



February 27, 2026

**VIA FOIA.GOV**

Amie Napier  
Section Chief  
Federal Bureau of Investigation  
Record/Information Dissemination Section  
200 Constitution Drive  
Winchester, VA 22602

*Re: Freedom of Information Act Request—Information Concerning Kash Patel's  
Olympics Trip to Italy*

Dear FOIA Officer,

Democracy Defenders Fund (“DDF”) respectfully submits the following request for records pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act (“FOIA”), 5 U.S.C. § 552 *et seq.* and Department of Justice (“DOJ”) regulations, 28 C.F.R. part 16. Specifically, DDF is requesting:

1. All travel authorizations or approvals for the use of government aircraft and any expenses related to the use of such aircraft in connection with Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) Director Kash Patel’s trip to Italy in February 2026, including his attendance at the 2026 Winter Olympics, including any blanket approval under 41 C.F.R. § 301-10.262 and any authorization or approval for any non-federal traveler to travel with Director Patel.
2. Any itinerary or agenda prepared for Director Patel’s official, personal, and political meetings during his February 2026 trip to Italy, including any events held at or during the 2026 Winter Olympics.
3. Any of the following forms prepared by Director Patel, his personal assistant Nicole Rucker, or any other person for or on behalf of Director Patel between Feb. 1-25, 2026:
  - a. FD-772 or other form to report foreign travel outside the U.S. by FBI personnel;
  - b. SF-1012 Travel Voucher
  - c. GSA Form 3641 Senior Federal Travel Form as submitted to GSA
  - d. OPM-71 Request for Leave or Approved Absence
  - e. Any other document providing an accounting for Director Patel's official, personal, and political time while attending the 2026 Winter Olympics
4. Any briefing books or advance materials prepared for Director Patel’s meetings with any of the following:
  - a. Tilman J. Fertitta, US Ambassador to Italy and San Marino
  - b. Matthew Whitaker, US Ambassador to NATO

- c. Luca Garavoglia, Italian billionaire businessman, and chairman of the Campari Group, who hosted a dinner attended by Patel, Fertitta, Whitaker, and others on or around Feb. 21, 2026,<sup>1</sup>
  - d. Mike Sullivan, Coach of men's U.S. olympic hockey team
5. Any advice, determination, authorization, or opinion concerning the acceptance by Director Patel, directly or indirectly, personally or on behalf of the United States, of any gift from any person in connection with his trip to the 2026 Winter Olympics, including but not limited to:
  - a. Any advice, determination, authorization, or opinion that a gift does or does not qualify for an exclusion from the definition of a "gift" for purposes of 5 C.F.R. 2635.203(b);
  - b. Any advice, determination, authorization, or opinion that a gift does or does not qualify for an exception pursuant to 5 C.F.R. 2635.204, including the "widely attended gathering" exception at 5 C.F.R. 2635.204(g);
  - c. Any advice, determination, authorization, or opinion that a gift is or is not required to be disposed of pursuant to 5 C.F.R. 2635.206;
  - d. Any advice, determination, authorization, or opinion that a gift can or may be accepted pursuant to a statutory gift authorization;
  - e. Any advice, determination, authorization, or opinion concerning the acceptance of non-federal source travel payments pursuant to 31 U.S.C. 1353;
  - f. Any advice, determination, authorization, or opinion concerning the acceptance of gifts pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 7342 or the Foreign Emoluments Clause of the United States Constitution.
6. Any records held by the FBI Office of Integrity and Compliance or the DOJ Departmental Ethics Office regarding Director Patel's locker room appearances, consumption of alcohol, or use of official social media in relation to the Olympics.
7. Any authorization for the advancement or reimbursement of transportation, lodging, subsistence, or other travel-related expenses to Director Patel or any private person accompanying Director Patel in connection with his trip to the 2026 Winter Olympics.
8. Any documents or records discussing the amount of reimbursement required to be paid by Director Patel for use of any government aircraft for personal use in connection with his trip to the 2026 Winter Olympics.
9. Any communications<sup>2</sup> to, from, and between Director Patel and any other person concerning his February 2026 trip to Italy, including any communications concerning his attendance at the 2026 Winter Olympics.
10. All direct messages to or from the X accounts @\_WilliamsonBen or @FBIDirectorKash from February 16-23, 2026<sup>3</sup>
11. Any communications created between Feb. 16-23 to or from Director Patel, his personal assistant Nicole Rucker,<sup>4</sup> FBI Assistant Director for Public Affairs Ben Williamson, or FBI Office of Congressional Affairs Assistant Director Marshall Yates containing any of the following keywords

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<sup>1</sup> Ambassador Tilman J. Fertitta (@USAmbItaly), X.com (Feb. 21, 2026), <https://x.com/USAmbItaly/status/2025328023067599214>.

<sup>2</sup> Communications include, but are not limited to, any email, instant messaging, SMS text, MMS, RCS, Slack, iMessage, Signal, WhatsApp, Telegram, or direct messages on X.com, Truth Social, or similar social media app.

<sup>3</sup> Excluding any message "Requests" which were not responded to by Patel or Williamson.

<sup>4</sup> Ms. Rucker has also spelled her name as Nikole Rucker; she may have also gone by Nicki Rucker.

- a. Italy
- b. Tilman
- c. Fertitta
- d. Whitaker
- e. Luca
- f. Garavoglia
- g. Congress
- h. Epstein<sup>5</sup>
- i. Olympics
- j. Gaudreau
- k. Campari
- l. Aperol
- m. Hockey
- n. Milan
- o. MSNOW
- p. Mamdani
- q. Girlfriend
- r. Nashville
- s. podcast
- t. media
- u. journalist
- v. rag
- w. celebration
- x. Boondoggle
- y. Raskin
- z. Durbin
- aa. Judiciary
- bb. Unity
- cc. Sacrifice
- dd. Attitude
- ee. plane
- ff. jet
- gg. fly/flight
- hh. McCabe
- ii. Mueller

### **General Search Guidelines**

Please search for responsive records regardless of format, medium, or physical characteristics. We request that searches be made of the primary accounts and mobile devices for these officials and any other email addresses, accounts, or devices that they use for official business. We also request that the search include any personal staff reporting to these officials with responsibility for managing, sending, or receiving official correspondence on their behalf, including specifically Nicole Rucker and any staff assistant or special assistant reporting directly to

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<sup>5</sup> Excluding any records which are only responsive because they are to/from any current federal official named Epstein.

Assistant Director Williamson, and any PAOs assigned specifically to work on media inquiries relating to Director Patel. Responsive records may also be held by the Executive Secretariat in the Office of the Director or Liaison Staff who coordinated with Ambassadors Fertitta and Whitaker.

If it is your position any portion of the requested records is exempt from disclosure, DDF requests that you provide an index of those documents as required under *Vaughn v. Rosen*. If some portions of the requested records are properly exempt from disclosure, please disclose any reasonably segregable non-exempt portions of the requested records. If it is your position that a document contains non-exempt segments, but that those non-exempt segments are so dispersed throughout the document as to make segregation impossible, please state what portion of the document is non-exempt, and how the material is dispersed throughout the document. Please be advised that DDF intends to pursue all legal remedies to enforce its right under the FOIA to access these documents. Accordingly, because litigation reasonably is foreseeable, the agency should institute an agency-wide preservation hold on documents potentially responsive to this request.

## Background

On February 22, 2026, a trespasser entered the premises of Mar-a-Lago with a shotgun and gas tank.<sup>6</sup> The man was shot and killed after he pointed the shotgun at two secret service agents and a country sheriff's deputy after breaching the Mar-a-Lago security perimeter.<sup>7</sup> In Mexico, the death of Nemesio Cervantes, the head of the Jalisco New Generation Cartel, resulted in widespread violence, including near the U.S.-Mexico border.<sup>8</sup> And two days before, in Washington, D.C., President Trump suggested that the U.S. may initiate a strike against Iran.<sup>9</sup>

Meanwhile, FBI Director Patel was nearly 4,300 miles away, attending the 2026 Olympic Games in what appears to be a skybox<sup>10</sup> and chugging beer in the U.S. men's hockey team's locker room.<sup>11</sup> Director Patel's trip to Italy occurred on government aircraft at a reported cost of \$75,000 to the American taxpayer.<sup>12</sup> It is not clear what events he attended while at the Olympics

<sup>6</sup> Hannah Phillips, *Here's what officials have said about Trump's Mar-a-Lago shooting*, USA TODAY (Feb. 22, 2026), <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/trump/2026/02/22/what-we-know-after-fatal-breach-at-donald-trump-mar-a-lago-club-palm-beach-estate-man-break-in-shot/88811943007/>.

<sup>7</sup> *Id.*

<sup>8</sup> Dina Arévalo, *Mexico cartel boss killed, violence flares near South Texas border*, SAN ANTONIO NEWS (Feb. 23, 2026), <https://www.mysanantonio.com/news/south-texas/article/rio-grande-valley-cartel-violence-21853761.php>.

<sup>9</sup> Francesca Chambers & Cybele Mayes-Osterman, *Will the US attack Iran? Trump weighs options, floats limited strike*, USA TODAY (Feb. 21, 2026), <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2026/02/21/trump-iran-military-strike-options/88778926007/>.

<sup>10</sup> Alexander Smith, *FBI head Kash Patel celebrates with men's hockey team amid major probes in U.S.*, NBC NEWS (Feb. 23, 2026), <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/kash-patel-fbi-celebrates-mens-hockey-team-winter-olympics-milan-video-rcna260215>.

<sup>11</sup> Erkki Forster & Catherine Bouris, *Keystone Kash Slammed for Boozing at Olympics Amid Multiple Crises*, THE DAILY BEAST (Feb. 23, 2026), <https://www.thedailybeast.com/keystone-kash-slammed-for-boozing-at-olympics-amid-multiple-crises/>.

<sup>12</sup> Carol Lennig & Ken Dilanian, *Kash Patel heads to Milan for the Olympics –on the FBI Jet*, MS NOW (Feb. 19, 2025), <https://www.ms.now/news/kash-patel-headed-to-milan-for-the-olympics-on-the-fbi-jet#:~:text=Government%20acc>

other than the men's hockey final. Prices to attend Olympic events varied based on the event, however, tickets to attend the men's hockey final alone ranged between \$500 and \$1,600.<sup>13</sup>

FBI spokesperson Ben Williamson explained on x.com, that "it's not a personal trip. Director Patel is on a trip that was planned months ago. It includes: partner meetings with Italian law enforcement and security officials (they invited the Director last July), meeting with Ambassador Fertitta (as a follow up to our law enforcement roundtable he hosted in January), meetings with Legat staff, and more."<sup>14</sup> However, *The New York Times* reports that according to an internal schedule "Mr. Patel had long segments of personal and leisure time."<sup>15</sup> Moreover, this is not the first time that Director Patel has used government aircraft to attend a hockey game<sup>16</sup> and Director Patel is alleged to have said during a meeting with FBI field offices that "[i]f you have golf, hockey, fishing, or hunting and beautiful sights, you're going to see a lot of me."<sup>17</sup> Speaking on *CNN*, former FBI Deputy Director Andrew McCabe said, however, that the FBI's explanation that Director Patel "had to go to security meetings the day before the games were over is patently ridiculous. Director Mueller once traveled to Greece to consult with partners on the security arrangements [for] the Greek Olympics eight months before the games began. That is when the sort-of details and arrangements are made that an FBI Director needs to weigh in on . . . not the day of the final hockey game."<sup>18</sup>

Director Patel's use of government aircraft for personal reasons has already come under significant scrutiny. On February 24, 2026, Senator Durbin sent a letter requesting that the Government Accountability Office and the Office of Inspector General at the Department of Justice investigate whether Director Patel violated the appropriations laws by utilizing government aircraft to attend the 2026 Olympics.<sup>19</sup> This letter followed on an earlier letter that Senator Durbin, sent in May 2025, asking the Government Accountability Office to investigate claims that Director Patel had used government aircraft to attend a professional hockey game and to visit his girlfriend in Nashville, Tennessee.<sup>20</sup> In December of last year, Democrats on the House Judiciary Committee sent a request to Director Patel seeking information on his frequent

[ounts%20estimate%20it%20costs%20U.S.%20taxpayers%20at%20least%20%245%2C000%20per%20flight%20hour%20for%20the%20FBI%20Gulfstream%20to%20fly%2C%20meaning%20Patel%E2%80%99s%20trip%20to%20Milan%20is%20likely%20to%20cost%20as%20much%20as%20%2475%2C000.%C2%A0](#)

<sup>13</sup> Chad de Guzman, *The Cost of Attending the 2026 Olympic Games*, TIME (Jan. 28, 2026),

<https://time.com/7357812/milano-cortina-2026-olympics-cost/>; ASSOCIATED PRESS, *Ticket prices for the 2026 Milan-Cortina Winter Olympics range from 30 to nearly 3,000 euros* (Oct. 3, 2024),

<https://apnews.com/article/2026-olympics-ticket-prices-b980535ab3ea83aa92b75e5e0babfb3>.

<sup>14</sup> Ben Williamson (@\_WilliamsonBen), X.com (Feb. 19, 2026),

[https://x.com/\\_WilliamsonBen/status/2024605212858630465?s=20](https://x.com/_WilliamsonBen/status/2024605212858630465?s=20).

<sup>15</sup> Glenn Thrush, *Kash Patel's Olympics Schedule Left Plenty of Time for Leisure*, THE NEW YORK TIMES (Feb. 24, 2026),

<https://www.nytimes.com/2026/02/24/us/politics/kash-patel-fbi-olympics-milan.html?smid=nytcore-ios-share>.

<sup>16</sup> Josh Fiallo, *Jet-Set Kash Patel Took FBI Plane to NHL Game and GF's City*, THE DAILY BEAST (Apr. 20, 2025), <https://www.thedailybeast.com/kash-patel-took-fbi-jet-to-nhl-game-and-girlfriends-city>.

<sup>17</sup> Letter from Sen. Richard J. Durbin, Ranking Member, U.S. Senate Committee on the Judiciary (Feb. 24, 2026), [2026-02-24 Letter to GAO and DOJ IG on Kash Patel Olympic Travel.pdf](#) (hereinafter "Durbin 2026 Letter").

<sup>18</sup> *The Lead with Jake Tapper*; CNN (Feb. 24, 2026),

<https://www.cnn.com/audio/podcasts/the-lead-with-jake-tapper/episodes/747ff38e-b8ed-11f0-a395-435a199c94dc> (15:00 mark).

<sup>19</sup> Durbin 2026 Letter, *supra* nt. 17.

<sup>20</sup> Letter from Sen. Richard J. Durbin, Ranking Member, U.S. Senate Committee on the Judiciary (May. 7, 2025), [2025-5-07 Letter to GAO re Executives use of aircraft for nonmission purposes.pdf](#); see also Fiallo, *supra* nt. 16.

use of a “\$60 million government jet” for “an overnight date with your girlfriend, a Scottish golfing excursion with your buddies, and a trip to a luxury hunting retreat called ‘Boondoggle Ranch.’”<sup>21</sup> Director Patel’s travel reportedly has also been a matter of frustration for officials within the Department of Justice and at the White House.<sup>22</sup>

### Fee Waiver Request

Pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 552(a)(4)(A) and 28 C.F.R. 16.10(k), DDF requests a waiver of fees associated with processing this request. Department regulations provide for a waiver of fees when it involves the “disclosure of the requested 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.” Courts have found that a fee waiver is appropriate when the disclosure will “(1) shed light on ‘the operations or activities of the government’; (2) be ‘likely to contribute significantly to public understanding’ of those operations or activities; and (3) not be ‘primarily in the commercial interest of the requester.’”<sup>23</sup> DDF’s request meets all elements.

First, the disclosure of these records is necessary to shed light on Kash Patel’s use of government resources, including government aircraft, to facilitate his attendance at the 2026 Olympics and whether he accepted any gifts including free attendance at the Olympics including at the men’s hockey final.

Use of government aircraft is strictly regulated by longstanding OMB policy Circular A-126 as well as the Federal Travel Regulations. Certain high-sensitivity positions, like the FBI Director, are considered “required use” officials who are authorized to use government aircraft when there is a need for personal travel, given their unique security needs.<sup>24</sup> Required use travelers must reimburse the government the full coach fare for any wholly personal trip or for any costs in excess of the full coach fare for mixed-use flights.<sup>25</sup> There has been bipartisan concern about the abuse of government aircraft by high-ranking officials of both parties, including “required use” travelers like Director Patel. FBI Director William Sessions was fired by President Bill Clinton based in part on accusations that he used an FBI plane to visit his family.<sup>26</sup> Former FBI Director

<sup>21</sup> Letter from Representative Jamie Raskin and Representative Kamlager-Dove (Dec. 1, 2025), [2025-12-01-raskin-kamlager-dove-to-patel-fbi-re-plane.pdf](https://www.thedailybeast.com/kash-patel-accused-of-using-gov-jet-for-date-night/); see also Adam Downer, *Keystone Kash Accused of Using \$60M FBI Jet for Date Night*, THE DAILY BEAST (Oct. 29, 2025), <https://www.thedailybeast.com/kash-patel-accused-of-using-gov-jet-for-date-night/>; Sadie Gurman, et al., *Kash Patel’s ‘Effin Wild’ Ride as FBI Director*, WALL ST. J., (Nov. 11, 2025), <https://www.wsj.com/politics/policy/kash-patel-private-jet-flights-fbi-197da8fd>; Amy McCarthy, *Kash Patel Takes \$60M FBI Jet to See Girlfriend 2 Years After Slamming His Predecessor for Using Government Plane*, PEOPLE (Nov. 4, 2025), <https://people.com/kash-patel-takes-60m-fbi-jetto-see-girlfriend-2-years-after-slamming-predecessor-for-using-gov-airplane-11842772>.

<sup>22</sup> Gurman, *supra* nt. 21.

<sup>23</sup> *Cause of Action v. FTC*, 799 F.3d 1108, 1115 (D.C. Cir. 2015).

<sup>24</sup> OMB Circular A-126(5)(d); 41 C.F.R. § 300-3.1. Required use travel is usually required to be approved on a case-by-case basis, unless there is a determination that all travel is considered “required use” given the sensitivity of the individual’s position. 41 C.F.R. §§ 301-10.262(a), 301-70.803(a).

<sup>25</sup> OMB Circular A-126(9)(b); 41 C.F.R. § 301-10.264(b).

<sup>26</sup> Blair Shiff, *Why President Clinton fired then-FBI Director William Sessions in July 1993*, ABC NEWS (May 10, 2017), <https://abcnews.com/Politics/president-clinton-fired-fbi-director-william-sessions-july/story?id=47323746>.

Christopher Wray recently came under scrutiny for his frequent use of government aircraft.<sup>27</sup> Outside of the FBI, several previous Cabinet Secretaries, including former Health and Human Services Secretary Tom Price and former Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin either left government or were subject to massive criticism after it became known that their use of government and private aircraft appeared at odds with the federal travel rules.<sup>28</sup>

Acceptance of gifts, including free attendance at events, by federal officials is also strictly regulated by the Standards of Ethical Conduct for Employees of the Executive Branch.<sup>29</sup> Any gift that is given because of an employee's official position or from a prohibited source cannot be accepted, unless an individual has accepted the gift pursuant to an exception.<sup>30</sup> Exceptions exist for certain gifts, such as those that are provided by close friends and family members<sup>31</sup> or that are to attend "widely attended gatherings."<sup>32</sup> This latter exception is not, however, generally available for attendance to sports events.<sup>33</sup> Likewise, a gift exception for "social events" would be inapplicable because it only applies when "[n]o fee is charged to any person in attendance."<sup>34</sup> Gifts may also be accepted on behalf of the government in certain limited circumstances. For example, a gift of travel expenses from a non-federal source can be accepted on behalf of the government to attend a meeting under 31 U.S.C. 1353.<sup>35</sup> However, that law only permits an employee to accept free attendance to a "conference, seminar, speaking engagement, symposium, training course, or similar event" and is not available for any other event including personal events or "any event required to carry out an agency's statutory or regulatory functions."<sup>36</sup> In addition, prior to accepting a covered gift of travel expenses from a non-federal source on behalf of the United States pursuant to 31 U.S.C. 1353, the agency must determine and document that a reasonable person would not question the integrity of the government's programs or operations based on accepting the gift.<sup>37</sup>

The public has been rightly concerned that FBI Director Patel's attendance at the 2026 Olympics men's hockey final raises questions about his compliance with applicable laws and rules. The rules related to use of government aircraft and the rules related to when an employee can accept gifts, including free attendance to events, are exacting. Adherence to these exacting standards is not only legally mandated, but it is necessary to maintain the public's confidence. Access to the requested records is imperative to determine whether Director Patel complied with his basic

<sup>27</sup> Miranda Devine, *Director Christopher Wray's use of FBI jet amounts to 'embezzlement,' current and ex-agents allege*, (Oct. 16, 2022), <https://nypost.com/2022/10/16/director-christopher-wrays-use-of-fbi-jet-amounts-to-embezzlement-current-ex-agents-allege/>.

<sup>28</sup> Dan Diamond & Rachana Pradhan, *How We Found Tim Price's Private Jets*, POLITICO (Oct. 4, 2017), <https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2017/10/04/how-we-found-tim-prices-private-jets-215680/>; Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington, *The Travels of Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin* (Mar. 15, 2018), <https://www.citizensforethics.org/reports-investigations/crew-reports/the-travels-of-treasury-secretary-steven-mnuchin/>.

<sup>29</sup> 5 C.F.R. § 2635.201, et seq.

<sup>30</sup> 5 C.F.R. §§ 2635.202, 2635.204.

<sup>31</sup> 5 C.F.R. § 2635.204(b).

<sup>32</sup> 5 C.F.R. § 2635.204(g).

<sup>33</sup> OGE DAEOgram DO-07-047 (Dec. 5, 2007).

<sup>34</sup> 5 C.F.R. § 2635.204(h).

<sup>35</sup> 5 C.F.R. § 2635.203(b)(9); 31 U.S.C. § 1353.

<sup>36</sup> 41 C.F.R. § 304-2.1.

<sup>37</sup> 41 C.F.R. §§ 304-5.1, 304-5.2, 304-5.3.

obligation of ethical service or not. This concern is heightened by the fact that Director Patel is already under scrutiny for misusing government aircraft, including to attend another professional hockey game,<sup>38</sup> and that at least one former Deputy Director of the FBI has called the justification provided by the FBI for Director Patel's official attendance at the Olympics “patently ridiculous.”<sup>39</sup>

Second, the purpose of the disclosures is not “primarily in the commercial interest of” DDF. DDF is a nonprofit organization established under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. DDF’s core mission is to defend the rule of law, fight corruption, and protect elections using a variety of tools including publication of information concerning ongoing activities of the government. DDF regularly speaks on issues related to government activities through traditional broadcast media, podcasts, and issuance of op-eds. DDF maintains a dedicated website where it provides information related to its activities which can be accessed by the public. The purpose of the disclosure is to inform the public about the activities of the government.

In addition, DDF requests the waiver of fees related to processing this request as a “representative of the news media” pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 552(a)(4)(A)(ii)(II) and DHS regulations. DDF routinely collects information of “potential interest to a segment of the public” and “uses its editorial skills to turn the raw materials into a distinct work and distributes that work to an audience.” DDF maintains a dedicated webpage for informing the public about activities related to government activity through a variety of media including press releases, public reports, and op-eds. DDF experts routinely engage with the public and with other members of the news media to publicize important information, including information related to government activities and information related to information sought under the FOIA. Pursuant to existing case law, DDF clearly meets the criteria for a fee waiver under section 552(a)(4)(A)(ii)(II).

In the event that fees are not waived, we agree to pay reasonable duplication fees in an amount not to exceed \$100, but we request to be notified before processing incurs expenses in excess of that amount.

### **Expedited Processing**

DDF is entitled to expedited processing of this request pursuant to 5 U.S.C. § 552 and departmental regulations at 28 C.F.R. § 16.5(e) because (1) there exists “[a]n urgency to inform the public about an actual or alleged Federal Government activity” and DDF is “primarily engaged in disseminating information” and (2) this is a “[a] matter of widespread and exceptional media interest involving questions about the Government's integrity which affect public confidence.” 28 C.F.R. § 16.5(e)(1)(ii), (iv).

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<sup>38</sup> See Fiallo, *supra* nt. 16.

<sup>39</sup> Janna Brancolini, *Keystone Kash Lashed for ‘Patently Ridiculous’ Olympic Antics by FBI Insider*, THE DAILY BEAST (Feb. 26, 2026), <https://www.thedailybeast.com/keystone-kash-patel-lashed-for-patently-ridiculous-olympic-antics-by-fbi-insider-and-rew-mccabe/>.

**1. The request involves a matter on which there is an urgency to inform the public about an actual or alleged federal government activity, and DDF is primarily engaged in disseminating information concerning that activity.**

As the Supreme Court explained in *NLRB v. Robbins Tire & Rubber Co.*, “[t]he basic purpose of [the] FOIA is to ensure an informed citizenry, vital to the functioning of a democratic society, needed to check against corruption and to hold the governors accountable to the governed.” Department regulations provide for expedited processing of any request involving an “urgency to inform the public about an actual or alleged federal government activity, if made by a person who primarily engaged in disseminating information.”<sup>40</sup> In assessing whether there is an established urgency courts look to three factors: “(1) whether the request concerns a matter of current exigency to the American public; (2) whether the consequences of delaying a response would compromise a significant recognized interest; and (3) whether the request concerns federal government activity.”<sup>41</sup>

The actions here clearly involve government activity. They also involve a matter of current widespread interest to the American public. This is a “currently unfolding story.”<sup>42</sup> Prompt release of Director Patel’s Olympic-related records is necessary given the “immediate public interest in view of the ongoing debate” about the propriety of the FBI Director’s use of government resources to attend recreational events like the Olympics.<sup>43</sup> At least one Member of Congress has asked the Government Accountability Office to look into whether Director Patel’s use of government aircraft to attend the Olympics violated the appropriations laws. The records requested could also inform any government policy decisions that Congress may make in either its oversight responsibilities or through the legislative process. Moreover, the FBI Director must stand as an example for law enforcement throughout the country, if not throughout the world. Violations of law by the FBI Director are not excusable—they implicate the very integrity of the rule of law. Several FBI Directors have been scrutinized—and one was removed, in part—for using government aircraft for inappropriate purposes. The American people must know that the head of the primary criminal investigative agency of the United States is himself law abiding. Hence the immediate release of these records is necessary to protect the public trust.

DDF is also an entity that is “primarily engaged in disseminating information” to the public.<sup>44</sup> DDF’s communications infrastructure is robust and designed to maximize reach and engagements. With a significant presence across social media platforms, and targeted outreach initiatives, DDF has built a network capable of rapidly disseminating accurate and detailed information regarding government activities. DDF’s public dissemination and media outreach are extensive, allowing it to connect with a vast and diverse audience across various platforms, making it uniquely positioned to effectively inform the public about the findings of this request.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> 5 C.F.R. § 16.5(e)(1)(ii).

<sup>41</sup> *Al-Fayed v. C.I.A.*, 254 F.3d 300, 310 (D.C. Cir. 2001) (citing H.R. Rep. No. 104–795, at 26 (1996)).

<sup>42</sup> *Id.* at 310.

<sup>43</sup> *Am. Civ. Liberties Union v. U.S. Dep’t of Just.*, 321 F. Supp. 2d 24, 29 (D.D.C. 2004); *see also* Forster & Bouris, *supra* nt. 11.

<sup>44</sup> *See, e.g. Protect Democracy Project, Inc. v. United States Dep’t of Just.*, 498 F. Supp. 3d 132, 139 (D.D.C. 2020).

<sup>45</sup> *See e.g.*, Trump’s Power & The Rule of Law: Norman Eisen, PBS FRONTLINE (Mar. 24, 2025), <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/interview/norman-eisen/>; Virginia Canter, et al., *Why we ‘Democracy Defenders’ are demanding information about DOGE*, MS Now (Dec. 27,

DDF management and staff frequently publish reports, op-ed, and articles in traditional and new media, including in the *Contrarian* which is owned by DDF's sister organization, Democracy Defenders Action.<sup>46</sup> By utilizing a variety of news media sources, DDF is able to make its investigative findings relatable and understandable. As a result, DDF not only informs but empowers the public to participate meaningfully in conversations about governance and accountability. The necessity of expediting the production of responsive records is underscored by DDF's proven capacity to reach a wide audience and spark meaningful public dialogue.

**2. The request involves a matter of widespread and exceptional media interest involving questions about the integrity of ICE, DHS, and the Trump Administration which profoundly affect public confidence.**

DDF requests expedited processing as well under 28 C.F.R. § 16.5(e)(1)(iv) which provides that the Department will process requests on an expedited basis if it involves “[a] matter of widespread and exceptional media interest in which there exist possible questions about the government's integrity that affect public confidence.”

As evidenced by voluminous sources quoted throughout this request, dozens of news and media outlets, including the Time Magazine, NBC News, the Associated Press, the Independent, The New York Times, USA Today, the BBC, the Hill, the Daily Beast, Salon Magazine, and Sports Illustrated have covered FBI Director Patel's trip.<sup>47</sup> Many of these articles highlight concerns that

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2024), <https://www.msnbc.com/opinion/msnbc-opinion/group-launched-inquiry-musk-ramaswamys-doge-rcna185248>; see also David A. Fahrenthold, *Two Watchdogs Were Rebuffed From Joining Trump's Cost-Cutting Effort*, THE NEW YORK TIMES (Jan. 16, 2025), <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/01/16/us/doge-trump-watchdogs.html>; Stephen M. Lepore, *DOGE'S brutal response to former Obama and Clinton aides attempting to join Elon Musk's cost cutting machine*, DAILY MAIL (Jan. 17, 2025),

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14295275/DOGE-brutal-response-former-Obama-Clinton-aides-Elon-Musk.html>; Travis Gettys, *'Too many to enumerate': Watchdogs open probe into Musk's alleged 'conflicts of interest'*, RAWSTORY (Dec. 27, 2024), <https://www.rawstory.com/musk-doge-ethics/>.

<sup>46</sup> Norman Eisen, et al., *The Coming Legal and Congressional Action to Fight 'The Donroe Doctrine'*, THE CONTRARIAN (Jan. 7, 2026), <https://contrarian.substack.com/p/the-coming-legal-and-congressional>; Christopher Swartz & Virginia Canter, *Congress is abandoning centuries-old ethics lessons in its crypto push*, THE HILL (Oct. 9, 2025), <https://thehill.com/opinion/finance/5545644-crypto-regulation-conflict-interest/>; Gabe Lezra, et al., *15 Ways You Can Fight for Democracy*, THE CONTRARIAN (Mar. 18, 2025),

<https://contrarian.substack.com/p/15-ways-you-can-fight-for-democracy>; Jennifer Rubin & Craig Becker, *Craig Becker on the power of unions & Trump's attacks against civil institutions at large*, THE CONTRARIAN (Aug. 29, 2025) <https://contrarian.substack.com/p/craig-becker-on-the-power-of-unions>; Jennifer Rubin & Virginia Canter, *Musk Turned a Government Role into a Profit Machine: Ginny Canter on Musk's Conflicts of Interest*, THE CONTRARIAN (Jun. 6, 2025), <https://contrarian.substack.com/p/musk-turned-a-government-role-into>.

<sup>47</sup> See e.g., Miranda Jeyaretnam, *FBI Director Kash Patel Defends Celebrations With U.S. Ice Hockey Team*, TIME (Feb. 22, 2026),

<https://time.com/7380414/kash-patel-fbi-jet-us-olympics-ice-hockey-milan-italy-celebrations-locker-room/>;

Alexander Smith, *FBI head Kash Patel celebrates with men's hockey team amid major probes in U.S.*, NBC NEWS (Feb. 23, 2026),

<https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/kash-patel-fbi-celebrates-mens-hockey-team-winter-olympics-milan-video-rcna260215>; Eric Tucker, *FBI director invites fresh scrutiny over travels with appearance at US men's hockey team celebration*, ASSOCIATED PRESS (Feb. 23, 2026),

<https://apnews.com/article/olympics-hockey-fbi-director-kash-patel-8eb9ff9fcd6ec605643860fd1c18bf>; John Bowden, *Kash Patel parties with Team USA hockey champs after taking FBI jet to Italy as aide defends 'official business' trip*, THE INDEPENDENT (Feb. 22, 2026),

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/us-politics/kash-patel-olympics-europe-travel-b2925401.html>;

have been raised about Director Patel's use of government aircraft and attendance at the Olympics.<sup>48</sup> As noted above, the rules and regulations concerning both use of government aircraft and attendance at events establish an ethical minimum for government employees, including high-level officials like the FBI Director. Commentators, including a former high-ranking FBI official, have called into question the FBI's purported justification of Director Patel's attendance at the Olympics. Meanwhile, Director Patel and the FBI press office have been able to "frame the public discussion on his own terms while the [underlying records] remain[] under wraps."<sup>49</sup> Delaying disclosure of the underlying records risks further undermining public confidence in the FBI Director, an untenable position for the country to be in.

The requested documents are essential for ensuring the public remains informed of the FBI Director's use of government aircraft and his attendance at events, such as the Olympics. As noted, DDF has a proven ability to reach broad and diverse audiences, which positions this organization as a key disseminator of this missing information. Moreover, DDF has extensive knowledge of the rules and regulations that protect against government corruption and malfeasance and is uniquely situated to understand and convey information received through this FOIA concerning potential corruption to the public.

Immediate compliance with this FOIA request is necessary not only to uphold legal obligations under FOIA but also to address the growing demand for transparency on an issue of national importance that has captured significant national attention. The government's credibility depends on its willingness to timely meet this demand and to allow the public to scrutinize its actions through the lens of complete and accurate information.

If you have any questions about this clarification or foresee any problems in fully releasing the requested records, please contact us at FOIA@democracydefenders.org. Please send the

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Alan Feur, et al., *F.B.I. Director Celebrates Hockey Victory as Bureau Stares Down Crises*, THE NEW YORK TIMES (Feb. 22, 2026), <https://www.nytimes.com/2026/02/22/us/politics/fbi-director-patel-olympics-mar-a-lago.html>; Austin Curtright & N'dea Yancey-Bragg, *FBI Director Kash Patel celebrates with USA men's hockey team after gold medal win*, USA TODAY (Feb. 22, 2026), <https://www.usatoday.com/story/sports/olympics/2026/02/22/kash-patel-celebrates-with-team-usa-mens-hockey-gold-medal/88817367007/>; Madeline Halpert, *FBI Boss Kash Patel Defends Winter Olympics celebration with USA Team*, BBC (Feb. 23, 2026), <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c0e59n12rlwo>; Max Rego, *Former FBI official: Patel Olympics appearance sends 'horrible' message to rank and file*, THE HILL (Feb. 24, 2026), <https://thehill.com/homenews/administration/5752209-patel-celebration-draws-criticism/>; Julia Ornedo & Catherine Bouris, *Keystone Kash Gives Bizarre Excuse for Boozy Olympic Partying*, THE DAILY BEAST (Feb. 22, 2026), <https://www.thedailybeast.com/keystone-kash-gives-bizarre-excuse-for-olympics-locker-party/>; Sophia Tesfaye, *Kash Patel hijacks Team USA's Olympic hockey win*, SALON (Feb. 23, 2026), <https://www.salon.com/2026/02/23/kash-patel-hijacks-team-usas-olympic-hockey-win/>; Kristen Wong, *FBI Director Kash Patel Addresses Viral Video of Him Partying With Team USA Hockey*, SPORTS ILLUSTRATED (Feb. 23, 2026), <https://www.si.com/winter-olympics/fbi-director-kash-patel-addresses-viral-video-partying-with-team-usa-hockey>.

<sup>48</sup> See, e.g., Charles Pierce, *How Can Republicans Defend Kash Patel's Outrageous Private Plane Usage?*, ESQUIRE (Feb. 25, 2026), <https://www.esquire.com/news-politics/politics/a70501335/kash-patel-private-jet-fbi/>; Evan Perez, *Kash Patel's use of the FBI jet sparks outrage. Here's why he couldn't travel to the Olympic any other way*, CNN (Feb. 24, 2026), <https://www.cnn.com/2026/02/24/politics/kash-patel-fbi-jet-use-explained/>; Chris Iorfida, *FBI flights, taxpayer dollars: Why Director Kash Patel's travels are drawing scrutiny*, CBC NEWS (Feb. 24, 2026), <https://www.cbc.ca/news/world/fbi-plane-patel-9.7103617>; Ryan Lucas, *FBI Director Kash Patel faces scrutiny over travel on government jet*, NPR (Feb. 25, 2026), <https://www.npr.org/2026/02/25/nx-s1-5726395/fbi-director-kash-patel-faces-scrutiny-over-travel-on-government-jet>

<sup>49</sup> *Citizens for Resp. & Ethics in Washington v. U.S. Dep't of Just.*, 436 F. Supp. 3d 354, 361 (D.D.C. 2020).

requested records to FOIA@democracydefenders.org or Democracy Defenders Fund, 600 Pennsylvania Ave., S.E., Washington, D.C. 20003. Thank you for your assistance in this matter.

The undersigned hereby certify that these statements submitted supporting DDF's request for expedited processing are true and correct to the best of our knowledge and belief.

Sincerely,

/s/

Amb. Norman L. Eisen (Ret.)  
Executive Chair  
Democracy Defenders Fund

/s/

Virginia Canter  
Ethics and Anticorruption Chief Counsel and Director  
Democracy Defenders Fund

/s/

Christopher Swartz  
Senior Ethics Counsel  
Democracy Defenders Fund

**Guidance Regarding the Search and Processing of Requested Records:**

- In connection with its request for records, DDF provides the following guidance regarding the scope of records sought and the search and processing of records:
- Please search all locations and systems likely to have responsive records, regardless of format, medium, or physical characteristics.
- Our request for records includes any attachments to those records or other materials enclosed with those records when they were previously transmitted. To the extent that an email is responsive to our request, our request includes all prior messages sent or received in that email chain, as well as any attachments to the email.
- Please search all relevant records or systems containing records regarding agency business. Do not exclude records regarding agency business contained in files, email accounts, or devices in the personal custody of your officials, such as personal email accounts or text messages. Records of official business conducted using unofficial systems or stored outside of official files are subject to the Federal Records Act and FOIA.<sup>50</sup> It is not adequate to rely on policies and procedures that require officials to move such information to official systems within a certain period of time; DDF has a right to records contained in those files even if material has not yet been moved to official systems or if officials have, by intent or through negligence, failed to meet their obligations.<sup>51</sup>
- In the event some portions of the requested records are properly exempt from disclosure, please disclose any reasonably segregable non-exempt portions of the requested records.
- If a request is denied in whole, please state specifically why it is not reasonable to segregate portions of the record for release.
- Please take appropriate steps to ensure that records responsive to this request are not deleted by the agency before the completion of processing for this request. If records potentially responsive to this request are likely to be located on systems where they are subject to potential deletion, including on a scheduled basis, please take steps to prevent that deletion, including, as appropriate, by instituting a litigation hold on those records.

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<sup>50</sup> See *Competitive Enter. Inst. v. Office of Sci. & Tech. Policy*, 827 F.3d 145, 149–50 (D.C. Cir. 2016); cf. *Judicial Watch, Inc. v. Kerry*, 844 F.3d 952, 955–56 (D.C. Cir. 2016).

<sup>51</sup> See *Competitive Enter. Inst. v. Office of Sci. & Tech. Policy*, No. 14-cv-765, slip op. at 8 (D.D.C. Dec. 12, 2016).