



OFFICE OF  
**INSPECTOR GENERAL**  
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

**VIA EMAIL**

November 20, 2019

Maraya Cornell  
Muckrock News  
DEPT MR 79838  
411A Highland Ave  
Somerville, MA 02144-2516

Re: OIG-2020-00015

Dear Maraya Cornell:

This is in response to your Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request dated October 8, 2019, which was received by the Office of Inspector General (OIG) on the same date. You requested the following information under the FOIA, 5 U.S.C. § 552: The case file, including all interviews and notes, for the OIG's investigation into BLM Law Enforcement gift cards that led to Report Number: 17-0820.

Your October 8, 2018, request asked for a fee waiver which was granted. Therefore, in this case, no fee has been assessed.

We obtained the documents you seek and conducted a review of the material you requested. During this review we identified 12 pages of responsive documents that originated with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). We have referred these pages to BLM, and they will issue a response directly to you. You do not have to contact them at this time, but should you need to do so in the future, you may do so at:

Bureau of Land Management (BLM)  
Keiosha Alexander (Acting)  
MS-WO-640  
1849 C St. N.W.  
Washington, DC 20240  
Phone: (202) 912-7566  
[FOIA@blm.gov](mailto:FOIA@blm.gov)

After reviewing the remaining responsive documents, we have determined that we may release information. We have determined that we may release 25 pages of responsive documents, with FOIA redactions, pursuant to exemption 5 U.S.C. § 552(b)(7)(C). A further 87 pages of interview transcripts have been withheld entirely pursuant to exemptions 5 U.S.C. § 552(b)(7)(C) and (b)(7)(D).

FOIA requires that agencies generally disclose records. Agencies may only withhold requested records only if one or more of the nine exemptions apply.

Exemption 7 allows agencies to refuse to disclose records compiled for law enforcement purposes under any one of six circumstances (identified as exemptions 7(A) through 7(F)). Law enforcement within the meaning of Exemption 7 includes enforcement pursuant to both civil and criminal statutes.

Specifically, Exemption 7(C) permits an agency to withhold information contained in files compiled for law enforcement purposes if production "could reasonably be expected to constitute an unwarranted invasion of personal privacy." U.S.C. § 552(b)(7)(C). Thus, the purpose of Exemption 7(C) is to protect the privacy interest of an individual if one exists. To determine this, we must evaluate not only the nature of the personal information found in the records, but also whether release of that information to the general public could affect that individual adversely. In this case, we find that release of personal information could reasonably be expected to have a negative impact on an individual's privacy. However, even if a privacy interest exists, we must nevertheless disclose the requested information if the public interest outweighs the privacy interest in the information requested. In this instance, you have not established that release of the privacy information of witnesses, interviewee, middle and low-ranking federal employees and investigators, and other individuals name in the investigatory file, would shed light on government operations, and we have not found such a public interest in this case. For this reason, after reviewing the information in question, we have determined that disclosure would be an unwarranted invasion of personal privacy and we must withhold this information under FOIA Exemption 7(C).

Furthermore, FOIA Exemption 7(D) exempts from disclosure records or information compiled for law enforcement purposes which could reasonably be expected to disclose the identity of a confidential source. In this instance we have determined that releasing these documents could reasonably be expected to disclose the identity of a confidential source who provided information under circumstances from which an assurance of confidentiality could be reasonably inferred. Because enforcement of the law depends upon information elicited from these vulnerable sources, they must be protected in order to further effective law enforcement. For this reason, we are withholding information that may identify confidential sources.

We reasonably foresee that disclosure would harm an interest protected by one or more of the nine exemptions to the FOIA's general rule of disclosure.

If you disagree with this response, you may appeal this response to the OIG's FOIA/Privacy Act Appeals Officer. If you choose to appeal, the FOIA/Privacy Act Appeals Officer must receive your FOIA appeal **no later than 90 workdays** from the date of this letter. Appeals arriving or delivered after 5 p.m. Eastern Time, Monday through Friday, will be deemed received on the next workday.

**Your appeal must be made in writing.** You may submit your appeal and accompanying materials to the OIG FOIA/Privacy Act Appeals Officer by mail, courier service, fax, or email. All communications concerning your appeal should be clearly marked with the words:

"FREEDOM OF INFORMATION APPEAL." You must include an explanation of why you believe the OIG's response is in error. You must also include with your appeal copies of all correspondence between you and the OIG concerning your FOIA request, including your original FOIA request and the OIG's response. Failure to include with your appeal all correspondence between you and the OIG will result in the OIG's rejection of your appeal, unless the FOIA/Privacy Act Appeals Officer determines (in the FOIA/Privacy Act Appeals Officer's sole discretion) that good cause exists to accept the defective appeal.

Please include your name and daytime telephone number (or the name and telephone number of an appropriate contact), email address and fax number (if available) in case the FOIA/Privacy Act Appeals Officer needs additional information or clarification of your appeal. The OIG FOIA/Privacy Act Appeals Office Contact Information is the following:

Office of the Inspector General  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
1849 C Street, NW  
MS-4428  
Washington, DC 20240  
Attn: FOIA/Privacy Act Appeals Office  
Telephone: (202) 208-6742  
Fax: (202) 219-1944  
Email: [oirg\\_foiaappeals@doioig.gov](mailto:oirg_foiaappeals@doioig.gov)

For your information, Congress excluded three discrete categories of law enforcement and national security records from the requirements of FOIA. *See* [5 U.S.C. 552\(c\)](#). This response is limited to those records that are subject to the requirements of FOIA. This is a standard notification that is given to all our requesters and should not be taken as an indication that excluded records do, or do not, exist.

The 2007 FOIA amendments created the Office of Government Information Services (OGIS) to offer mediation services to resolve disputes between FOIA requesters and Federal agencies as a non-exclusive alternative to litigation. Using OGIS services does not affect your right to pursue litigation. You may contact OGIS in any of the following ways:

Office of Government Information Services  
National Archives and Records Administration  
8601 Adelphi Road - OGIS  
College Park, MD 20740-6001  
E-mail: [ogis@nara.gov](mailto:ogis@nara.gov)  
Web: <https://ogis.archives.gov>  
Telephone: 202-741-5770  
Facsimile: 202-741-5769  
Toll-free: 1-877-684-6448

Please note that using OGIS services does not affect the timing of filing an appeal with the OIG's FOIA & Privacy Act Appeals Officer.

However, should you need to contact me, my telephone number is 202-208-6464, and the email is [foia@doioig.gov](mailto:foia@doioig.gov).

Sincerely,

*Sidrah Miraaj-Raza*

Sidrah Miraaj-Raza  
Legal Trainee