



DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF NAVAL OPERATIONS
2000 NAVY PENTAGON
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20350-2000

IN REPLY REFER TO

5720
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5 May 2005

From: Chief of Naval Operations
To: FOIA Distribution List

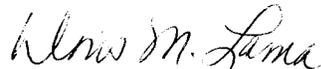
Subj: FOIA POLICY RE REDACTION TECHNIQUES

1. The following was passed to this office by the Department of Defense FOIA Office and is forwarded for your immediate action and implementation:

“Recently, redacted documents were placed on a non-FOIA DoD website, and with the use of apparently unsophisticated methods the redacted portions were electronically reinserted into the text of the documents resulting in the compromise of the information that was intended to be denied public release. Although this latest incident was not a FOIA release, previous similar compromises of redacted documents have occurred through FOIA releases. Because of technological means that defeat many old redaction methods, the following guidance is distributed concerning redaction methods that are acceptable to use in the processing of FOIA requests:

- The preferred DoD method of redacting information denied in association with FOIA requests is a modern software redaction system. These systems are specifically designed to defeat any electronic attempt to reinstall redacted information.
- The following electronic redaction method **is not** to be used under any circumstances for FOIA requests: Word processing functions. Redactions made using these readily available resources are easily restored.
- The following physical redaction techniques **are not** to be used under any circumstances for FOIA requests: “Black out” methods using magic markers or grease pencils. These methods of covering up information not intended for public release are easily defeated using modern electronic devices.
- Other physical redaction methods such the use of redaction tape, redaction markers, paper overlay, and liquid paper are not recommend to be used. Although some specific makes of these kinds of products will resist efforts to restore redactions, the possibility of confusion with similar products that will not properly mask deletions is not worth the risk of an unintended release.
- The acceptable way of physical excising remains the use of an Exacto knife or scissors to cut out the material to be deleted. “

2. Pending the approval of REDAX, this office has routinely uses Post-it Labeling and Cover-Up Tape. We simply cover the information we wish to withhold, bracket the amount of information being withheld, and insert the FOIA exemption. Then the document is copied and the copied version provided to the requester.
3. Because redacted material is made publicly available through means other than the FOIA, please forward this information concerning proper redaction techniques as applicable to public affairs officers, web security specialists, or other personnel within your organizations that make such releases.
4. As you are aware, we are seeking approval by NMCI for the use of REDAX, an electronic redaction software. Some of you have indicated a desire to use this software. Once approval is granted, we will disseminate information regarding cost, installation, and training.
5. This document is posted at www.foia.navy.mil under Resource Materials (FOIA Policy).



DORIS M. LAMA

By direction
(202) 685-6545