U.S. Department of Justice
Office of Information Policy
Sixth Floor
441 G Street, NW
Washington, DC 20530-0001

Telephone: (202) 514-3642

October 12, 2023

Morgan Yardis

,

Re: Appeal No. A-2023-01376
Request No. 1585931

[redacted]

VIA: Online Portal

Dear Morgan Yardis:

You appealed from the action of the Federal Bureau of Investigation on your Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request for access to records of communications between Yoel Roth and employees within the FBI's Foreign Influence Task Force. I note that your appeal concerns the FBI's refusal to confirm or deny the existence of responsive records pertaining to the named third party and the FBI's determination that the remainder of your request is not reasonably described.

After carefully considering your appeal, I am affirming the FBI's action on your request. The FOIA provides for disclosure of many agency records. At the same time, Congress included in the FOIA nine exemptions from disclosure that provide protection for important interests such as personal privacy, privileged communications, and certain law enforcement activities. The FBI properly refused to confirm or deny the existence of records responsive to the portion of your request targeting a named third party. Confirming or denying the existence of such records, including law enforcement records, concerning a third-party individual would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy, and could reasonably be expected to constitute an unwarranted invasion of personal privacy. See 5 U.S.C. § 552(b)(6), (7)(C). Additionally, it is reasonably foreseeable that confirming or denying the existence of such records would harm the interests protected by these exemptions. See, e.g., People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals v. NIH, 745 F.3d 535, 544 (D.C. Cir. 2014) (upholding agencys refusal to confirm or deny existence of records that would confirm whether investigation of third party had occurred); see also Antonelli v. FBI, 721 F.2d 615, 618 (7th Cir. 1983) (finding that confirming whether third party has been the subject of investigation would likely constitute an invasion of that persons privacy that implicates the protections of

Exemptions 6 and 7).

Please be advised that this Office's decision was made only after a full review of this matter. Your appeal was assigned to an attorney with this Office who thoroughly reviewed and analyzed your appeal, your underlying request, and the action of the FBI in response to your request.

If you are dissatisfied with my action on your appeal, the FOIA permits you to file a lawsuit in federal district court in accordance with 5 U.S.C. § 552(a)(4)(B).

For your information, the Office of Government Information Services (OGIS) offers mediation services to resolve disputes between FOIA requesters and Federal agencies as a non-exclusive alternative to litigation. Using OGIS services does not affect your right to pursue litigation. The contact information for OGIS is as follows: Office of Government Information Services, National Archives and Records Administration, Room 2510, 8601 Adelphi Road, College Park, Maryland 20740-6001; email at ogis@nara.gov; telephone at [redacted] toll free at 1-877-684-6448; or facsimile at 202-741-5769. If you have any questions regarding the action this Office has taken on your appeal, you may contact this Office and speak with the undersigned agency official by calling [redacted].

Sincerely,

X [redacted]

Daniel Castellano,
Associate Chief, for Matthew Hurd, Chief,
Administrative Appeals Staff