



United States Department of State

Washington, D.C. 20520

September 1, 2023

Case No. FL-2023-00033

Kevin Schmidt
Americans For Prosperity Foundation
1310 North Courthouse Road, Suite 700
Arlington, VA 22201

Dear Mr. Schmidt:

As we noted in our letter dated August 1, 2023, we are processing your request for material under the Freedom of Information Act (“FOIA”), 5 U.S.C. § 552. The Department of State (“Department”) has identified five additional responsive records subject to the FOIA. We have determined that all five records may be released in part.

An enclosure explains the FOIA exemptions and other grounds for withholding material. Where we have made redactions, the applicable FOIA exemptions are marked on each record. Where applicable, the Department has considered the foreseeable harm standard when reviewing these records and applying FOIA exemptions. All non-exempt material that is reasonably segregable from the exempt material has been released and is enclosed.

We will keep you informed as your case progresses. If you have any questions, your attorney may contact Sean Tepe, Assistant U.S. Attorney, at Sean.Tepe@usdoj.gov or (202) 252-2533. Please refer to the case number, FL-2023-00033, and the civil action number, 23-cv-00206, in all correspondence about this case.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Diamonece Hickson', with a large, stylized initial 'D' and a horizontal line extending to the right.

Diamonece Hickson
Chief, Litigation and Appeals Branch
Office of Information Programs and Services

Enclosures: As stated.

The Freedom of Information Act (5 USC 552)

FOIA Exemptions

- (b)(1) Information specifically authorized by an executive order to be kept secret in the interest of national defense or foreign policy. Executive Order 13526 includes the following classification categories:
- 1.4(a) Military plans, systems, or operations
 - 1.4(b) Foreign government information
 - 1.4(c) Intelligence activities, sources or methods, or cryptology
 - 1.4(d) Foreign relations or foreign activities of the US, including confidential sources
 - 1.4(e) Scientific, technological, or economic matters relating to national security, including defense against transnational terrorism
 - 1.4(f) U.S. Government programs for safeguarding nuclear materials or facilities
 - 1.4(g) Vulnerabilities or capabilities of systems, installations, infrastructures, projects, plans, or protection services relating to US national security, including defense against transnational terrorism
 - 1.4(h) Weapons of mass destruction
- (b)(2) Related solely to the internal personnel rules and practices of an agency
- (b)(3) Specifically exempted from disclosure by statute (other than 5 USC 552), for example:
- | | |
|----------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|
| ARMSEXP | Arms Export Control Act, 50a USC 2411(c) |
| CIA PERS/ORG | Central Intelligence Agency Act of 1949, 50 USC 403(g) |
| EXPORT CONTROL | Export Administration Act of 1979, 50 USC App. Sec. 2411(c) |
| FS ACT | Foreign Service Act of 1980, 22 USC 4004 |
| INA | Immigration and Nationality Act, 8 USC 1202(f), Sec. 222(f) |
| IRAN | Iran Claims Settlement Act, Public Law 99-99, Sec. 505 |
- (b)(4) Trade secrets and confidential commercial or financial information
- (b)(5) Interagency or intra-agency communications forming part of the deliberative process, attorney-client privilege, or attorney work product
- (b)(6) Personal privacy information
- (b)(7) Law enforcement information whose disclosure would:
- (A) interfere with enforcement proceedings
 - (B) deprive a person of a fair trial
 - (C) constitute an unwarranted invasion of personal privacy
 - (D) disclose confidential sources
 - (E) disclose investigation techniques
 - (F) endanger life or physical safety of an individual
- (b)(8) Prepared by or for a government agency regulating or supervising financial institutions
- (b)(9) Geological and geophysical information and data, including maps, concerning wells

Other Grounds for Withholding

- NR Material not responsive to a FOIA request excised with the agreement of the requester

From: Sullivan, Thomas D
Sent: Tue, 21 Jun 2022 00:04:50 +0000
To: Hochstein, Amos J
Subject: Re: Heads up

Thanks. We're in Berlin Fri not tomorrow.

On Jun 20, 2022, at 4:43 PM, Hochstein, Amos J (b)(6)@state.gov> wrote:

I spoke to the Germans today who asked to convey the following.

(b)(5)

Adding (b)(6) here for awareness as he's with Blinken in Berlin tomorrow
Get [Outlook for iOS](#)

From: Lochman, Laura A
Sent: Tue, 27 Sep 2022 16:07:02 +0000
To: Hochstein, Amos J
Cc: (b)(6)
Subject: Need your view on Chevron: U.S. vs. international markets

Amos –

(b)(5)

(b)(5)

Please see below and let me know your thoughts.

Thanks, Laura

(b)(5)

~~SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED~~

~~SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED~~

From: (b)(6)
Sent: Thu, 6 Oct 2022 04:38:54 +0000
To: (b)(6) Hochstein, Amos J
Subject: Fwd: Story and request for comment

Amos - Do you want to do an interview w FT, too?

(b)(6)

Chief of Staff to Amos Hochstein
Special Presidential Coordinator

Desk: (b)(6) | Mobile: (b)(6)

From: Derek Brower <derek.brower@ft.com>
Sent: Thursday, October 6, 2022 12:08:32 AM
To: (b)(6)@state.gov>
Subject: Re: Story and request for comment

Hi (b)(6)

Re-upping the below. I'm now writing the Big Read for the FT weekend paper -- our flagship deep dive. It's about the Opec decision, what it means for the US, what went wrong, etc. I'll definitely be mentioning Amos in the piece. So if he is available to talk or give any kind of steer, it would be great. Thanks. Derek

On Tue, 4 Oct 2022 at 09:42, Derek Brower <derek.brower@ft.com> wrote:

Hi (b)(6)

we are writing a story right now about the Saudis preparing a big oil supply cut and that this marks a pretty substantial blow to the US.

We understand Amos and Brett McGurk were in Saudi Arabia last week for meetings about oil policy. But that the Saudis will now go their own way with cuts to raise prices, despite the proximity to the midterms etc.

We also understand from several people that if prices rise too high, the US may consider measures such as restrictions on US fuel exports and/or continued SPR releases beyond those announced.

Would it be possible to get any comment? Many thanks, Derek

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Derek Brower
US Energy Editor
FT Energy Source Editor

M (b)(6)

Sign up for Energy Source, the FT's essential energy newsletter, [here](#).



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Derek Brower

US Energy Editor

FT Energy Source Editor

M (b)(6)

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From: Price, Edward C
Sent: Wed, 9 Mar 2022 21:35:33 +0000
To: ENR-PD-Clearances;Hochstein, Amos J;WHA-Press
Cc: SPOX2
Subject: FW: Reuters Exclusive: Washington pins easing of Venezuela sanctions on direct oil supply to U.S. -sources

I've been pinged a couple times today on this story (b)(5)

(b)(5)

(b)(5)

From: PA Press Clips <PAPressMediaMonitors@state.gov>
Sent: Wednesday, March 9, 2022 5:31 AM
To: PA Monitoring Group <PAMonitoringGroup@state.gov>
Subject: Reuters Exclusive: Washington pins easing of Venezuela sanctions on direct oil supply to U.S. -sources

March 9, 2022

5:00 AM EST

EXCLUSIVE Washington pins easing of Venezuela sanctions on direct oil supply to U.S. -sources

By Marianna Parraga and Matt Spetalnick

<https://www.reuters.com/world/us/exclusive-washington-pins-easing-venezuela-sanctions-direct-oil-supply-us-2022-03-09/>

HOUSTON/WASHINGTON, March 8 (Reuters) - U.S. officials have demanded Venezuela supply at least a portion of oil exports to the United States as part of any agreement to ease oil trading sanctions on the OPEC member nation, two people close to the matter said.

U.S. President Joe Biden on Tuesday banned U.S. imports of Russian oil in retaliation for the invasion of Ukraine, ramping up economic pressure on a key Venezuelan ally.

U.S. diplomats have worked to find energy supplies worldwide that can help compensate for disruption to Russian oil and gas exports caused by sanctions or war. U.S. officials met Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro in Caracas for the first bilateral talks in years on Saturday.

Venezuela has been under U.S. oil sanctions since 2019 and could reroute crude if those restrictions were lifted.

U.S. officials made clear their priority was to secure supplies for the United States, the people told Reuters. The officials told their Venezuelan counterparts that any relaxation in U.S. sanctions would be conditional on Venezuela shipping oil directly to the United States, the sources said.

The United States had not previously made stipulations about the specific destination of cargoes permitted under waivers to sanctions.

The U.S. Department of State and Venezuelan state run energy company PDVSA did not immediately reply to requests for comment.

Chevron Corp (CVX.N), the last U.S. oil producer still operating in Venezuela, could be the first beneficiary if a deal is reached with Maduro's administration. Chevron has been barred from shipping Venezuelan oil from its joint ventures since 2020 and has pushed to overturn the ban.

A Chevron spokesperson declined to comment on the U.S. discussions. The company operates "in compliance with the current sanctions framework provided by the U.S. Office of Foreign Assets Control," he said.

The California-based company has a special license that allows it to maintain a low-level presence in the country, only to ensure the maintenance and safety of its facilities.

With that license due to expire in June, Chevron has sought authorization from the U.S. Treasury Department to trade Venezuelan oil cargoes for debt repayment through a revamped exemption, Reuters has reported. Chevron wants the revised permit so it can recoup hundreds of million dollars in unpaid debt and late dividends from its joint ventures with PDVSA.

If Washington decides to ease sanctions, Chevron could be in position to partially recover production in Venezuela and resume exports to its own and other refineries on the U.S. Gulf Coast, one of the sources said, replacing Russian barrels.

Chevron had no immediate comment.

Little progress was made in the weekend talks as Washington sought to gauge prospects for peeling Maduro away from his alliance with Russian President Vladimir Putin. But the parties agreed to further talks.

The sides established what one person familiar with the matter called "maximalist" negotiating positions. Washington pressed for free presidential elections and for the release of Americans jailed in Venezuela, while Maduro asked for a wide lifting of sanctions.

But the most pressing topic was energy. The parties discussed returning Venezuelan oil to markets hit by disruptions of Russian supplies and a workaround for PDVSA to temporarily access international bank transfers, according to the sources.

The meeting sparked strong reactions on Capitol Hill, where New Jersey Senator Robert Menendez and other U.S. lawmakers criticized the outreach to Maduro, who is under U.S. sanctions for human rights abuses.

The U.S. engagement comes as Venezuela's financial lifeline to Russia is fraying under sanctions on Moscow following its bombardment of Ukraine. Venezuela's funds held in Russian banks blacklisted by Washington have been frozen.

Oil prices rose another 5% on Tuesday to \$128 per barrel on the U.S. import ban on Russia - which accounted for 670,000 barrels per day in 2021. Britain said it will phase out Russian imports by year end.

Venezuela's oil production last year recovered from free fall and averaged 636,000 bpd. Officials have said it can boost output and exports, but analysts believe there is little room for further increases without massive new spending.

However, many refiners in the U.S. Gulf Coast that were importing Russian barrels could potentially resume processing Venezuelan heavy oil and fuel, among their preferred feedstock for specialized units.

Before sanctions, U.S. Valero Energy (VLO.N), Citgo Petroleum, Chevron and PBF Energy (PBF.N) were among top U.S. buyers of Venezuelan oil.

From: (b)(6)
Sent: Thu, 20 Oct 2022 23:08:37 +0000
To: Hochstein, Amos J
Subject: FW: Need your view on Chevron: U.S. vs. international markets

Amos - I am meeting with Laura tomorrow morning at 0900 to discuss the Venezuela issues – do you have an answer to her question below?

(b)(5)

From: Lochman, Laura A (b)(6)@state.gov>
Sent: Thursday, October 20, 2022 6:01 PM
To: (b)(6)@state.gov>
Subject: FW: Need your view on Chevron: U.S. vs. international markets

(b)(6)

(b)(5)

If you can help get a response, that would be great.

Many thanks, Laura

~~SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED~~

From: Lochman, Laura A
Sent: Tuesday, September 27, 2022 12:07 PM
To: Hochstein, Amos J (b)(6)@state.gov>
Cc: (b)(6)@state.gov>
Subject: Need your view on Chevron: U.S. vs. international markets

Amos –

(b)(5)

(b)(5)

Please see below and let me know your thoughts.

Thanks, Laura

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