



OFFICE of GOVERNMENT INFORMATION SERVICES

October 8, 2015 - Sent via U.S. mail

NATIONAL
ARCHIVES
and RECORDS
ADMINISTRATION

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[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Re: Case No. 201501208
JH: CM: KG

Dear Mr. [REDACTED]:

This responds to your September 16, 2015 letter to the Office of Government Information Services (OGIS), which we received via U.S. mail. Your request for assistance concerns your Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request to the Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI).

Congress created OGIS to complement existing FOIA practice and procedure and we strive to work in conjunction with the existing request and appeal process. OGIS's goal, whenever practical, is to allow the requester to exhaust his or her remedies within the agency, including the appeal process. OGIS has no investigatory or enforcement power, nor can we compel an agency to release documents. OGIS serves as the Federal FOIA Ombudsman and our jurisdiction is limited to assisting with the FOIA process.

You contacted OGIS regarding your request to the FBI for information about [REDACTED]. The FBI responded to your request on [REDACTED] denying your FOIA request, stating "the FOIA does not require federal agencies to answer inquiries, create records, conduct research, or draw conclusions concerning queried data." You appealed this determination on [REDACTED]. The Department of Justice's Office of Information Policy (OIP) responded to your appeal, affirming the FBI's denial on [REDACTED]. OIP explained in their letter that the FOIA only "requires agencies to provide access to reasonably described, nonexempt records." You contacted OGIS requesting assistance resolving this matter.

In your original request to the FBI you asked the question, "[REDACTED]?" As OIP explained in its response to your appeal, the FOIA gives requesters the right to request federal *records*. The law does not give the public the right to obtain answers in response to questions or to explain the context of documents. If you believe the FBI might have records on [REDACTED], as you explained in your correspondence to OGIS, you would have to make a request asking for specific files related to them, rather than submitting questions.

[REDACTED]
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FBI's FOIA website has several resources which may help you to craft a FOIA request; for example, you may wish to review a sample FOIA request (<https://www.fbi.gov/foia/sample-fbi-foia-request-letter>). You may also find the information on the FBI's site about cross-references useful (available at <https://www.fbi.gov/foia/requesting-fbi-records>). If you believe [REDACTED] are mentioned in FBI files of another person, place, or event, you can follow the directions in the cross-reference section when drafting your request.

I hope you find this information useful in understanding why the FBI denied your request. At this time, OGIS can offer no further assistance. Thank you for bringing this matter to OGIS. We will close your case.

Sincerely,

/s/

JAMES V.M.L. HOLZER
Director

cc: Dennis Argall, Federal Bureau of Investigations, Department of Justice
Matthew Hurd, Office of Information Policy, Department of Justice