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U.S. Department of Justice

National Security Division

U.S. FOREIGN  
INTELLIGENCE  
SURVEILLANCE COURT

2021 AUG 30 PM 4:40

CLERK OF COURT

Washington, D.C. 20530

August 30, 2021

The Honorable Rudolph Contreras  
United States Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court  
333 Constitution Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20001

Re: *In Re Accuracy Concerns Regarding FBI Matters Submitted to the FISC*,  
Docket No. Misc. 19-02

Dear Judge Contreras:

(U) The Government respectfully submits this update regarding technological improvements the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) is undertaking to aid in consistency and accountability within the FISA application process.

(U) On March 5, 2020, the Court entered an Order directing the Government to provide by March 27, 2020, "a description of any planned or implemented technological improvements to the process of preparing FISA applications or verifying the information contained in FISA applications and updates every thirty days thereafter until they have been fully implemented." Corrected Opinion and Order of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court (the Court) entered on March 5, 2020 (March 5, 2020 Order) at 17. Following the Court's grant of a one-week extension, the Government filed a response to the March 5, 2020 Order on April 3, 2020.<sup>1</sup> The Government subsequently provided the Court with updates regarding technological improvements to the process of preparing, or verifying the information contained in, FISA applications on April 30, 2020,<sup>2</sup> and again on May 29, 2020.<sup>3</sup> On June 4, 2020, the Government submitted a Motion to Modify Reporting Period requesting that subsequent updates be provided to the Court every ninety days rather than every thirty days. On June 23, 2020, the Court issued an Order granting the requested modification, and the Government subsequently filed updates on August 31, 2020; November 30, 2020; March 1, 2021; and June 1, 2021.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> (U) Response to the Court's Corrected Opinion and Order Dated March 5, 2020 and Update to the Government's January 10, 2020 Response, at 19-20.

<sup>2</sup> (U) Supplemental Response to the Court's Order Dated December 17, 2019; the Court's Scheduling Order Dated January 17, 2020; and the Court's Corrected Opinion and Order Dated March 5, 2020, Attachment A at 10-12.

<sup>3</sup> (U) Letter from Kevin O'Connor, Chief, Oversight Section to the Honorable James E. Boasberg (May 29, 2020).

<sup>4</sup> (U) Letter from Kevin O'Connor, Chief, Oversight Section to the Honorable James E. Boasberg (August 31, 2020); Letter from Kevin O'Connor, Chief, Oversight Section to the Honorable James E. Boasberg (November 30, 2020); Letter from Kevin O'Connor, Chief, Oversight Section to the Honorable James E. Boasberg (March 1, 2021); Letter from Kevin O'Connor, Chief, Oversight Section to the Honorable Rudolph Contreras (June 1, 2021).

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(U) As explained previously, the FBI currently manages its FISA-related workflow processes in a platform called the FISA Management System (FISAMS) but is transitioning to a system colloquially known as “the Bridge.” The Bridge is designed to increase collaboration within FBI, as well as between FBI and the Office of Intelligence. FISA workflow processes on the Secret system are not expected to replace those in FISAMS until at least the second quarter of fiscal year 2022. Those on the Top Secret system will follow on later.

(U) Several design features of the Bridge also are expected to enhance accuracy in the FISA process. As discussed in previous letters, these include, for example, creating a technical interface between the Bridge and the FBI’s case management system, known as Sentinel. This interface will afford FBI personnel using the Bridge the ability to ensure a high level of data integrity, by automatically cross-referencing data input in the Bridge with existing case data in Sentinel. The interface between the Bridge and Sentinel also will provide FBI users the ability to serialize to Sentinel documents created in, or required for, the Bridge, including documents necessary for the creation of an accuracy subfile. The FBI believes that automating these processes and ensuring that relevant documents are routinely serialized and/or easily uploaded into FBI systems will improve the FISA process by reducing inadvertent errors; providing ready access to documents for review and analysis; and promoting collaboration between all parties involved in the FISA process.

(U) The FBI’s efforts to develop and implement the Bridge are continuous and ongoing. During this reporting period, the Bridge team developed and deployed for testing the FBI’s FISA verification forms and associated workflow processes. The team also developed and deployed for testing the pen register and trap and trace request form the FBI revised in or about July 2021. At a more strategic level, the Bridge team built-out the system’s pre-production environment on the Secret network and deployed the system’s base architecture. As an environment that seeks to resemble as closely as possible the actual, eventual production environment, the FBI reports that development of the pre-production environment is a significant milestone in the FBI’s efforts to operationalize the Bridge.

(U) As discussed in previous letters, the FBI also is working on technological improvements related to its accuracy procedures, also known as the Woods Procedures, which will ultimately be integrated with the Bridge. These efforts are designed to use Sentinel to streamline certain processes FBI personnel use to create accuracy subfiles and ensure the contents thereof are available in a manner that is consistent with the FBI’s FISA minimization procedures. Previously, the FBI completed development of a feature in Sentinel called the Electronic Woods Capability (EWC) that interfaces with the Bridge and allows FBI personnel to export an accuracy subfile that can be downloaded and transmitted to other FBI personnel involved in the FISA process. As described in the June 1, 2021, letter, the Sentinel team previously deployed the EWC to production and operationally tested it in select FBI field offices. Following successful testing, FBI reports that the EWC was deployed enterprise wide in or about July 2021, to align with the transition the FBI contemporaneously made to require, when permissible, electronic FISA accuracy subfiles. The team also created video tutorials highlighting the features of the tool and, with the FBI’s National Security and Cyber Law Branch, provided virtual training sessions to FBI personnel to explain the purpose and

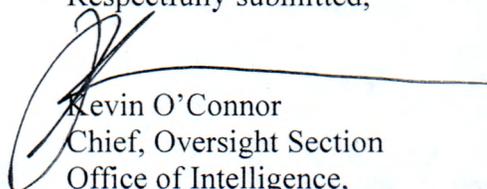
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capabilities of the tool. Overall, the FBI believes the EWC will enhance the accuracy and completeness of FISA applications by, for example, making documents readily available to those FBI personnel working on applications and/or attesting to their accuracy.

(U) This letter constitutes the Government's seventh update in the above-captioned docket regarding planned or implemented technological improvements. The FBI has reviewed this response and confirmed its accuracy.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kevin O'Connor", is written over a horizontal line. The signature is stylized and loops back to the left.

Kevin O'Connor  
Chief, Oversight Section  
Office of Intelligence,  
National Security Division  
U.S. Department of Justice

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