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FAX

To: Laurie Day, Chief, Initial Request Staff	From: Ian Bassin, Counsel at Protect Democracy Project
Fax: (202) 514-1009	Pages: 3
Phone: (202) 514-FOIA	Date: 4/7/2017
Re: Freedom of Information Act Request – Expedited Processing	

To Whom It May Concern:

Please find enclosed a Freedom of Information Act request. To contact us, please either email us at FOIA@protectdemocracy.org, or fax us at (929) 777-8428. If you have any questions about the contents of the request, please reach out to Ben Berwick, Counsel, at ben.berwick@protectdemocracy.org

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "Ian Bassin".

Ian Bassin
Protect Democracy Project



April 7, 2017

Laurie Day
Chief, Initial Request Staff
Office of Information Policy
Department of Justice
Suite 11050
1425 New York Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20530-0001
Phone: (202) 514-FOIA
Fax: (202) 514-1009

Re: Freedom of Information Act Request

To Whom It May Concern:

Pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), 5 U.S.C. § 552, The Protect Democracy Project hereby requests that your office produce within 20 business days the following records (see below for clarity on the types of records sought):

Any and all records, including but not limited to emails and memoranda, reflecting, discussing, or otherwise relating to the April 6, 2017 military strike on Syria and/or the President's legal authority to launch such a strike. This request includes, but is not limited to, internal Department of Justice communications, communications between Department of Justice employees and the Executive Office of the President, and communications between Department of Justice employees and other agencies.

The timeframe for this request is April 4, 2017 through the present.

EXPEDITED PROCESSING

We request that you expedite the processing of this request pursuant to 5 U.S.C. § 552(a)(6)(E) and 28 C.F.R. § 16.5(e). This request meets the criteria for expedited processing because it concerns "[a] matter of widespread and exceptional media interest in which there exist possible questions about the government's integrity that affect public confidence," 28 C.F.R. § 16.5(e)(1)(iv) and because there is an urgent need "to inform the public about an actual or alleged Federal Government activity." 28 C.F.R. § 16.5(e)(1)(ii). As explained below in more detail in the section of this request regarding a fee waiver, The Protect Democracy Project intends to disseminate the information obtained in response to this request.

There can be no question that the President's decision to initiate military action is of the utmost importance to the public. Similarly, whether the President has the legal authority to launch a military strike – or used military force without legal authorization – is a question that is fundamental to our democracy. The public has an immediate right to understand the administration's position with respect to the legality of the recent strike against Syria, and to assess whether that position is justified.

The American people and their representatives have already begun debating this issue of utmost importance. As we expect the President will comply with the War Powers Resolution and notify Congress of his military actions by the evening of April 8, 2017, 48 hours after these strikes were launched, the public debate on how Congress should exercise its co-equal role in this serious matter will intensify at that time. There is no way for the American people to advise their representatives of the public's view on this matter without a full understanding of the legal justification on which the President acted.

It is therefore incumbent upon the government and urgent for your office to share any responsive records in an expedited fashion because that is only way in a democracy for citizens and other branches of government to assess the actions that have been undertaken on our behalf in time to affect the present debate.

This request is made all the more urgent by the possibility that the President may decide to engage in further military action at any time.

Under penalty of perjury, and pursuant to 28 C.F.R. § 16.5(e)(3), I hereby affirm that the foregoing is true and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief.

FEE WAIVER

FOIA provides that any fees associated with a request are waived if “disclosure of the information is in the public interest because it is likely to contribute significantly to public understanding of the operations or activities of the government and is not primarily in the commercial interest of the requester.” 5 U.S.C. § 552(a)(4)(A)(iii). The core mission of The Protect Democracy Project, a new organization awaiting 501(c)(3) status, is to inform public understanding on operations and activities of the government. This request is submitted in consort with the organization's mission to gather and disseminate information that is likely to contribute significantly to the public understanding of executive branch operations and activities. The Protect Democracy Project has no commercial interests.

In addition to satisfying the requirements for a waiver of fees associated with the search and processing of records, The Protect Democracy Project is entitled to a waiver of all fees except “reasonable standard charges for document duplication.” 5 U.S.C. § 552(a)(4)(A)(ii)(II). Federal law mandates that fees be limited to document duplication costs for any requester that qualifies as a representative of the news media. *Id.* The Protect Democracy Project operates in the tradition of 501(c)(3) good government

organizations that qualify under FOIA as “news media organizations.” Like those organizations, the purpose of The Protect Democracy Project is to “gather information of potential interest to a segment of the public, use its editorial skills to turn the raw materials into distinct work, and distribute that work to an audience.” *Nat’s Sec. Archive v. Dep’t of Defense*, 880 F.2d 1381, 1387 (D.C. Cir. 1989). We intend to give the public access to documents transmitted via FOIA on our website, www.unitedtoprotectdemocracy.org, and to provide information about and analysis of those documents as appropriate.

RESPONSIVE RECORDS

We ask that all types of records and all record systems be searched to discover records responsive to our request. We seek records in all medium and format. This includes, but is not limited to: agendas, manifests, calendars, schedules, notes, and any prepared documentation for meetings, calls, teleconferences, or other discussions responsive to our request; voicemails; e-mails; e-mail attachments; talking points; faxes; training documents and guides; tables of contents and contents of binders; documents pertaining to instruction and coordination of couriers; and any other materials. We ask that you search all systems of record, including electronic and paper, in use at your agency. The Protect Democracy Project would prefer records in electronic format, saved as PDF documents, and transmitted via email or CD-rom.

If you make a determination that any responsive record, or any segment within a record, is exempt from disclosure, we ask that you provide an index of those records at the time you transmit all other responsive records. In the index, please include a description of the record and the reason for exclusion with respect to each individual exempt record or exempt portion of a record, as provided by *Vaughn v. Rosen*, 484 F.2d 820 (D.C. Cir. 1973), cert. denied, 415 U.S. 977 (1974). When you deem a portion of a record exempt, we ask that the remainder of the record to be provided, as required by 5 U.S.C. § 552(b).

Given the 20-day statutory deadline, we hope to be as helpful as possible in clarifying or answering questions about our request. Please contact me at FOIA@protectdemocracy.org or (202) 599-0466 if you require any additional information. We appreciate your cooperation, and look forward to hearing from you very soon.

Sincerely,



Ian Bassin
Executive Director
The Protect Democracy Project