

or any private organization. The exemption applies whether the source provides information under an express promise of confidentiality or under circumstances from which such an assurance could be reasonably inferred. Also, where the record, or information in it, has been compiled by a criminal law enforcement authority conducting a criminal investigation, or by an agency conducting a lawful national security investigation, the exemption also protects all information supplied by a confidential source. Also protected from mandatory disclosure is any information which, if disclosed, could reasonably be expected to jeopardize the system of confidentiality that assures a flow of information from sources to investigatory agencies.

(5) *Techniques and procedures.* We may withhold records reflecting special techniques or procedures of investigation or prosecution not otherwise generally known to the public. In some cases, it is not possible to describe even in general terms those techniques without disclosing the very material to be withheld. We may also withhold records whose release would disclose guidelines for law enforcement investigations or prosecutions if this disclosure could reasonably be expected to create a risk that someone could circumvent requirements of law or of regulation.

(6) *Life and physical safety.* We may withhold records whose disclosure could reasonably be expected to endanger the life or physical safety of any individual. This protection extends to threats and harassment as well as to physical violence.

(h) *Exemptions eight and nine—records on financial institutions and records on wells.* (1) Exemption eight permits us to withhold records about regulation or supervision of financial institutions.

(2) Exemption nine permits the withholding of geological and geophysical information and data, including maps, concerning wells.

[54 FR 26734, June 26, 1989, as amended at 63 FR 67577, Dec. 8, 1998]

§ 503.9 Electronic Records Act of 1996.

(a) *Introduction.* This section applies to all records of the Broadcast Board of Governors, including all of its foreign

posts. Congress enacted the FOIA to require Federal agencies to make records available to the public through public inspections and at the request of any person for any public or private use. The increase in the Government's use of computers enhances the public's access to Government information. This section addresses and explains how records will be reviewed and released when the records are maintained in electronic format. Documentation not previously subject to the FOIA when maintained in a non-electronic format is not made subject to FOIA by this law.

(b) *Definitions—(1) Compelling need.* Obtaining records on an expedited basis because of an imminent threat to the life of physical safety of an individual, or urgently needed by an individual primarily engaged in disseminating information to the public concerning actual or alleged Federal Government activities.

(2) *Discretionary disclosure.* Records or information normally exempt from disclosure will be released whenever it is possible to do so without reasonably foreseeable harm to any interest protected by an FOIA exemption.

(3) *Electronic reading room.* The room provided which makes electronic records available.

(c) *Electronic format of records.* (1) Materials such as Department opinions and policy statements (available for public inspection and copying) will be available electronically by accessing Broadcasting Board of Governors' Home Page via the Internet at <http://www.usia.gov>. To set up an appointment to view such records in hard copy or to access the Internet via Broadcasting Board of Governors computer, please contact the FOIA/PA Unit on (202) 619-5499.

(2) The Department will make available for public inspection and copying, both electronically via the Internet and in hard copy, those records that have been previously released in response to FOIA requests, when the Department determines the records have been or are likely to be the subject of future requests.

(3) The Department will provide both electronically through its Internet address and in hard copy a "Guide" on

how to make an FOIA request, and an Index of all Department information systems and records that may be requested under the FOIA.

(4) The Department may delete identifying details when it publishes or makes available the index and copies of previously-released records to prevent a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy.

(i) The Department will indicate the extent of any deletions made from where the deletion was made, if feasible.

(ii) The Department will not reveal information about deletions if such disclosure would harm an interest protected by an exemption.

(d) *Honoring form or format requests.* The Department will aid requesters by providing records and information in the form requested, including electronic format, if we can readily reproduce them in that form or format. However, if we cannot accommodate the requester, we will provide responsive, nonexempt information in a reasonably accessible form.

(1) The Department will make a reasonable effort to search for records kept in an electronic format. However, if the effort would significantly interfere with the operations of the Department or the Department's use of its computers, we will consider the effort to be unreasonable.

(2) The Department need not create documents that do not exist, but computer records found in a database rather than in a file cabinet may require the application of codes of some form of programming to retrieve the information. This application of codes of programming of records will not amount to the creation of records.

(3) Except in unusual cases, the cost of computer time will not be a factor in calculating the two free hours of search time available under § 503.7. In those unusual cases, where the cost of conducting a computerized search significantly detracts from the Department's ordinary operations, no more than the dollar equivalent of two hours of manual search time shall be allowed. For searches conducted beyond the first two hours, the Department shall only charge the direct costs of conducting such searches.

(e) *Technical feasibility of redacting non-releasable material.* The Department will make every effort to indicate the place on the record where a redaction of non-releasable material is made, and an FOIA citation noting the applicable exemption for the deletion will also be placed at the site. If unable to do so, we will notify you of that fact.

(f) *Ensuring timely response to request.* The Department will make every attempt to respond to FOIA requests within the prescribed 20 working-day time limit. However, processing some requests may require additional time in order to properly screen material against the inadvertent disclosure of material covered by the exemptions.

(1) *Multitrack first-in first-out processing.* (i) Because the Department has been able to process its requests without a backlog of cases, Broadcasting Board of Governors will not institute a multitrack system. Those cases that may be handled easily, because they require only a few documents or a simple answer, will be handled immediately by each specialist.

(ii) If you wish to qualify for processing under a faster track, you may limit the scope of your request so that we may respond more quickly.

(2) *Unusual circumstances.* (i) The Department may extend for a maximum of ten working days the statutory time limit for responding to an FOIA request by giving notice in writing as to the reason for such an extension. The reasons for such an extension may include: the need to search for and collect requested records from multiple offices; the volume of records requested; and, the need for consultation with other components within the Department.

(ii) If an extra ten days still does not provide sufficient time for the Department to deal with your request, we will inform you that the request cannot be processed within the statutory time limit and provide you with the opportunity to limit the scope of your request and/or arrange with us a negotiated deadline for processing your request.

(iii) If you refuse to reasonably limit the scope of your request or refuse to agree upon a time frame, the Department will process your case as it would

have, had no modification been sought. We will make a diligent, good-faith effort to complete our review within the statutory time frame.

(3) *Aggregation of requests.* The Department will aggregate requests that clearly involve related material that should be considered as a single request.

(i) If you make multiple or related requests for similar material for the purpose of avoiding costs, the Department will notify you that we are aggregating your requests, and the reasons why.

(ii) Multiple or related requests may also be aggregated, such as those involving requests and schedule, but you will be notified in advance if we intend to do so.

(g) *Time periods for Department consideration of requests—(1) Expedited access.* The Department will authorize expedited access to requesters who show a compelling need for access, but the burden is on the requester to prove that expedition is appropriate. The Department will determine within ten days whether or not to grant a request for expedited access and will notify the requester of its decision.

(2) *Compelling need for expedited access.* Failure to obtain the records within an expedited deadline must pose an imminent threat to an individual's life or physical safety; or the request must be made by someone primarily engaged in disseminating information, and who has an urgency to inform the public about actual or alleged Federal Government activity.

(3) *How to request expedited access.* We will be required to make factual and subjective judgments about the circumstances cited by requesters to qualify them for expedited processing. To request expedited access, your request must be in writing and it must explain in detail your basis for seeking expedited access. The categories for compelling need are intended to be narrowly applied:

(i) *A threat to an individual's life or physical safety.* A threat to an individual's life or physical safety should be imminent to qualify for expedited access to the records. You must include the reason why a delay in obtaining the information could reasonably be

foreseen to cause significant adverse consequences to a recognized interest.

(ii) *Urgency to inform.* The information requested should pertain to a matter of a current exigency to the American public, where delay in response would compromise a significant recognized interest. The person requesting expedited access under an "urgency to inform," must be primarily engaged in the dissemination of information. This does not include individuals who are engaged only incidentally in the dissemination of information. "Primarily engaged" requires that information dissemination be the main activity of the requester. A requester only incidentally engaged in information dissemination, besides other activities, would not satisfy this requirement. The public's right to know, although a significant and important value, would not by itself be sufficient to satisfy this standard.

(4) *Expansion of Department response time.* The new law provides that agencies now have 20 working-days to respond to all FOIA requests. However, when possible, we will continue to respond to requests within the former 10 working-day time frame.

(5) *Estimation of matter denied.* The Department will try to estimate the volume of any denied material and provide the estimate to the requester, unless doing so would harm an interest protected by an exemption.

(h) *Computer redaction.* The Department will identify the location of deletions in the released portion of the records, and where technologically feasible, will show the deletion at the place on the record where the deletion was made, unless including that indication would harm an interest protected by an exemption.

(i) *Report to Congress.* In addition to the information already provided to Congress in the Department's Annual Report on FOIA Activities, the Department will include the following: the number of Privacy Act (PA) requests handled; the number of backlogged requests; the number of days taken to process requests; the number of staff devoted to processing FOIA requests; whether a claimed (b)(3) statute has been upheld in court; and the costs of litigation. The Department's annual

report will be available both in hard copy and through the Internet. In the past, annual reports were required based on a calendar year and were provided to Congress on or before March 1 of the following year. However, the new law has changed the annual reporting requirements now to be related to the Department's fiscal year. Thus, the Annual Report to Congress on FOIA Activities for 1997 only encompassed the first nine months (January through September), and was reported by March 1, 1998. The FY 98 report will begin in October 1997 and conclude at the end of September 1998. This report will be presented to the Department of Justice instead of Congress, by February 1, 1999, and Justice will report all Federal agency FOIA activity through electronic means.

(j) *Reference materials and guides.* The Department has available in hard copy, and will have electronically via the Internet, a guide for requesting records under the FOIA and an index and description of all major information systems of the Department. The guide is a simple explanation of what the FOIA is intended to do, and how you can use it to access Broadcasting Board of Governors records. The Index explains the types of records that may be requested from the Department through FOIA requests and why some records cannot, by law, be made available by Broadcasting Board of Governors.

[63 FR 71587, Dec. 29, 1998]

PART 505—PRIVACY ACT POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

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AUTHORITY: Pub. L. 93-579, 88 Stat. 1897; 5 U.S.C. 552a; 55 FR 31940, Aug. 6, 1990, as amended.

SOURCE: 62 FR 10630, Mar. 7, 1997, unless otherwise noted.

§ 505.1 Purpose and scope.

The Broadcasting Board of Governors will protect individuals' privacy from misuse of their records, and grant individuals access to records concerning them which are maintained by the Board's domestic and overseas offices, consistent with the provisions of Public Law 93-579, 88 Stat. 1897; 5 U.S.C. 552a, the Privacy Act of 1974, as amended. The Board has also established procedures to permit individuals to amend incorrect records, to limit the disclosure of personal information to third parties, and to limit the number of sources of personal information. The Board has also established internal rules restricting requirements of individuals to provide social security account numbers.

§ 505.2 Definitions.

(a) *Access Appeal Committee (AAC)*—the body established by and responsible to the Director of Broadcasting Board of Governors for reviewing appeals made by individuals to amend records held by the Board.

(b) *Board*—Broadcasting Board of Governors, its offices, divisions, branches and its Foreign Service establishments.

(c) *Amend*—To make a correction to or expunge any portion of a record about an individual which that individual believes is not accurate, relevant, timely or complete.

(d) *Individual*—A citizen of the United States or an alien lawfully admitted for permanent residence.

(e) *Maintain*—Collect, use, store, disseminate or any combination of these record-keeping functions; exercise of control over and hence responsibility and accountability for systems of records.

(f) *Record*—Any information maintained by the Board about an individual that can be reproduced, including finger or voice prints and photographs, and which is retrieved by that