors have asked the Court to look at all documents that are under seal.

So, to the extent there are other things besides what Mr. Tobin has talked at length about, I would ask that the Court review those as well to ensure not only that the documents remain under seal, but that the individual information within those documents remain under seal, too.

I would ask, no judge has ever had done this, it would be enormously helpful to the press if we could get a notation on the docket, motion to seal, affidavit, something that lets us know. It may prevent us from being here as often as we might otherwise be, but it is at your discretion, your Honor, because Rule 5.4 does not require you to do that.

THE COURT: I will ask you to call your friendly member of the local rules committee. Perhaps you can get them

to convince the Court that the Court should amend that local 1 2 rule, but I hear you. 3 MS. SHULLMAN: Don't you worry, your Honor, I have tried. 4 5 THE COURT: I'm sure you have. Thank you very much, I 6 appreciate it. 7 I can say this without violating anything that is There is nothing substantive under seal in this 8 under seal. case. There are some motions, for example, to seal pleadings 9 by the Government that have now subsequently been unsealed. 10 That may be what you are seeing, but there is nothing 11 12 substantive that I am considering here today, other than the 13 affidavit itself, that remains under seal. 14 MS. SHULLMAN: Thank you. 15 THE COURT: Mr. Reeder, good afternoon. MR. REEDER: Good afternoon, Judge, thank you. 16 17 represent the Palm Beach Post, and the Post adopts the 18 compelling arguments of Mr. Tobin. 19 I do have a question that has been running through my 2.0 mind sitting here. When the probable cause affidavit was 21 presented to the Court with the request by the Government that 22 a warrant issue, was that a proceeding at which there was 23 testimony or a record made that would be in addition to the 24 probable cause affidavit itself? 25 THE COURT: I will just refer you to Federal Rule of

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Criminal Procedure 41, which says, if, in addition to what is in the written affidavit, there is any other information provided to the Court it has to be memorialized by either using a court reporter or a tape recording.

My practice is, I make the Government amend the affidavit so that all information that the Court considers is in the written affidavit.

I hope that answers your question.

Ms. King, I think you are up. If I can take a second, I want to congratulate you on your recent election as the President of the National Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers for our local Bar. That is a really significant achievement and I want to congratulate you for that.

MS. KING: I appreciate those words, Judge, thank you.

Your Honor, today I am here on behalf of the Florida

Center for Government Accountability. It's an agency which

provides support and assistance for citizens and investigative

journalists working for Government transparency.

I adopt fully Mr. Tobin's arguments, we are in alignment on what was said and what has been pled in the documents before the Court. So I would just make a couple of points.

The balancing analysis in this particular case tips in favor of at least some public release. We do not dispute that the Government has an interest, particularly in a case this hot

as far as potential threat to witnesses.

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We do not dispute those aspects of it, nor do we dispute what the Court raised as far as process, in other words, revealing anything that could jeopardize their investigation.

That being said, we oppose blanket restrictions, particularly under an argument that it would be cumbersome to the Government because that doesn't comport with a narrowly tailored analysis.

I would point out that Footnote 1 of the Government's response, on page one, the Government recognizes not only the common Government practice of doing just that, in other words redacting Government documents, but they actually make the suggestion that they are willing to conduct that process in this very case by saying if the Court is inclined to release certain information, please let us redact or propose redactions first.

So, Government is unwieldy, you know, typically termed a bureaucracy, so the cumbersome aspect of what may be proposed should not militate against disclosure if that is appropriate.

So, we would advocate for a particularized review line by line, as Mr. Tobin indicated and the law supports, because that is the mechanism by which the public has at least the information it can have provided. That's all, Judge.

THE COURT: Thank you very much, Ms. King, I

appreciate it.

Mr. Moon.

MR. MOON: Thank you, your Honor, it is a pleasure to be here before you today. I represent Judicial Watch, which is a non-profit educational organization seeking to promote transparency, accountability, and integrity in Government and fidelity to the rule of law.

Your Honor, I am not going to reiterate a lot of the arguments you heard. We certainly join with the substantive arguments made by Mr. Tobin and Ms. King as well.

I wanted to address a couple of the arguments that we heard here today. Your Honor, the DOJ has already acknowledged the fact that this is an unusual situation. You heard counsel argue that they never unseal search warrants, so already this early in the case they are acting differently because of the magnitude, because of the gravity of the issues that are in play. This is not business as usual and it shouldn't be treated as such.

All parties acknowledge, your Honor, that there is a balancing test that has to occur, and we understand the problem with the Catch 22 argument, how can they possibly do this. Your Honor, we already know the answer to that. You are the gate keeper. We, unfortunately, have to put all of our trust in you. I shouldn't say unfortunately, I'd say gladly so because many of us have a lot of confidence in our judicial

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system and the decisions that are made. We certainly cannot imagine another type of case where you would not be looking at this with a very critical eye with respect to what should be unsealed and what needs to remain sealed. We certainly acknowledge the gravity of the concerns that the Government has raised with respect to ongoing criminal investigations and national security matters.

Your Honor, I can tell you personally, as someone that actually held a top secret ESI clearance, that stuff is incredibly dangerous if it is leaked, so we understand that.

Your Honor, I don't think anybody here is asking that the floodgates be opened, concerns be damned, just give us everything. What we are asking, your Honor, is that you adhere, and we know that you will, to your responsibility and, indeed, your mandate to be our gatekeeper, to look at line by line what are they actually telling us needs to be -- needs to remain under seal.

Your Honor, we heard the argument that releasing this information could pose a threat to the investigation. What does that mean, your Honor? We can't determine what that could possibly mean, only you can. Is the threat a small one? Does it mean that one particular witness might be inconvenienced? Does it mean that one particular type of investigatory tool might be jeopardized in some way, small or large? We just don't know. Only you can make that determination.

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So, we simply reiterate that we ask you to do that for us, your Honor, because we have to put that trust in you.

With respect to the burden that we heard about, your Honor, in this particular case, I believe the balancing here of what the burden should be is relatively light. The reason for that, your Honor, is we have already had, thankfully -- and we do thank the DOJ for doing that, unsealing the search warrant and now some related documents.

Your Honor, the burden that is imposed by going line by line on the affidavit, which let's say it is 150 pages, is really minimal in what the large construct of what the issues are in this case.

I thought I heard that there was a reference to we don't want to get into a situation where we are having to do this all the time. Your Honor, in reality, what is before you, as you mentioned, is what is in front of you, and that is this particular affidavit. Frankly, it is the Government's job to be doing this kind of stuff, and here we do believe that the burden would be minimal.

THE COURT: Let me also pose this to you. I think you and a number of your colleagues have, rightly so, pointed out that this case is unique and that it has — there is substantial national and international interest in the ongoing investigation, which on the one hand means it is very important that the public, your argument, have as much information as the

public can have so that the public can be informed.

But don't you also -- would you agree that the high profile nature of the case and the high profile nature of the reported subjects of the case will also cut in favor of making sure the Government is able to conduct an investigation that is untainted, where they can access the information they need from the sources they need so they can make an informed prosecutive decision? Would you agree that the public is also served in that regard?

MR. MOON: What I would say to that is this, your Honor: We, sitting here without being able to review the documents, can't say exactly what is going to cause a potential threat to that investigation. We trust your judgment with respect that you are going to take a look at that. We simply remind you -- not that we need to -- but we just simply remind you, please take a close look at this, and it is not just because the law mandates it. It is because in the broader prospect of what is going on in the body politic, by doing so, and be seen to be doing so enforces confidence in the judicial system.

If there were simply a blanket seal of this document, with no -- or what does not seem to be a critical analysis line by line of what should be redacted, that does not enforce confidence in the judicial system. As we have seen, what unfortunately happens in this void of information it is

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easily and quickly filled by those that would be happy to give you whatever truth you want.

The only antiseptic to that is the actual truth and as much of it as we can get as quickly as we can get it, your Honor.

THE COURT: Let me ask you this. I should have asked Mr. Tobin since he was speaking for the majority of the folks to start with.

object — if I were to conclude that the affidavit should not be sealed in its entirety, that the Government, at least as I sit here today, has not persuaded me that it be sealed in its entirety, the Government requested leave at that point to submit their proposed redactions, do you object to me giving them that opportunity?

MR. MOON: You absolutely should, your Honor. I think that is totally consistent with what your mandate is here.

Your Honor, the other point I'd make about that is, we did hear argument made by the Government that, well, there is no purpose to be served. With all due respect, it is not really their decision to tell us what purpose is served. The information gets released and people will do with it what they will do with it.

They are going to do that anyway, but at least if we know that the system has been seen to be fair, has been seen to

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be actually taking the role of reviewing these documents as our gatekeeper seriously, then I think you do a service to not only the investigation, but also to the public that needs to know.

And so, finally, your Honor, the only thing I would add, there were some comments about information that is already out in the public, and you made some comments or observations about what can I really rely on.

Your Honor, once again, you will know whether that information is right or wrong. For example, if there is a particular news item out there that such and such confidential informant gave X bit of information, you're going to see in the affidavit whether that information lines up or not. If it is not in the affidavit, it doesn't matter.

THE COURT: That is a dangerous path to go down because I don't have encyclopedic knowledge of everything that is in the media, on Twitter, on Facebook, and everywhere else in the world. Once I start to go down the road of do I know if this fact is public or not, it is an endless spiral.

MR. MOON: It's a good point, your Honor, and frankly, none of us can keep up with all of the different news information or confidential sources or whatever.

With this particular proceeding in front of you, what I would simply say is to focus on this particular -- news items that were relied upon by the media interests and, of course, I don't speak for them, they can speak for themselves, but I

would say, limit it to just take a look at that.

If you want to fashion your order with respect to, well, you know, I don't know if this should be let out or not, but I see here that this particular news article that was relied on by the media intervenor said X, well, that sure lines up, or no, it doesn't, that might be a factor that you can take into, your Honor.

THE COURT: Okay.

MR. MOON: We do have confidence, your Honor, just reiterating that we are not in any way minimizing what the interests are that the Government has, we are simply saying that that balancing test, you have to look really closely because the public not only needs, but would be well served by seeing justice administered fairly here.

THE COURT: Thank you very much, Mr. Moon.

Mr. Tobin, I raised a few issues possibly with your colleagues. If you wanted to be heard on anything new that was raised, I will give you that opportunity.

MR. TOBIN: Yes, your Honor. I would agree with Mr. Moon, it is wholly appropriate if the Court asks the Government, as they have offered, for their idea on the redactions, and then I would go one step further and ask the Court call them in for a conference on the record, but in an exparte proceeding, and put them to the test line by line. I do agree with Mr. Moon's suggestion and the Court's question.

1 If I could, your Honor, like my clients, I get paid to 2 be a little nosy sometimes. 3 THE COURT: That's okay. I get paid to say no 4 sometimes. 5 MR. TOBIN: You may shut me down. Your Honor, Mr. 6 Reeder was asking about any testimony or proceeding in 7 connection with the probable cause affidavit, and I understand the Court's response to him. 8 9 I would just ask that if there is such a recording or transcript, and there was such a proceeding, I would ask that 10 should be, at least for now, in a sealed docket entry so that 11 12 at some point, if it does exist, we have a right because that is a judicial record as well. 13 14 THE COURT: Again, I think I can say this without disclosing anything I shouldn't disclose. All the information 15 that the Court relied upon is in the written affidavit. 16 17 were no other factual representations made to the Court that 18 are not in the written affidavit. If that helps you, I hope that helps you. 19 2.0 MR. TOBIN: Thank you, your Honor. 21 Mr. Bratt, I will give you the last word. THE COURT: 22 I'd welcome you to respond to Mr. Tobin's suggestion 2.3 about whether I should hold an ex parte proceeding or whether I 24 ought to, if I am inclined, to allow you to file proposed 25 redactions or a brief along with proposed redactions, obviously

to be under seal and ex parte.

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Assuming -- again, I haven't concluded my thoughts here, but I will tell you I am inclined to say that I am not going to seal the entire affidavit, but I will give you a chance to be heard on that. What is your preferred procedure if I decide to go down that road?

MR. BRATT: I think, your Honor, what would make the most sense is to have us submit the proposed redactions. We would likely file a not overly lengthy brief that would explain the reasons for them. If that is not sufficient, I would be happy to come back down here with my colleagues and meet with you in camera and answer any questions that you have.

THE COURT: Thank you for answering that. I will let you respond to anything else that has been raised.

MR. BRATT: I really have very brief responses.

First, with respect to the Alabama lethal injection case that Mr. Tobin raised, that certainly was a civil case, that was not a matter that involves getting access pre-indictment to a search warrant affidavit at an early stage in the proceedings.

I think, as counsel recognized, the Eleventh Circuit has not directly ruled on a search warrant affidavit case, and I don't think the Eleventh Circuit -- one can draw from the decision -- from the earlier decision that the Eleventh Circuit would announce a rule that if people have put things in the public realm, that that outweighs the investigative interests

in the Government in keeping and protecting the information 1 2 that is in the search warrant affidavit. I also think --3 THE COURT: If I am correct, and I apologize for 4 5 interrupting you, at least in my research and my review of the pleadings, it seems the only cases I found in the Eleventh 6 7 Circuit that involved pre-charged search warrants were the Bennett case, the Patel case, I am going to call it the Islam 8 9 case, the one in the Middle District of Florida, and then the Olympic bombing case. 10 11 MR. BRATT: Is there a case C-O-R-C-E-S, is that --12 THE COURT: Could be, I don't recall seeing that one. 13 Those four were the ones that I found. 14 MR. BRATT: There may be one other that starts with an 15 S. 16 THE COURT: If you want to confer with your colleague, 17 that is fine. 18 MR. BRATT: We can just submit those. 19 THE COURT: I agree with you, there is no clear 2.0 binding statement from the Eleventh Circuit, there is no 21 precedent from the Eleventh Circuit itself, but there are these 22 other District Court cases which I think are well reasoned that 2.3 address the issue. 24 MR. BRATT: Right. With respect to the argument and

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the comparison with FOIA litigation, if there were FOIA

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requests -- and I think we have already received FOIA requests
-- there are exemptions that apply to a case in this stage.

FOIA requests deal with matters that have concluded and matters that are not ongoing.

So, the analogy to the work that the Government has to do in FOIA cases is certainly not the same, nor does it require, in responding to a FOIA request, the same nuanced understanding of the investigation that one would have to have and that the line prosecutors in this case would have to use, and if the Court asked us to submit redactions, will now likely have to use in making the judgment calls of what really can and cannot be revealed.

Last, I found it interesting that at the end of Mr. Tobin's argument he invoked the Gunn decision. I assume that was only because it stands for the proposition that the First Amendment analysis applies. I don't think they want to rely on the holding, which I will just take a moment to read to the Court, and I will then give to the Court Reporter the actual portion of the opinion, but this is from Gunn from 855 F.2d, at 574.

"We have reviewed the District Court's order and hold that the District Court properly concluded that these documents should be kept under seal. The Government has demonstrated that restricting public access to these documents is necessitated by a compelling Government interest, the ongoing

investigation." Exactly what we have here.

"These documents describe in considerable detail" -- as the sworn affidavit here does -- "the nature, scope, and direction of the Government's investigation and the individuals and specific projects involved. There is a substantial probability that the Government's ongoing investigation would be severely compromised if the sealed documents were released.

"We also agree with the District Court's determination that line by line redaction of the sealed documents was not practicable."

That is the summary of the Government's argument, and I would ask the Court to follow Gunn in all of those respects.

THE COURT: Just for the record, that is G-U-N-N, a person's name, not gun as in firearm.

MR. BRATT: Yes. Thank you, your Honor.

THE COURT: Thank you, Mr. Bratt.

Well, here is what I am going to do. First of all, I acknowledge -- I don't think we are all apart on the law on this. Honestly, I think both sides pretty much agree what the law is and really the only issue here is how the Court applies the facts to the law.

I think we are all in agreement, and I appreciate Mr. Bratt clarifying and conceding this at the beginning of the hearing, it is the Government's burden. We are all in agreement that I need to give -- if I conclude that the

affidavit should not be fully sealed based upon the current record before me, I should give the Government an opportunity to justify why it should be redacted either in whole or in part.

First of all, I do find in the record before me that I am not prepared to find that the affidavit should be fully sealed. I believe, based on my initial careful review of the affidavit many times, that there are portions of it that at least presumptively could be unsealed.

Whether those unsealed portions would be meaningful to the media and to the public is for somebody else to decide, but I at least presumptively believe there are portions of this affidavit that can be unsealed, but the Government may disagree with me about some or all of that. I am going to give the Government a full and fair opportunity to litigate that issue.

For purposes of today, I am going to move forward in that way.

So, Mr. Bratt and Mr. Gonzalez, how much time would you like to file under seal and ex parte with the Court your proposed redactions, along with any pleading or briefing that you include with it? I am not going to put a page limit on the briefing that you submit.

MR. BRATT: If we could have a week, your Honor.

THE COURT: Any objection from the media intervenors if I give the Government until next Thursday at noon to file

whatever they are going to file?

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MR. TOBIN: No, your Honor.

THE COURT: All right. I will grant that request from the Government.

Next Thursday, which will be August 25th, I believe, 24th -- next Thursday, August 25th, twelve o'clock noon Eastern time the Government shall file under seal ex parte its proposed redactions and any briefing that the Government would like to include.

I am going to then review those. If I am in agreement that the Government has met its burden as to the redactions that the Government proposes, I will issue an order accordingly and we will go from there.

If I disagree with the Government and I believe there are additional things that the Government wants redacted that I don't believe should be redacted, I will either have an ex parte proceeding with the Government on the record with a court reporter, or I will issue under seal ex parte my proposed redactions, serve it on the Government only, stay the issuance — or the release of that and give the Government an opportunity to respond.

I will decide how I want to do that once I see how far apart the Government may be from wherever I may land. I may agree with the Government and we will be done. I may disagree with the Government and I will have to figure out the

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appropriate further proceedings.

2.0

At that point, when I conclude my process, we will —
if there is at that point disagreement between the Government
and me over what should be redacted, obviously I win, and I
will enter whatever order I want to enter, but I will stay that
order and seal it to allow the Government, if it wants to seek
appellate review of my decision, to do so.

I want the Government, the media, the public to be aware this is going to be a considered careful process where everybody's rights, both the Government's and the media's rights are going to be protected here, and if the Government seeks to take an appeal because they don't like my redactions, I will give them that chance.

If, once I issue my order, the media doesn't like my redactions, they can take their appeal and we will go from there.

With that, let me turn back to the Government. Mr. Bratt, Mr. Gonzalez, anything else you wanted to raise this afternoon?

 $\it MR.~\it BRATT:$ No, your Honor. We appreciate the time that the Court is giving us.

THE COURT: Thank you, Mr. Bratt.

Mr. Tobin or anyone else from the media side, anything else you wanted to raise with me this afternoon?

MR. TOBIN: No, your Honor. The order that the Court

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will enter ultimately will be a public order, as much of it as can be?

THE COURT: Ultimately, there will be -- again, assuming the Government doesn't convince me in their pleading that everything ought to be sealed, which maybe they can, but at least as I sit here today they haven't met that burden yet, but assuming there is something to be released at some point in the future, once all appellate review is exhausted by the Government, then that will be a publicly released order.

I am going to do a public order today setting forth the procedures I put into place, but at some point, assuming that I believe something ought to be released and the appellate review agrees with me, then the public will get to see some portion of this affidavit.

Does that answer your question, Mr. Tobin?

MR. TOBIN: It does. The part of the case law that says specific findings of fact must be made by the Court is rattling through my brain, so I would ask that the Court -- I know the Court knows the law. That is what prompted my question, your Honor.

THE COURT: Again, I reflect back on the Eleventh Circuit's opinion in the Kooistra case, K-O-O-I-S-T-R-A, which was cited by Judge Jordan in the Steinger case, where the Eleventh Circuit said, "Findings in a public order as to the need for sealing need not be extensive. It is sufficient if a

reviewing Court is able to determine the Court's findings and 1 2 engage in a meaningful appellate review based on what the Court has said publicly as well as the affidavit itself." 3 4 If your question to me is, am I going to do a 5 line-by-line, paragraph-by-paragraph findings of fact, I doubt That would take me too long, and if I am going to release 6 7 this, I want to get it released. 8 If I determine the media has a right to get it, I want 9 to make sure it is released in a timely and appropriate fashion 10 without truncating the Government's ability to protect its 11 legitimate interests. 12 MR. TOBIN: Thank you, your Honor. 13 THE COURT: Thank you all. We will be in recess, 14 everyone. Thank you very much. 15 (Thereupon, the hearing was concluded.) 16 17 I certify that the foregoing is a correct transcript 18 from the record of proceedings in the above matter. 19 2.0 August 18, 2022 Date: 21 /s/ Pauline A. Stipes, Official Federal Reporter 22 Signature of Court Reporter 2.3 24 25

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