
Jeremy Bigwood
Investigative Reporter and Photojournalist

3200 16th St. NW #806
Washington, DC 20010
(202) 319-9150, 361-5000 bigwood@rcn.com

FOIA & EXPEDITED PROCESSING REQUEST
USAID programs in Bolivia during 2008

Joanne Paskar
Acting FOIA Coordinator
Room 2.07C, RRB
Washington, D.C. 20523-1608

Sunday, September 14, 2008

Dear Ms. Paskar:

In my capacity as an investigative journalist, I am writing your office to request all records, regardless of format, medium, or physical characteristics, and including electronic records and information, audiotapes, videotapes and photographs, pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act ("FOIA"), 5 U.S.C. §§ 552 *et seq.* regarding **any and all records that USAID may possess regarding USAID programs in Bolivia during 2008.**

Expedited processing:

I am also asking that this request be subjected to ***expedited processing***, because there is a "compelling (public) need" for these documents as they concern a breaking news story of general public interest that is urgently needed by a journalist (me) who is primarily engaged in disseminating information in order to inform the public concerning actual or alleged federal government activity.

The record requested "concerns a matter of current exigency to the American public" because there is a breaking news story regarding Bolivian President Evo Morales' claims that USAID is funding the Bolivian opposition, especially those in the Bolivian departments of Pando, Beni, Santa Cruz and Tarija. This opposition -- allegedly with USAID backing -- has pushed Bolivia to the verge of civil war. As a result of all of these alleged USAID activities, President Morales has declared the U.S. Ambassador in Bolivia to be "persona non-grata" and sent him packing. In a tit for tat, the U.S. Department of State followed suite and sent the Bolivian Ambassador in Washington, DC back home. And it did not stop there. Venezuela expelled the U.S. ambassador there and recalled its ambassador from the U.S. Honduras --repeat-- Honduras then refused to accept a new U.S. Ambassador's accreditation, leaving the U.S. government unrepresented in three countries. And all of this about alleged funding of the Bolivian opposition.

I suggest that USAID open its records immediately so that the public can judge what really happened. And that is why I am filing this FOIA request.

The "consequences of delaying a response would compromise a significant recognized interest"- to wit, the American public's right to know if USAID funding is threatening international relations.

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I would like this request to be processed under the “representative of the news media” category, which entitles me to a waiver of costs accumulated during the actual search and review process. I understand that in order to comply with the requisites of the “freelance” category of the “representative of the news media” requirements of the FOIA, which entitle me to gratuitous searches of your archives, I must offer you proof of said status. However, in accordance with the principles and spirit of the Paperwork Reduction Act (PRA) of 1995, whose stated goals are “to have Federal agencies become more responsible and publicly accountable for reducing the burden of Federal paperwork on the public...,” in lieu of sending you photocopies to attest to my due inclusion into this status, I include the following Internet URL (http://jeremybigwood.net/JBsPUBS/Articles4FOIA.htm#*) where digital facsimiles of articles I have published can be found. These articles alone are sufficient to fulfill the stated requirement of a long track record of publication and the likelihood of further publication and clearly bestow upon me “representative of the news media” status. You will note that I also publish whole FOIA responses from various US government entities at: (<http://jeremybigwood.net/FOIAs/FOIA.htm>).

I believe that disclosure of the requested information to me is in the public interest because it is likely to contribute significantly to public understanding of the operations or activities of the government and is not primarily in my commercial interest. For this reason I request a waiver of all fees. However, in the event that fee waiver is not granted, I agree to pay all photocopying costs in excess of 100 pages up to \$200.00. My preference, however, is to receive digital versions of these documents, if they indeed exist.

Please respond to this request in writing within twenty (20) days as required under 5 U.S.C. §552(a)(6)(A)(I). If all of the requested documents are not available within that time period, I ask that you provide them as they are processed.

If you have any questions about this request or foresee problems in fully releasing the requested records within the twenty day period, feel free to call me within that time period. I can be reached at (202) 319-9150 or my cell at (202) 361-5000. Please send the hard copies of the requested documents to the above address or digitized versions to me at my e-mail which is: bigwood@rcn.com.

Under penalty of perjury, I hereby affirm that the foregoing is true and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief as stipulated by §552(a)(6)(E)(vi).

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully yours,

Jeremy Bigwood