

May 19, 2020

BY EMAIL: FOIA@usss.dhs.gov

United States Secret Service

Information Appeal, Deputy Director

Communications Center

245 Murray Lane, S.W., Building T-5

Washington, D.C. 20223

Re: Appeal of FOIA Request No. 2020-IGFO-00097

Dear Deputy Director:

Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington (“CREW”) hereby appeals the initial determination by the United States Secret Service for records concerning a trip Ivanka Trump and Jared Kushner took to Trump National Golf Club Bedminster in April 2020. As set forth below, the failure of the Secret Service to locate any responsive records is clearly the result of a patently unreasonable search and accordingly the Secret Service must be directed to initiate a new search.

On April 16, 2020, CREW submitted to the Secret Service by email a request for two categories of records. First, CREW requested copies of records of or reflecting the use of government funds to provide security and any other services for Ivanka Trump and Jared Kushner’s trip to Trump National Golf Club Bedminster in April 2020, dating from April 1, 2020 to the present. Second, CREW requested copies of records of or reflecting the number of Secret Service agents involved in the detail for that trip, from April 1 to the present. For your convenience a copy of this request is enclosed. On May 13, 2020, the Secret Service advised CREW that it had conducted a search of all program offices and computer systems “likely to contain potentially responsive records” and had located no records. A copy of this response also is enclosed. For the reasons outlined below, the Secret Service failed to conduct a reasonable search.

On April 16, 2020, the *New York Times* reported that Ivanka Trump and her husband Jared Kushner travelled to Trump National Golf Club Bedminster in New Jersey, a golf club owned by the Trump Organization, for the first night of Passover.[[1]](#footnote-1) The trip contravened federal guidelines for travel during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Id.* Ms. Trump remained at Bedminster along with her children for a number of days, working remotely. *Id.* As the daughter of the president, Ivanka Trump and her family receive Secret Service protection.

It is simply inconceivable that the Secret Service would have no records concerning this trip. As the records of past trips reveal, at a minimum the Secret Service incurs expenses for transportation, lodging, meals and incidentals, and logistical support. *See, e.g.*, March 18, 2020 report issued by the DHS Office of Inspector General (“OIG”), “United States Secret Service Expenses Incurred at Trump Turnberry Resort,” OIG-20-18. At Bedminster alone, according to the *Washington Post*, the president has spent 950 nights, which resulted in the Secret Service incurring the costs of renting an entire cottage “to store equipment and provide sleeping space for agents.”[[2]](#footnote-2) Yet in response to CREW’s request the Secret Service claimed to have no records reflecting these or any other expenses.

The costs to the Secret Service of providing protection to the president and his family for their many trips, including overseas trips to advance their business interests, have drawn significant public attention, particularly because many of those expenses have been paid to the president’s own company. The *Washington Post* has calculated that the U.S. government paid at least $970,000 to the president’s company since the president took office, a number that includes “more than 1,600 nightly room rentals at Trump’s hotels and clubs[.]”[[3]](#footnote-3) This raises the possibility that the Secret Service has either given an unduly narrow construction to CREW’s request or failed to conduct an adequate search in order to prevent the disclosure of more embarrassing information.

Further highlighting the inadequacy of the Secret Service’s initial search is its failure to locate any records of or reflecting the number of Secret Service agents involved in the detail for that trip. Again, it simply is not believable that the Secret Service has no records whatsoever concerning the detail that provided protection for Ivanka Trump and her family during their April stay at Bedminster.

For all these reasons we request that you direct the Secret Service to conduct a new search for records responsive to CREW’s request.

Sincerely,

Anne L. Weismann Chief FOIA Counsel

Encl.

1. Annie Karni, Ivanka Trump, Disregarding Federal Guidelines, Travels to N.J. for Passover, *New York Times*, Apr. 16, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/14/us/politics/coronavirus-ivanka=trump.html?smid=nytcore-ios-share>. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. David A. Fahrenthold and Joshua Partlow, Trump’s company has received at least $970,000 from U.S. taxpayers for room rentals, *Washington Post*, May 14, 2020, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/trumps-company-has-received-at-least-970000-from-us-taxpayers-for-room-rentals/2020/05/14/26d27862-916d-11ea-9e23-6914ee410a5f_story.html>. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. *Id.* [↑](#footnote-ref-3)