



April 14, 2015

VIA FAX (202-254-5396)

Katrina Hagan
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Re: Documents Related to “Violent Intent Modeling and Simulation” AKA
“Violent Intent Modeling System” or “Threat Analysis System Requirements”

Dear Ms. Hagan:

This letter constitutes a request under the Freedom of Information Act (“FOIA”), 5 U.S.C. § 552, and is submitted on behalf of the Electronic Privacy Information Center (“EPIC”).

EPIC seeks documents related to the “Violent Intent Modeling and Simulation” (“VIMS”) program, also known as “Violent Intent Modeling System” or “Threat Analysis System Requirements.”

Background

The DHS’s Science and Technology Directorate (“S&T”) is the sponsor of the ongoing “Violent Intent Modeling and Simulations” project, also known as “Threat Analysis System Requirements.”¹ In 2008, DHS S&T published a Privacy Impact Assessment (“PIA”) for the “Violent Intent Modeling and System”² which appears to be the same program that is later referred to as “Violent Intent Modeling and Simulation” in publicly available contracting data.³ According to S&T’s PIA for the Violent Intent Modeling and System (“VIMS”) and publicly available contracting data, VIMS is a program of S&T’s Human Factors Division (HFD).⁴ S&T’s PIA for VIMS states that it is “a software tool that is used to analyze group behaviors and motivations” in an effort to

¹<https://www.usaspending.gov/Transparency/Pages/AwardSummary.aspx?AwardID=7827611>

² Department of Homeland Security, *Privacy Impact Assessment for Violent Intent Monitoring System*, April 25, 2008, https://www.dhs.gov/xlibrary/assets/privacy/privacy_pia_gvim.pdf

³ <https://www.usaspending.gov/Transparency/Pages/AwardSummary.aspx?AwardID=25073851>

⁴ Department of Homeland Security, *Privacy Impact Assessment for Violent Intent Monitoring System*, April 25, 2008, https://www.dhs.gov/xlibrary/assets/privacy/privacy_pia_gvim.pdf; <https://www.usaspending.gov/Transparency/Pages/AwardSummary.aspx?AwardID=25073851>

predict violent behavior.⁵ S&T's PIA states that the agency will collect Personally Identifiable Information ("PII") as part of the VIMS program.⁶ Within the VIMS system, individuals will be linked by name to groups or associations that the VIMS program will track and label as "violent groups."⁷ The agency acknowledges in the PIA that this poses potential privacy problems, stating "The potential risk to the individual would be inappropriately associating an individual with a violent group."⁸

USASpending.gov shows that DHS first granted contract number HSHQDC08C00100 on June 30, 2008 in the amount of \$6,855,147.⁹ Since then the contract has been modified or renewed sixteen times – on February 23, 2009; April 21, 2009; May 20, 2009; June 6, 2009; August 5, 2009; September 26, 2009; March 25, 2010; April 8, 2010; April 14, 2010; July 22, 2010; September 21, 2010; March 17, 2011; June 17, 2011; September 29, 2011; and July 27, 2012.¹⁰ The original award description of contract number HSHQDC08C00100 between DHS S&T and the Research Triangle Institute states

"This request is in response to broad agency announcement (BAA) number BAA08-01 submission and supports congressional mandates for the DHS Directorate of Science and Technology (S&T) and RTI to establish IHSS [Institute for Homeland Security Solutions]. Formation of (IHSS) within the community preparedness and resilience program area supports the S&T effort by establishing a resource for foundational and applied research in the sociological, physiological and psychological dimensions of homeland security; in modeling and simulation relevant to hazard and risk analysis, decision analysis and training; and in human systems development to support federal, state and local execution of homeland security missions. IHSS is a congressionally-mandated center to be established under the Research Triangle Institute of North Carolina (RTI) and is dedicated to conducting applied technological and social science research with universities, other federal agencies, state and local security agencies and the private sector."¹¹

The latest modification, made on July 27, 2012 states "The Purpose Of This Modification Is To Change The Clin 0004 Project Name From Violent Intent Modeling And Simulation (Vims) To Threat Analysis System Requirements (Tasr)."¹²

USASpending.gov also lists several related contracts between the Department of Homeland Security and the Research Triangle Institute, including contract number HSHQDC11F00087 (first granted September 14, 2011 with seven modifications/extensions),¹³ HSHQDC11C00047 (first granted June 1, 2011 with eleven

⁵ <https://www.usaspending.gov/Transparency/Pages/AwardSummary.aspx?AwardID=25073851>

⁶ *Id.*

⁷ *Id.*

⁸ *Id.* at 6.

⁹ <https://www.usaspending.gov/Transparency/Pages/AwardSummary.aspx?AwardID=7827611>

¹⁰ <https://www.usaspending.gov/Transparency/Pages/AwardSummary.aspx?AwardID=7827611>

¹¹ <https://www.usaspending.gov/Transparency/Pages/AwardSummary.aspx?AwardID=7827611>

¹² <https://www.usaspending.gov/Transparency/Pages/AwardSummary.aspx?AwardID=7827611>

¹³ <https://www.usaspending.gov/Transparency/Pages/AwardSummary.aspx?AwardID=37491998>

modifications)¹⁴ and HSHQDC14A00015 (first issued July 3, 2014 with one modification/extension).¹⁵

Documents Requested

On April 2, 2015, EPIC received a response to an earlier FOIA request, DHS FOIA number **2015-HQFO-00062** on this topic. The response contained mentions of several documents that EPIC is now requesting.

Page 94 of the .pdf FOIA response, available at <http://epic.org/foia/2015-HQFO.pdf>, is a statement of work for an internet workshop to be developed by the contractor. The deliverables include a “workshop agenda, list of invitees, and project management plan,” as well as “literature reviews,” “workshop notes,” and a “final report.” The statement of work states that all deliverables should be provided to the “DHS S&T Technical Representative.” The listed DHS contact on this statement of work is Allison Smith at DHS S&T. EPIC now requests these documents.

Page 105 of the .pdf file is a statement of work for a “Workshop on Innovating Survey Methodologies and Workshop on Public Perceptions of Emerging National Security Technologies and Processes.” This was planned and executed by Research Triangle Institute. Deliverables included a “workshop agenda, list of invitees, and project management plan,” “literature reviews,” “workshop notes,” and a “final report” for each of two workshops. (Page 108 and 112 of the .pdf). The statement of work states that all deliverables should be provided to the “DHS S&T Technical Representative.” The listed DHS contact on this statement of work are Allison Smith and Ji Sun Lee at DHS S&T. EPIC now requests these documents.

Page 128 of the .pdf file is a statement of work for the Institute for Homeland Security Solutions. The deliverables include development of a “prioritized research plan” and “research strategy and operational-level implementation plan,” as well as “report and briefing.” (Page 130 of the .pdf). For the Violent Intent Modeling project, a “research plan acceptable to the COTR” is required. (Page 131 of the .pdf). The “Synthesis and Analysis of Homeland Security Research” project must submit “Routine reports and point papers of no more than five pages in length.” (Page 132 of .pdf). Violent Intent Modeling has additional deliverables, including “evaluation and assessment of data sources for VIMS,” “Criteria based modeling research brief,” and “Predictive modeling research brief,” “Group violence SME panel report,” and “Year end report.” (Page 134-135 of .pdf). EPIC now requests these plans, reports and briefs.

According to the statement of work for the Institute for Homeland Security Solutions, the VIMS 1.0 and 1.1 team had already conducted a “preliminary assessment of the known data sets” and developed a “summarized list of the data sets that were likely to provide the most value to VIMS” as well as “privacy considerations pertaining to the use of data characterizing U.S. groups and individuals.” (Page 135 of .pdf). EPIC now requests these documents.

¹⁴ <https://www.usaspending.gov/Transparency/Pages/AwardSummary.aspx?AwardID=40069821>

¹⁵ <https://www.usaspending.gov/Transparency/Pages/AwardSummary.aspx?AwardID=25073851>

The statement of work for the Institute for Homeland Security Solutions also details tasks to be conducted by the Institute regarding data sources and acquisition. The subtasks include “conduct an assessment of available data sources,” “identify promising new variables,” “provide database improvement recommendations,” and “identify the best data sets to be used and new data sets to be create in subsequent phases of VIMS development.” (Page 135 – 136 of the .pdf). EPIC now requests all documents produced as a result of these requirements.

The statement of work for the Institute for Homeland Security Solutions also requires a literature review. (Page 137 of the .pdf). EPIC now requests all documents related to the literature review.

The statement of work for the Institute for Homeland Security Solutions also requires development of a VIMS prototype. One of the subtasks for this project is to “generate reports.” (Page 143 of .pdf). EPIC now requests all reports generated as a result of this requirement.

The statement of work designates that all deliverables for this project should be provided “directly to the DHS S&T Technical Representative.” (Page 144 of .pdf). The technical representative for the Institute for Homeland Security Solutions is listed as Ji Sun Lee in DHS S&T.

Request for “News Media” Fee Status and Fee Waiver

EPIC is a “representative of the news media” for fee purposes.¹⁶ Based on our status as a “news media” requester, we are entitled to receive the requested record with only duplication fees assessed.

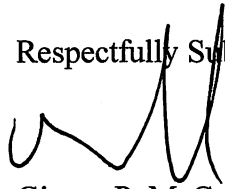
Further, because disclosure of this information will “contribute significantly to public understanding of the operations or activities of the government,” any duplication fees should be waived. The disclosure of these documents will allow the public to understand the activities of Department of Homeland Security and will allow the public to evaluate how public dollars are being spent. The DHS has not begun to address the enormous privacy, transparency, and accountability concerns of its “pre-crime” detection techniques, such as when the algorithm returns a false positive, or when an innocent individual is wrongly linked with a violent group or detained because he looks like a criminal to the computer. It is vitally important for the agency to make available to the public more information about the VIMS program.

Conclusion

Thank you for your consideration of this request. As provided in 5 U.S.C. §552, I will anticipate your determination on our request within twenty business days. For questions regarding this request I can be contacted at 202-483-1140 ext. 111 or FOIA@epic.org.

¹⁶ *EPIC v. Department of Defense*, 241 F. Supp. 2d 5 (D.D.C. 2003).

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ginger P. McCall'. The signature is stylized with a large, prominent 'M' and a long, sweeping underline.

Ginger P. McCall
Director, EPIC Open Government Project

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TOTAL NO. OF PAGES INCLUDING COVER:

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COMMENTS: