



Exemption 7(D)

Exemption 7(D) provides protection for "records or information compiled for law enforcement purposes [which] could reasonably be expected to disclose the identity of a confidential source, including a state, local, or foreign agency or authority or any private institution which furnished information on a confidential basis, and, in the case of a record or information compiled by a criminal law enforcement authority in the course of a criminal investigation or by an agency conducting a lawful national security intelligence investigation, information furnished by a confidential source."¹

Introduction

It has long been recognized that Exemption 7(D) affords the most comprehensive protection of all of the FOIA's law enforcement exemptions.² Indeed, as the Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit has remarked Exemption 7(D) was enacted "to assist federal law enforcement agencies" in their efforts "to obtain, and to maintain, confidential sources, as well as to guard the flow of information to these agencies."³ Exemption 7(D) ensures that "confidential sources are not lost through retaliation

¹ [5 U.S.C. § 552\(b\)\(7\)\(D\)\(2006 & Supp. IV 2010\)](#); see also [Presidential Memorandum for Heads of Executive Departments and Agencies Concerning the Freedom of Information Act](#), 74 Fed. Reg. 4683 (Jan. 21, 2009) (emphasizing that Freedom of Information Act reflects "a profound national commitment to ensuring an open Government" and directing agencies to "adopt a presumption in favor of disclosure"); accord [Attorney General Holder's Memorandum for Heads of Executive Departments and Agencies Concerning the Freedom of Information Act](#), 74 Fed. Reg. 51879 (Oct. 8, 2009); *FOIA Post*, "[OIP Guidance: President Obama's FOIA Memorandum and Attorney General Holder's FOIA Guidelines - Creating a New Era of Open Government](#)" (posted 4/17/09).

² [Billington v. DOJ](#), 301 F. Supp. 2d 15, 22 (D.D.C. 2004) (stating that "Exemption 7(D) has long been recognized as affording the most comprehensive protection of all FOIA's law enforcement exemptions" (citing [Voinche v. FBI](#), 940 F. Supp. 323, 331 (D.D.C. 1996)); accord [Irons v. FBI](#), 880 F.2d 1446, 1451 (1st Cir. 1989).

³ [Parker v. DOJ](#), 934 F.2d 375, 380 (D.C. Cir. 1991).

against the sources for past disclosure or because of the sources' fear of future disclosure."⁴

Accordingly, Exemption 7(D) is comprised of two distinct clauses, which together provide comprehensive protection to confidential sources to achieve these goals. The first clause protects the identity of confidential sources.⁵ The second clause, in contrast, broadly protects all information obtained from those sources in criminal investigations and national security intelligence investigations.⁶ In addition, because

⁴ See, e.g., Ortiz v. HHS, 70 F.3d 729, 732 (2d Cir. 1995) (stating that "Exemption 7(D) is meant to . . . protect confidential sources from retaliation that may result from the disclosure of their participation in law enforcement activities"); McDonnell v. United States, 4 F.3d 1227, 1258 (3d Cir. 1993) (finding that "goal of Exemption 7(D) [is] to protect the ability of law enforcement agencies to obtain the cooperation of persons having relevant information and who expect a degree of confidentiality in return for their cooperation"); Providence Journal Co. v. U.S. Dep't of the Army, 981 F.2d 552, 563 (1st Cir. 1992) (explaining that Exemption 7(D) is intended to avert "drying-up" of sources) (citing Irons, 880 F.2d at 1450-51); Nadler v. DOJ, 955 F.2d 1479, 1486 (11th Cir. 1992) (observing that "fear of exposure would chill the public's willingness to cooperate with the FBI . . . [and] would deter future cooperation" (citing Cleary v. FBI, 811 F.2d 421, 423 (8th Cir. 1987); Shaw v. FBI, 749 F.2d 58, 61 (D.C. Cir. 1984) (holding that purpose of Exemption 7(D) is "to prevent the FOIA from causing the 'drying up' of sources of information in criminal investigations"); Schoenman v. FBI, 763 F. Supp. 2d 173, 200 (D.D.C. 2011) (concluding that FBI properly invoked Exemption 7(D) because as it stated in its declaration "public disclosure of [confidential] source information would have a chilling effect on the cooperation of other sources and thereby hinder its ability to gather confidential information"); Sellers v. DOJ, 684 F. Supp. 2d 149, 161 (D.D.C. 2010) (noting that exemption "not only protects confidential sources, but also protects the ability of law enforcement agencies to obtain relevant information from such sources"); Miller v. DOJ, 562 F. Supp. 2d 82, 122 (D.D.C. 2008) (recognizing that "[e]xperience has shown the FBI that its sources must be free to provide information 'without fear of reprisal' and 'without the understandable tendency to hedge or withhold information out of fear that their names or their cooperation with the FBI will later be made public'" (quoting agency declaration)); Wilson v. DEA, 414 F. Supp. 2d 5, 15 (D.D.C. 2006) (concluding that release of names of DEA sources could jeopardize DEA criminal investigative operations and deter cooperation of future potential DEA sources); Garcia v. DOJ, 181 F. Supp. 2d 356, 375 (S.D.N.Y. 2002) (holding that "Exemption 7(D) [en]sures that confidential sources are protected from retaliation in order to prevent the loss of valuable sources of information").

⁵ 5 U.S.C. § 552(b)(7)(D) (protecting information which "could reasonably be expected to disclose the identity of a confidential source, including a state, local, or foreign agency or authority or any private institution which furnished information on a confidential basis").

⁶ Id. (protecting "information furnished by a confidential source" in national security and criminal law enforcement investigations); see also Hulstein v. DEA, 671 F.3d 690, 694 (8th Cir. 2012) (finding that Exemption 7(D) "can be divided into two separate sections – the first exempting information that could reveal the identity of a confidential source, and the second exempting information provided by a confidential source to law enforcement in the course of a criminal investigation"); Georgacarakos v. FBI, 908 F. Supp. 2d 176, 185 (D.D.C.

the applicability of this exemption hinges on the circumstances under which the information is provided, and not on the harm resulting from disclosure (in contrast to Exemptions 6 and 7(C)), no balancing test is applied under the case law of Exemption 7(D).⁷

The term "source" includes a wide variety of individuals and institutions. The legislative history of the 1974 amendments to the FOIA indicates that the term "confidential source" was specifically chosen because it encompasses a broader group than would have been included had the word "informer" been used.⁸ This was reinforced in the Freedom of Information Reform Act of 1986,⁹ which added to the statute specific categories of individuals and institutions to be included in the term "source."¹⁰ Thus, state and local law enforcement agencies¹¹ and employees;¹² foreign

2012) (rejecting plaintiff's assertion that Exemption 7(D) could only protect identity of confidential sources and confirming that exemption also protects "information provided by that source").

⁷ See, e.g., Roth v. DOJ, 642 F.3d 1161, 1184 (D.C. Cir. 2011) (declaring that "[u]nlike Exemptions 6 and 7(C), Exemption 7(D) requires no balancing of public and private interests") (citing Parker, 934 F.2d at 375); Jones v. FBI, 41 F.3d 238, 247 (6th Cir. 1994) (clarifying that Exemption 7(D) "does not involve a balancing of public and private interests; if the source was confidential, the exemption may be claimed regardless of the public interest in disclosure"); McDonnell, 4 F.3d at 1257 (stating that Exemption "7(D) does not entail a balancing of public and private interests"); Nadler, 955 F.2d at 1487 n.8 (holding that "[o]nce a source has been found to be confidential, Exemption 7(D) does not require the Government to justify its decision to withhold information against the competing claim that the public interest weighs in favor of disclosure"); Irons v. FBI, 811 F.2d 681, 685 (1st Cir. 1987) (stating that "judiciary is not permitted to undertake a balancing of conflicting interests, but is required to uphold a claimed 7(D) exemption so long as the statutory criteria are met"); Brant Constr. Co. v. EPA, 778 F.2d 1258, 1262-63 (7th Cir. 1985) (observing that "[n]o judicial 'balancing' of the competing interests is permitted" under Exemption 7(D)); Bretti v. DOJ, 639 F. Supp. 2d 257, 265 (N.D.N.Y. 2009) (noting that plaintiff had not articulated public benefit, but stating that "information furnished by a confidential source requires no balancing test and no consideration of the public interest in disclosure" in order to qualify for protection).

⁸ See S. Conf. Rep. No. 93-1200, at 13.

⁹ Freedom of Information Reform Act of 1986, Pub. L. No. 99-570, § 1802, 100 Stat. 3207, 3207-48.

¹⁰ Id.

¹¹ See, e.g., Halpern v. FBI, 181 F.3d 279, 299 (2d Cir. 1999); Williams v. FBI, 69 F.3d 1155, 1160 (D.C. Cir. 1995) (local law enforcement agency); Jones, 41 F.3d at 248 (law enforcement agencies); Hopkinson v. Shillinger, 866 F.2d 1185, 1222 & n.27 (10th Cir. 1989) (state law enforcement agencies); Parton v. DOJ, 727 F.2d 774, 775-77 (8th Cir. 1984) (state prison officials interviewed in connection with civil rights investigation); Sellers, 684 F.

law enforcement agencies;¹³ and foreign commercial institutions¹⁴ have been found to qualify as sources. In addition, the Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit has held that a "federal government employee, like a local law enforcement agency, can be a confidential source" under Exemption 7(D).¹⁵

By its own terms, however, this statutory enumeration is not exhaustive. Indeed, courts have interpreted the term "source" to include a broad range of individuals and institutions that are not necessarily specified on the face of the statute -- such as crime victims;¹⁶ citizens providing unsolicited allegations of misconduct;¹⁷ citizens responding to inquiries from law enforcement agencies;¹⁸ private employees responding to OSHA investigators about the circumstances of an industrial accident;¹⁹ and employees

Supp. 2d at 163 (state law enforcement agency); Richardson v. DOJ, 730 F. Supp. 2d 225, 238 (D.D.C. 2010) (Washington D.C. Metropolitan Police Department).

¹² See Garcia, 181 F. Supp. 2d at 377 (protecting identity of "state governmental employee" who provided "professional opinions as well as observations" regarding "plaintiff and his criminal activities").

¹³ See, e.g., Billington v. DOJ, 233 F.3d 581, 585 n.5 (D.C. Cir. 2000) (foreign agencies); Halpern, 181 F.3d at 299; Shaw, 749 F.2d at 62 (foreign law enforcement agencies); Founding Church of Scientology v. Regan, 670 F.2d 1158, 1161-62 (D.C. Cir. 1981) (foreign INTERPOL national bureaus); Blackwell v. FBI, 680 F. Supp. 2d 79, 95 (D.D.C. 2010) (foreign government agency); Cozen O'Connor v. U.S. Dep't of Treasury, 570 F. Supp. 2d 749, 785 (E.D. PA. 2008) (foreign law enforcement entities); Badalamenti v. Dep't of State, 899 F. Supp. 542, 549 (D. Kan. 1995) (foreign law enforcement officials).

¹⁴ Cozen O'Connor, 570 F. Supp. 2d at 785.

¹⁵ Kuzma v. IRS, 775 F.2d 66, 69 (2d Cir. 1985). *But cf.* Retail Credit Co. v. FTC, No. 75-0895, 1976 WL 1206, at *4 n.3 (D.D.C. Feb. 2, 1976) (noting that "FTC cited the confidential source exemption as a further justification for withholding" document consisting of summary of meeting between Federal Housing Administration (FHA) and FTC, and commenting that "[c]ertainly the FHA cannot be a confidential source").

¹⁶ See, e.g., Coleman v. FBI, No. 89-2773, slip op. at 21 (D.D.C. Dec. 10, 1991), summary affirmance granted, No. 92-5040, 1992 WL 373976 (D.C. Cir. Dec. 4, 1992); Gula v. Meese, 699 F. Supp. 956, 960 (D.D.C. 1988).

¹⁷ See, e.g., Brant Constr., 778 F.2d at 1263; Pope v. United States, 599 F.2d 1383, 1386-87 (5th Cir. 1979); Almy v. DOJ, No. 90-0362, 1995 WL 476255, at *12-13 (N.D. Ind. Apr. 13, 1995), aff'd, 114 F.3d 1191 (7th Cir. 1997) (unpublished table decision).

¹⁸ See, e.g., Providence Journal, 981 F.2d at 565; Miller v. Bell, 661 F.2d 623, 627-28 (7th Cir. 1981); Kowalczyk v. O'Brien, No. 94-1333, slip op. at 2 (D.D.C. Jan. 30, 1996); Almy, 1995 WL 476255, at *21, *23.

¹⁹ See, e.g., L&C Marine Transp., Ltd. v. United States, 740 F.2d 919, 924-25 (11th Cir. 1984). *But cf.* Cooper Cameron Corp. v. U.S. Dep't of Labor, 280 F.3d 539, 552 (5th Cir.

providing information about their employers and co-workers.²⁰ Courts have likewise interpreted it to include prisoners;²¹ mental healthcare facilities;²² medical personnel;²³ commercial or financial institutions²⁴ and employees;²⁵ and social organizations' officials and employees.²⁶

The adjective "confidential" signifies that the "source furnished information with the understanding that the . . . [agency] would not divulge the communication except to the extent the . . . [agency] thought necessary for law enforcement purposes."²⁷ Most significantly, as the Supreme Court has declared, "the question is not whether the requested document is of the type that the agency usually treats as confidential, but whether the particular source spoke with an understanding that the communication would remain confidential."²⁸

2002) (stating that "[f]or us to hold . . . that OSHA's investigative records, as a category, are implicitly confidential would be unwarranted and would plow new ground").

²⁰ See, e.g., United Techs. Corp. v. NLRB, 777 F.2d 90, 94 (2d Cir. 1985) (recognizing fear of employer retaliation as giving rise to "justified expectation of confidentiality"); Canning v. DOJ, 567 F. Supp. 2d 104, 112 (D.D.C. 2008) (same); Gov't Accountability Project v. NRC, No. 86-1976, No. 86-3201, 1993 WL 13033518, at *4 (D.D.C. July 2, 1993) (holding that individuals who provided information to investigators about "potentially criminal matters involving co-workers" face risk of reprisal and are entitled to legitimate expectation of confidentiality).

²¹ See, e.g., Williams v. FBI, No. 99-0899, slip op. at 1-2 (D.D.C. July 31, 2000); Johnson v. BOP, No. 90-H-645, 1990 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 18358, at *9 (N.D. Ala. Nov. 1, 1990).

²² See, e.g., Sanders v. DOJ, No. 91-2263, 1992 WL 97785, at *4 (D. Kan. Apr. 21, 1992).

²³ See, e.g., Putnam v. DOJ, 873 F. Supp. 705, 716 (D.D.C. 1995).

²⁴ See, e.g., Halpern, 181 F.3d at 300; Davin v. DOJ, No. 98-3343, slip op. at 9 (3d Cir. Jan. 27, 1999); Williams, 69 F.3d at 1158-59; Jones, 41 F.3d at 248.

²⁵ See, e.g., Hunsberger v. DOJ, No. 92-2587, slip op. at 6-7 (D.D.C. July 22, 1997) (upholding confidential source protection for employee of financial institution).

²⁶ See Halpern, 181 F.3d at 300.

²⁷ DOJ v. Landano, 508 U.S. 165, 174 (1993); see Env'tl. Prot. Servs. v. EPA, 364 F. Supp. 2d 575, 589 (N.D. W.Va. 2005) (reiterating that source is deemed confidential if source furnished information with understanding that government agency would not divulge information except to extent necessary for law enforcement purposes).

²⁸ Landano, 508 U.S. at 172; see Billington, 233 F.3d at 585 (holding that "confidentiality analysis proceeds from the perspective of an informant, not [that of] the law enforcement agency"); Ortiz, 70 F.3d at 733 (finding that although agency did not solicit letter from letter writer, it was writer's expectation that letter would be kept secret); McDonnell, 4 F.3d at 1258 (holding that "content based test [is] not appropriate in evaluating a document for

The Confidentiality Analysis

The determination that a source furnished information with an expectation of confidentiality requires a careful analysis of the circumstances under which the information was provided. Sources are deemed confidential when they have provided information either under an express promise of confidentiality²⁹ or "under circumstances from which such an assurance could be reasonably inferred."³⁰ As the Supreme Court made clear in DOJ v. Landano,³¹ not all sources furnishing information in the course of criminal investigations are entitled to a "presumption" of

Exemption 7(D) status[;] rather the proper focus of the inquiry is on the source of the information"); Providence Journal, 981 F.2d at 563 (explaining that "confidentiality depends not on [document's] contents but on the terms and circumstances under which" agency acquired information); Ferguson v. FBI, 957 F.2d 1059, 1069 (2d Cir. 1992) (observing that "Exemption 7(D) is concerned not with the content of the information, but only with the circumstances in which the information was obtained"); Weisberg v. DOJ, 745 F.2d 1476, 1492 (D.C. Cir. 1984) (stating that availability of Exemption 7(D) depends not upon factual contents of document sought, but upon whether source was confidential); Gordon v. Thornburgh, 790 F. Supp. 374, 377 (D.R.I. 1992) (defining "confidential" as "provided in confidence or trust; neither the information nor the source need be 'secret'").

²⁹ See S. Conf. Rep. No. 93-1200, at 13 (1974), reprinted in 1974 U.S.C.C.A.N. 6285, 6291 (specifying that term 'confidential source' was substituted for 'informer' "to make clear that the identity of a person other than a paid informer may be protected if the person provided information under an express assurance of confidentiality or in circumstances from which such an assurance could reasonably be inferred"); Rosenfeld v. DOJ, 57 F.3d 803, 814 (9th Cir. 1995) (stating that "express promise of confidentiality is 'virtually unassailable' [and is] easy to prove: 'The FBI need only establish the informant was told his name would be held in confidence'" (quoting Wiener v. FBI, 943 F.2d 972, 986 (9th Cir. 1991))); Jones v. FBI, 41 F.3d 238, 248 (6th Cir. 1994) (stating that "sources who spoke with express assurances of confidentiality are always 'confidential' for FOIA purposes"); McDonnell v. United States, 4 F.3d 1227, 1258 (3d Cir. 1993) (holding that "identity of and information provided by [persons given express assurances of confidentiality] are exempt from disclosure under the express language of Exemption 7(D)").

³⁰ S. Conf. Rep. No. 93-1200, at 13 (1974), reprinted in 1974 U.S.C.C.A.N. 6285, 6291; see Parker v. DOJ, 934 F.2d 375, 378 (D.C. Cir. 1991) (noting that source can be confidential based upon express assurance of confidentiality or because of circumstances from which assurance of confidentiality may be reasonably inferred); Keys v. DOJ, 830 F.2d 337, 345 (D.C. Cir. 1987) (noting that "circuits agree without dissent that courts should find an assurance of confidentiality where it is reasonable to infer from the circumstances that its absence would impair the [FBI's] ability to elicit the information"); Farrugia v. EOUSA, No. 04-029, 2006 WL 335771, at *8 (D.D.C. Feb. 14, 2006) (reasoning that "[b]ased on the nature of crime for which plaintiff was convicted and circumstances surrounding his arrest . . . it [was] reasonable to infer the existence of an implicit grant of confidentiality").

³¹ 508 U.S. 165 (1993).

confidentiality.³² Instead, source confidentiality must be determined on a case-by-case basis,³³ and such a presumption should not be applied automatically to cooperating law enforcement agencies.³⁴

Before Landano, there existed conflict in the case law as to the availability of Exemption 7(D) protection for sources who were advised that they might be called to testify if a trial eventually were to take place.³⁵ However, in Landano, the Supreme Court resolved this conflict by holding that "[a] source should be deemed confidential if the source furnished information with the understanding that the [agency] would not divulge the communication except to the extent...thought necessary for law enforcement purposes."³⁶ (It should be noted that the effect of a source's actual testimony upon continued Exemption 7(D) protection presents a different issue,³⁷ which is addressed below together with other issues regarding waiver of this exemption.)

Express Confidentiality

Courts have uniformly recognized that express promises of confidentiality deserve protection under Exemption 7(D),³⁸ and they usually require affidavits

³² Id. at 175.

³³ Id. at 179-80.

³⁴ Id. at 176; see also FOIA Update, Vol. XIV, No. 3, at 10 ("Justice Changes Policy on Exemption 7(D) Disclosure").

³⁵ Compare Van Bourg, Allen, Weinberg & Roger v. NLRB, 751 F.2d 982, 986 (9th Cir. 1985) (no confidentiality recognized), and Poss v. NLRB, 565 F.2d 654, 658 (10th Cir. 1977) (same), with Irons v. FBI, 811 F.2d 681, 687 (1st Cir. 1987) (confidentiality recognized), Schmerler v. FBI, 900 F.2d 333, 339 (D.C. Cir. 1990) (same), and United Techs. v. NLRB, 777 F.2d 90, 95 (2d Cir. 1995) (same).

³⁶ 508 U.S. at 174 (clarifying that "'confidential,' as used in Exemption 7(D), refers to a degree of confidentiality less than total secrecy"); see also Leveto v. IRS, No. 98-285, 2001 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 5791, at *20 (W.D. Pa. Apr. 10, 2001) (finding confidentiality established for sources who were "assured that their identities would not be disclosed except to the extent necessary to obtain a search warrant, or at a future grand jury proceeding or criminal trial"); Jefferson v. O'Brien, No. 96-1365, slip op. at 2 (D.D.C. July 3, 2000) (rejecting as inconsequential "[p]laintiff's evidence that law enforcement officers recognized the potential need to have confidential informants available to testify at trial when they were interviewed").

³⁷ See Parker, 934 F.2d at 381 (distinguishing cases in which source actually testifies from cases "consider[ing] whether a source, knowing he is likely to testify at the time he furnishes information to [an] agency, is, or remains after testimony, a 'confidential source'").

³⁸ See, e.g., Williams v. FBI, 69 F.3d 1155, 1159 (D.C. Cir. 1995) (finding information provided under express assurances of confidentiality to be exempt from disclosure); Jones v. FBI, 41 F.3d 238, 248 (6th Cir. 1994) (express confidentiality justified based on Court's in

specifically demonstrating the existence of such an express promise.³⁹ Express promises can be supported by notations made on the face of documents indicating that the information in them is to be kept confidential pursuant to an express promise;⁴⁰ by

camera review); KTVY-TV v. United States, 919 F.2d 1465, 1470 (10th Cir. 1990) (upholding express assurances of confidentiality given interviewees who provided information regarding postal employee who shot and killed fellow workers); Taccetta v. FBI, No. 10-6194, 2012 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 90683, at *10 (D.N.J. June 29, 2012) (determining that FBI properly invoked Exemption 7(D) to protect identity of individual interviewed under express grant of confidentiality); Schoenman v. FBI, 763 F. Supp. 2d 173, 200 (D.D.C. 2011) (finding that FBI properly invoked Exemption 7(D) where it "explain[ed] in a reasonably detailed and non-conclusory manner, that the information at issue in each instance was received in connection with an express grant of confidentiality"); Kortlander v. BLM, 816 F. Supp. 2d 1001, 1014 (D. Mont. 2011) (finding names, identifiers, and information provided by confidential sources properly withheld because law enforcement agency provided express assurances of confidentiality).

³⁹ See, e.g., Boyd v. Criminal Div. of DOJ, 475 F. 3d 381, 389 (D.C. Cir. 2007) (finding that ATF's affidavit properly demonstrated that confidential source received express promise); King v. DOJ, 772 F. Supp. 2d 14, 20 (D.D.C. 2010) (declining plaintiff's request for *in camera* review to ascertain whether DEA applied Exemption 7(D) correctly by stating that "[i]n the absence of any cause shown, [it] will accord to the agency declaration the good faith to which it is entitled"); Citizens for Responsibility & Ethics in Wash. v. Nat'l Indian Gaming Comm'n, 467 F. Supp. 2d 40, 54 (D.D.C. 2006) (finding sufficient agency's declaration that indicates "'confidential source . . . has been given an express guarantee that personal and contact information will not be disclosed to the public'" (quoting agency declaration)); DiPietro v. EOUSA, 357 F. Supp. 2d 177, 185 (D.D.C. 2004) (reiterating that when agency relies on express assurance of confidentiality to invoke Exemption 7(D), it must offer "probative evidence that the source did in fact receive an express grant of confidentiality"); Guccione v. Nat'l Indian Gaming Comm'n, No. 98-CV-164, 1999 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 15475, at *8 (S.D. Cal. Aug. 4, 1999) (declaring that express confidentiality can be found to exist when agency's declaration "provides sufficient context and explanation of the [withheld] documents' contents").

⁴⁰ See, e.g., Hodge v. FBI, 703 F.3d 575, 581 (D.C. Cir. 2013) (affirming existence of express confidentiality where FBI explained in sworn declaration that witness interview documents were marked "'protect'" or "'protect identity'" because two witnesses were promised confidentiality); Roth v. DOJ, 642 F.3d 1161, 1186 (D.C. Cir. 2011) (holding that FBI properly withheld documents that "themselves contain[ed] positive indications that the FBI gave the sources express assurances of confidentiality" as evidenced by words "'protect identity'" and notation that source "'desired to remain anonymous'"); Hammouda v. OIP, No. 12-0130, 2013 WL 363191, at *6 (D.D.C. Jan. 31, 2013) (finding interview from source properly protected pursuant to Exemption 7(D) where "'Protect Identity'" appears whenever source's name is referenced); Adionser v. DOJ, 811 F. Supp. 2d 284, 300 (D.D.C. 2011) (finding that "notations on the withheld documents -- specifically the EOUSA's 'CI' notation and the DEA confidential informant code . . . provide[d] probative evidence that the source received an express grant of confidentiality"); Zavala v. DEA, 667 F. Supp. 2d 85, 101 (D.D.C. 2009) (agreeing with DEA that notations on documents obtained from state and local agencies established that there was express assurance of confidentiality where

statements from the agents or sources involved in which they attest to their personal knowledge of an express promise;⁴¹ by specific agency practices or procedures regarding the routine treatment of confidential sources,⁴² including those for "symbol-numbered" sources;⁴³ or by some combination of the above.⁴⁴

documents contained "expressed condition of confidentiality . . . prohibiting further distribution"); Peltier v. FBI, No. 03-905S, 2005 WL 735964, at *19 (W.D.N.Y. Mar. 31, 2005) (finding that evidence of express confidentiality was present when documents contained designations "'PROTECT,'" "'protect identity,'" and "'protect by request'"); Martinez v. EEOC, No. 04-0271, 2005 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 3864, at *15 (W.D. Tex. Mar. 3, 2005) (recognizing that courts have held that words such as "confidential[ity] requested by witness" on face of document are sufficient to justify nondisclosure); Homick v. DOJ, No. 98-0557, slip op. at 30 (N.D. Cal. Sept. 16, 2004) (determining that "'protect'" or "'protect identity by request,'" followed by name of interviewee, was indicative of express grant of confidentiality); see also Neely v. FBI, 208 F.3d 461, 466 (4th Cir. 2000) (remanding with instructions that if "district court finds that the [withheld] documents . . . do in fact, as the FBI claims, bear evidence 'on their face' of 'express assurances of confidentiality,' . . . then the FBI would most likely be entitled to withhold such documents" (quoting government's brief)).

⁴¹ See, e.g., Bullock v. FBI, 577 F. Supp. 2d 75, 80 (D.D.C. 2008) (holding that signed agreement between confidential source and law enforcement agency was sufficient to prove express promise); Adamowicz v. IRS, 552 F. Supp. 2d 355, 371 (S.D.N.Y. 2008) (stating that government's declaration was sufficient evidence of express grant of confidentiality); Neuhausser v. DOJ, No. 03-531, 2006 WL 1581010, at *7 (E.D. Ky. June 6, 2006) (finding that DEA's declaration delineated between those informants who received express assurances of confidentiality and those who received implied assurances of confidentiality); Wheeler v. DOJ, 403 F. Supp. 2d 1, 16 (D.D.C. 2005) (finding that FBI's declaration sufficiently demonstrated that agent had personal knowledge of express promise given to confidential source); Billington v. DOJ, 301 F. Supp. 2d 15, 22 (D.D.C. 2004) (finding that in camera affidavit of source "confirms that the source . . . was assured [with] an express grant of confidentiality").

⁴² See, e.g., Holt v. DOJ, 734 F. Supp. 2d 28, 46 (D.D.C. 2010) (finding express promise of confidentiality for "source material contained in the ViCAP [Violent Criminal Apprehension Program, a system that collects and analyzes behavioral and other data from crimes of violence] file as well as in a reference file concerning a Racketeering Enterprise Investigation ('REI') of gang activity" based in part on FBI's Rules of Behavior for ViCAP web which "clearly state that the ViCAP web database is a confidential system"); Callaway v. U.S. Dep't of Treasury, 577 F. Supp. 2d 1, 3 (D.D.C. 2008) (finding Exemption 7(D) appropriately invoked where "declarant with 'firsthand knowledge' of Customs' policy with respect to the assignment of source symbol codes explain[ed] that codes are assigned only to those expressly granted an assurance of confidentiality"); Neuhausser, 2006 WL 1581010, at *7 (finding that DEA has longstanding confidential source policy which provides that coded sources receive express assurances of confidentiality); Millhouse v. IRS, No. 03-1418, 2005 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 1290, at *5 (D.D.C. Jan. 3, 2005) (finding that IRS's Special Agent followed IRS procedures for providing confidential sources with express grants of confidentiality); Pinnavaia v. FBI, No. 03-112, slip op. at 12 (D.D.C. Feb. 25, 2004) (withholding confidential source number identifiers because FBI policy assigns such numbers only pursuant to

Further, courts have held that the identities of persons providing statements in response to routinely given "unsolicited assurances of confidentiality" are protectible under Exemption 7(D) as well.⁴⁵ However, courts have found that vague declarations, or

express grant of confidentiality); Rugiero v. DOJ, 234 F. Supp. 2d 697, 702 (E.D. Mich. 2002) (relying on detailed affidavits by DEA indicating that sources given express confidentiality were assigned codes and recorded as such), appeal dismissed voluntarily, No. 03-2455 (6th Cir. Feb. 8, 2005); Campbell v. DOJ, No. 89-3016, slip op. at 23 (D.D.C. Sept. 28, 2001) (finding express promise of confidentiality to be established in part by "Bureau Bulletins issued by the FBI headquarters" and FBI's "Manuals of Rules and Regulations that deal with confidential sources [and which] were in effect at the time the information . . . was gathered"); Wayne's Mech. & Maint. Contractor, No. 1:00-45, slip op. at 18-19 (N.D. Ga. May 7, 2001) (stating that "employee-witnesses are covered by Exemption 7(D) because OSHA representatives did ensure . . . that their statements would be confidential, according to standard OSHA practice"). *But cf.* Homick, No. 98-0557, slip op. at 28 (N.D. Cal. Sept. 16, 2004) (finding that FBI's 1993 policy guidelines for source symbol numbers were not applicable to requested information).

⁴³ *See, e.g.*, Mays v. DEA, 234 F.3d 1324, 1329 (D.C. Cir. 2000) (holding that agency affidavit that "plainly refers to 'notations on the face of [the] withheld document[s]' -- specifically, the DEA confidential informant code -- indicat[es] that [the] source received an express assurance of confidentiality" (quoting Campbell v. DOJ, 164 F.3d 20, 34 (D.C. Cir. 1998))); Manna v. DOJ, 51 F.3d 1158, 1167 (3d Cir. 1995) (finding that express confidentiality exists as to sources "assigned numbers" who provided information regarding organized crime); McDonnell v. United States, 4 F.3d 1227, 1258 (3d Cir. 1993) (reasoning that "source was considered so sensitive that he or she was assigned a symbol source number and was never referred to by name in the file [leading to the] conclusion that [the information is] exempt from disclosure under the express language of Exemption 7(D)"); Clemente v. FBI, 741 F. Supp. 2d 64, 87 (D.D.C. 2010) (agreeing that FBI's declaration showed that informants with source symbol numbers received express grant of confidentiality); Barbosa v. DOJ, No. 06-0867, 2007 WL 1201604 at *4 (D.D.C. Apr. 23, 2007) (finding coded confidential informants received express assurance of confidentiality); Mendoza v. DEA, 465 F. Supp. 2d 5, 13 (D.D.C. 2006) (explaining DEA's practice that coded sources are expressly assured confidentiality); Butler v. DOJ, 368 F. Supp. 2d 776, 785 (E.D. Mich. 2005) (recognizing that "coded informants" are assured by DEA that their identities and information they provide will remain confidential).

⁴⁴ *See, e.g.*, Davin v. DOJ, No. 98-3343, slip op. at 8 (3d Cir. Jan. 27, 1999) (finding express confidentiality to be established when "source is referred to as a 'confidential informant,' coupled with the FBI Manuals' policy that confidential informants should be given express assurances of confidentiality"); Neuhausser, 2006 WL 1581010, at *7 (concluding that DEA's policy sufficiently established that coded sources received express assurances of confidentiality).

⁴⁵ *See, e.g.*, L&C Marine Transp., Ltd. v. United States, 740 F.2d 919, 925 n.8 (11th Cir. 1984) (finding that "identity of a person . . . may be protected if the person provided information under an . . . assurance of confidentiality"); *see also* Church of Scientology Int'l v. DOJ, 30 F.3d 224, 239 (1st Cir. 1994) (ruling that "investigator's policy of affording

unsupported statements asserting the existence of an express promise from third parties who are without direct knowledge, or generalized recitations of harm are generally insufficient to support a showing of express confidentiality for a source.⁴⁶

confidentiality in interviews is an adequate basis upon which the government may consider the information provided . . . confidential"); Providence Journal Co. v. U.S. Dep't of the Army, 981 F.2d 552, 565 (1st Cir. 1992) (finding express promises of confidentiality for twenty-four individuals based upon inspector general regulation); Amnesty Int'l USA v. CIA, 728 F. Supp. 2d 479, 528 (D.D.C. 2010) (deciding that witness statements made during course of CIA OIG investigation were made pursuant to express promise of confidentiality because OIG regulations require OIG to maintain confidentiality of statements made in course of investigations except when OIG deems disclosure to be necessary); Badalamenti v. Dep't of State, 899 F. Supp. 542, 549 (D. Kan. 1995) (withholding proper when agency attests that expectation of confidentiality for exchange of information about criminal activity was documented by governing body of INTERPOL by specific resolutions); Kuffel v. BOP, 882 F. Supp. 1116, 1125 (D.D.C. 1995) (discussing how "ongoing understanding" between local law enforcement agencies and FBI that information shared about criminal investigation conducted by local agency would remain confidential alone could support conclusion that explicit grant of confidentiality existed). *But cf.* Cooper Cameron Corp. v. U.S. Dep't of Labor, 280 F.3d 539, 550 (5th Cir. 2002) (refusing to "presume regularity in [OSHA] inspector's actions" despite agency's "established policy explicitly to assure employee-witnesses of confidentiality").

⁴⁶ See, e.g., Cooper Cameron, 280 F.3d at 550 (holding that express promise of confidentiality is not established by "internally inconsistent, self-contradictory" declaration that "vaguely states that according to standard procedure, OSHA assured the [sources] that their statements would remain confidential"); Billington v. DOJ, 233 F.3d 581, 585 (D.C. Cir. 2000) (requiring the FBI "[at] the very least" to "indicate where [express] assurances of confidentiality are memorialized"); Halpern v. FBI, 181 F.3d 279, 299 (2d Cir. 1999) (finding to be insufficient agency's "bare assertions that express assurances were given to the sources in question, and that the information received was treated in a confidential manner during and subsequent to its receipt"); Campbell v. DOJ, 164 F.3d 20, 34-35 (D.C. Cir. 1998) (remanding case to district court because agency's affidavit "simply asserts that various sources received express assurances of confidentiality without providing any basis for the declarant's knowledge of this alleged fact"); Davin v. DOJ, 60 F.3d 1043, 1062 (3d Cir. 1995) (stating that "government . . . must produce evidence of its alleged policy and practice of giving all symbol numbered informants or code name sources express assurances of confidentiality, evidence that the policy was in force throughout the [time] spanned by the documents . . . and evidence that the policy was applied to each of the separate investigations and in each case in which a document or portion has been withheld"), aff'd on appeal after remand, 176 F.3d 471 (3d Cir. 1999) (unpublished table decision); Rosenfeld v. DOJ, 57 F.3d 803, 814-15 (9th Cir. 1995) (determining that FBI affidavits did not demonstrate that symbol-numbered sources were given express promises of confidentiality); ACLU of Wash. v. DOJ, No. 09-0642, 2011 WL 887731, at *6 (W.D. Wash. Mar. 10, 2011) (refusing to approve application of Exemption 7(D) where source had been identified, some of information from source had been disclosed, and there was no evidence of promise of confidentiality); Lazaridis v. DOJ, 766 F. Supp. 2d 134, 148 (D.D.C. 2011) (denying summary judgment on claim that there was express confidentiality where declarant did "not claim to have any personal knowledge of the agreement . . . and . . .

Implied Confidentiality

In addition to express confidentiality, Exemption 7(D) also affords protection to sources who provide information under circumstances in which an expectation of confidentiality can be inferred.⁴⁷ Historically, many courts of appeals applied a "categorical" approach to implied confidentiality cases, recognizing a presumption of confidentiality in criminal investigations.⁴⁸ However, in its landmark Exemption 7(D) decision in DOJ v. Landano, the Supreme Court effectively reversed all of these cases on this point of evidentiary presumption.⁴⁹

presented no probative evidence of such agreement"); Banks v. DOJ, 813 F. Supp. 2d 132, 145 (D.D.C. 2010) (denying motion for summary judgment with regard to Exemption 7(D) because United States Postal Inspection Service failed to present "probative evidence" of grant of express confidentiality or describe circumstances supporting inference of confidentiality); Fischer v. DOJ, 596 F. Supp. 2d 34, 48 (D.D.C. 2009) (finding bare assertion that foreign authority provided information to FBI under express assurance of confidentiality insufficient to carry burden of establishing that source received express grant); McCoy v. United States, No. 04-CV-101, 2006 WL 463106, at *10 (N.D. W.Va. 2006) (rejecting adequacy of affidavit that indicated that coded sources "generally" receive express assurances of confidentiality because agency failed to show that individuals in question were given express assurances of confidentiality); Hudson v. DOJ, No. 04-4079, 2005 WL 1656909, at *6 (N.D. Cal. July 11, 2005) (rejecting FBI's "bare assertions" of express confidentiality absent sufficiently detailed declaration demonstrating that such promise of confidentiality was provided); Voinche v. FBI, 46 F. Supp. 2d 26, 34 (D.D.C. 1999) (rejecting agency's "general arguments for protecting confidential informants as well as [its] unsupported assertion . . . that the FBI made an express promise of confidentiality to the informant"); Hronek v. DEA, 16 F. Supp. 2d 1260, 1275 (D. Or. 1998) (ordering submission of supplemental declaration because agency failed to sufficiently "discuss the [express] grant of confidentiality"), aff'd, No. 99-36055, 2001 WL 291035 (9th Cir. Mar. 12, 2001).

⁴⁷ DOJ v. Landano, 508 U.S. 165, 181 (1993) (rejecting blanket presumption of confidentiality for sources supplying information to FBI, although acknowledging that "[m]ore narrowly defined circumstances, however, can provide a basis for inferring confidentiality").

⁴⁸ See, e.g., Nadler v. DOJ, 955 F.2d 1479, 1486 & n.7 (11th Cir. 1992); Parker v. DOJ, 934 F.2d 375, 378 (D.C. Cir. 1991); KTVY-TV v. United States, 919 F.2d 1465, 1470 (10th Cir. 1990); Dow Jones & Co. v. DOJ, 917 F.2d 571, 576 (D.C. Cir. 1990); Donovan v. FBI, 806 F.2d 55, 61 (2d Cir. 1986); Ingle v. DOJ, 698 F.2d 259, 269 (6th Cir. 1983); Kimberlin v. Dep't of the Treasury, 774 F.2d 204, 208 (7th Cir. 1985); Parton v. DOJ, 727 F.2d 774, 776 (8th Cir. 1984).

⁴⁹ See 508 U.S. 165, 179-80 (1993).

In Landano, the Court found that it was not Congress's intent to provide for a "universal" presumption or broad categorical withholding under Exemption 7(D);⁵⁰ rather, it declared, a "more particularized approach" is required.⁵¹ Under this refined approach, agencies seeking to invoke Exemption 7(D) must prove expectations of confidentiality based upon the "circumstances" of each case.⁵² Specific showings of confidentiality can be made on a "generic" basis,⁵³ when "certain circumstances characteristically support an inference of confidentiality."⁵⁴

The Court cited two "factors": "the nature of the crime . . . and the source's relation to it" as an example of the more narrowly defined circumstances under which confidentiality may be inferred.⁵⁵ The courts that have addressed implied

⁵⁰ 508 U.S. at 174-78; see Rosenfeld v. DOJ, 57 F.3d 803, 814 (9th Cir. 1995) (reiterating that "presumption of confidentiality [no longer] attaches from the mere fact of an FBI investigation . . . [Instead,] the confidentiality determination turns on the circumstances under which the subject provided the requested information"); Jones v. FBI, 41 F.3d 238, 247 (6th Cir. 1994) (observing that "[Supreme] Court unanimously held that the government is not entitled to a presumption that all sources supplying information to the FBI in the course of a criminal investigation are confidential within the meaning of Exemption 7(D)"); cf. Rugiero v. DOJ, 257 F.3d 534, 552 (6th Cir. 2001) (finding DEA applied incorrect standard whereby "any informant who ha[d] not received an express assurance of confidentiality [would] be treated as having received an implied promise of confidentiality").

⁵¹ Landano, 508 U.S. at 179-80; see Quiñon v. FBI, 86 F.3d 1222, 1231 (D.C. Cir. 1996) (restating that "[Supreme] Court rejected . . . a broad presumption of confidentiality in favor of a 'particularized approach' that looks to 'factors such as the nature of the crime that was investigated and the source's relation to it' in order to determine whether a promise of confidentiality may be inferred" (quoting Landano, 508 U.S. at 179-80)).

⁵² Landano, 508 U.S. at 180; see Cooper Cameron Corp. v. U.S. Dep't of Labor, 280 F.3d 539, 552 (5th Cir. 2002) (declaring that "implied confidentiality can arise . . . through the specific circumstances of a particular investigation"); Billington v. DOJ, 233 F.3d 581, 585 (D.C. Cir. 2000) (finding that "circumstances under which the FBI receives information might support a finding of an implied assurance of confidentiality"); Hale v. DOJ, 226 F.3d 1200, 1204 (10th Cir. 2000) (holding that "source's reluctance to speak directly with the FBI is a clear sign that the source wanted to remain confidential"); Hale v. DOJ, 99 F.3d 1025, 1030 (10th Cir. 1996) (explaining that inferences of confidentiality "should be evaluated on a case-by-case basis"); see also FOIA Update, Vol. XIV, No. 3, at 10 ("Landano Decision Requires Greater Disclosure").

⁵³ Landano, 508 U.S. at 179.

⁵⁴ Id. at 177.

⁵⁵ Id. at 179; see Blanton v. DOJ, 64 F. App'x 787, 790 (D.C. Cir. 2003) (holding that "Landano does not require that both the nature of the crime and the relationship of the source must be investigated in all implied confidentiality situations; instead [Landano] only emphasized that the government could not rely on a blanket presumption that all

confidentiality since the Landano decision have applied these two factors as the primary factors in determining whether implied confidentiality exists.⁵⁶ They have uniformly recognized that a key consideration is the potential for retaliation against the source, whether based on actual threats of retaliation by defendants or requesters,⁵⁷ prior

information . . . was covered by an implied confidentiality agreement"); see also Mays v. DEA, 234 F.3d 1324, 1330-31 (D.C. Cir. 2000) (noting that source does not need to "have any particular relationship to the crime in order for the information he supplies to be deemed confidential" and that "Landano plainly contemplates that courts will identify 'generic circumstances' in which an implied assurance of confidentiality fairly can be inferred").

⁵⁶ See Hulstein v. DEA, 671 F.3d 690, 695 (8th Cir. 2012) (determining that "implied assurance of confidentiality rests on the nature of the alleged crime and the witness's relationship to the crime"); Hale, 226 F.3d at 1203; (same); Grand Cent. P'ship v. Cuomo, 166 F.3d 473, 487 (2d Cir. 1999) (finding implied confidentiality after examining sources' relationship with target of investigation, "seriousness of the underlying offenses being investigated," and concomitant risk of retaliation); Quiñon, 86 F.3d at 1232 (remanding for FBI to provide "additional affidavits to establish that the informants' particular social or professional relationships with the subjects of the investigation, and the nature of the information provided by them, allow for the inference of an assurance of confidentiality"); Ortiz v. HHS, 70 F.3d 729, 735 (2d Cir. 1995) (finding implied confidentiality after considering "the serious nature of the allegations, the author's apparently close relationship to [plaintiff], the possibility of retaliation, and the author's anonymity . . . without relying solely on any one of them"); Davin v. DOJ, 60 F.3d 1043, 1063 (3d Cir. 1995) (noting that FBI did not offer "evidence that any member of [the investigated group] engaged in acts of violence or harassment, or threatened to do so" and remanding for a more "detailed factual recitation"); Rosenfeld, 57 F.3d at 814 (affirming district court's inquiry applying "Landano's command to infer that the informant received an implied assurance of confidentiality only if factors like the nature of the crime being investigated and the source's relationship with the FBI made it reasonable to infer that the informant expected such an assurance"); Koch v. USPS, No. 93-1487, 1993 U.S. App. LEXIS 26130, at *3-4 (8th Cir. Oct. 8, 1993) (finding implied confidentiality based upon Landano's direction to look at nature of crime and witness's relationship to it); Dent v. EOUSA, No. 12-0420, 2013 WL 782625, at *10 (D.D.C. Mar. 2, 2013) (opining that "nature of the crime investigated and informant's relationship to it are the most important factors in determining whether implied confidentiality exists"); cf. Mays, 234 F.3d at 1330 (concluding that Supreme Court in Landano did not find that "source need have any particular relationship to the crime in order for the information [that] he supplies to be deemed confidential," and further concluding that "whatever his 'relation to the crime,' an informant is at risk to the extent that the criminal enterprise he exposes is of a type inclined toward violent retaliation").

⁵⁷ See, e.g., Meserve v. DOJ, No. 04-1844, 2006 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 56732, at *30 (D.D.C. Aug. 14, 2006) (concluding that agency properly applied Exemption 7(D) to protect eyewitness statements regarding armed robbery due to threats of harm made); Dohse v. Potter, No. 04-355, 2006 WL 379901, at *7 (D. Neb. Feb. 15, 2006) (concluding that "in light of the nature of the alleged threats . . . the informant could reasonably be assumed to suffer reprisal if his identity were disclosed"); Linn v. DOJ, No. 92-1406, 1995 WL 631847, at *34 (D.D.C. Aug. 22, 1995) (finding withholding proper when "persons associated with the investigation and

retaliatory acts by perpetrators or against sources,⁵⁸ the possibility of reprisals by third parties,⁵⁹ the specific dangers faced by prison informants,⁶⁰ or the violent or intimidating nature of the crime itself.⁶¹ Courts have also found that a possibility of

prosecution were subject to threats of harm when their cooperation was divulged"); see also Germosen v. Cox, No. 98-1294, 1999 WL 1021559, at *17 (S.D.N.Y. Nov. 9, 1999) (observing that requester sought names of confidential informants "for the specific purpose of inflicting the precise harm that Exemption 7(D) seeks to prevent -- harassment of the confidential source"), appeal dismissed for failure to prosecute, No. 00-6041 (2d Cir. Sept. 12, 2000). But see Hidalgo v. FBI, No. 04-0562, slip op. at 5-6 (D.D.C. Sept. 29, 2005) (finding that government initially failed to make necessary showing that disclosure of source's identity would subject him or her to "harassment and actual danger"), summary judgment granted, No. 04-0562, 2006 WL 2716086 (D.D.C. Sept. 22, 2006).

⁵⁸ See, e.g., Smith v. FBI, 663 F. Supp. 2d 1, 2 (D.D.C. 2009) (concluding that withholding information under 7(D) was justified because of facts offered in defendant's declaration concerning nature of crime and plaintiff's "propensity for violence" and because he had "threatened a victim and a witness in relation to his criminal trial" (quoting agency declaration)); Garcia v. DOJ, 181 F. Supp. 2d 356, 377 (S.D.N.Y. 2002) (holding that "sources expected their identities to be kept private in order to avoid retaliation by" plaintiff who had been "convicted of two violent felonies, including conspiring to kill an individual who had testified against him at his robbery trial"); Jimenez v. FBI, 938 F. Supp. 21, 30 (D.D.C. 1996) (finding withholding of name and identifying information of source to be proper when plaintiff had previously harassed and threatened government informants).

⁵⁹ See, e.g., Hale, 226 F.3d at 1204-05 (stating that "people who provided detailed information surrounding [kidnapping and murder], information that would only be known to a few people, would logically be fearful of retribution," in part because "[a]t the time the FBI conducted the[] interviews it was unclear if [plaintiff] had acted alone . . . or whether he may have worked with accomplices who might have violent propensities"); Coleman v. FBI, 13 F. Supp. 2d 75, 82 (D.D.C. 1998) (recognizing potential for "third party retaliation" even when imprisoned murderer, rapist, and kidnapper has "slim likelihood" of freedom).

⁶⁰ See, e.g., Maydak v. DOJ, 362 F. Supp. 2d 316, 324 (D.D.C. 2005) (concluding that "individual providing confidential information about an inmate-on-inmate sexual assault [would] only [speak with] an express or an implied grant of confidentiality"); Hazel v. DOJ, No. 95-01992, slip op. at 11 (D.D.C. July 2, 1998) (identifying risk of reprisal in "close-quarter context of prison" for sources who provided information about "cold-blooded murder" of inmate); Butler v. Dep't of the Treasury, No. 95-1931, 1997 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 802, at *10 (D.D.C. Jan. 14, 1997) (recognizing danger of cooperating with prison or law enforcement officials).

⁶¹ See, e.g., Hodge v. FBI, 703 F.3d 575, 581 (D.C. Cir. 2013) (noting that "vicious nature of the crimes" supported FBI's position that there was implied promise of confidentiality); Mays, 234 F.3d at 1331 (emphasizing "[t]hat a conspiracy to distribute cocaine is typically a violent enterprise, in which a reputation for retaliating against informants is a valuable asset, [and] is enough to establish the inference of implied confidentiality for those who give information about such a conspiracy"); Hale, 99 F.3d at 1031 (recognizing that nature of crime supports inference of confidentiality when "discrete aspects" of it "make it particularly

retaliation exists for paid informants,⁶² cooperative witnesses,⁶³ and anonymous sources.⁶⁴ Moreover, they have recognized that the "danger of retaliation encompasses more than the source's physical safety."⁶⁵

likely" for source to fear reprisal); Williams v. FBI, 69 F.3d 1155, 1159 (D.C. Cir. 1995) (finding withholding justified based on "risk of retaliation, harassment and bodily harm"); Koch, 1993 U.S. App. LEXIS 26130, at *3-4 (finding withholding proper as to whistleblower who reported another employee's threat to bring grenade in to work because of "nature of alleged threat" and possibility of retaliation); Brown v. FBI, 873 F. Supp. 2d 388, 407 (D.D.C. 2012) (upholding "precedent of implying confidentiality to sources who provide information about drug crimes" given violent nature of such crimes); Miller v. DOJ, 872 F. Supp. 2d 12, 27 (D.D.C. 2012) (same); Adionser v. DOJ, 811 F. Supp. 2d 284, 300 (D.D.C. 2011) (finding that it was "reasonable to conclude that . . . sources disclosed information in confidence due to the fear of reprisal" because of "violence and risk of retaliation attendant to drug trafficking"); Cozen O'Connor v. U.S. Dep't of Treasury, 570 F. Supp. 2d 749, 785 (E.D. PA. 2008) (observing that "[o]ne cannot seriously argue that anyone providing information in the investigation of terrorist organizations and activities would not expect that his identity as a source would be kept secret"); Canning v. DOJ, 567 F. Supp. 2d 104, 112 (D.D.C. 2008) (finding that "crime of government corruption, while not inherently violent, gives rise to an implied assurance of confidentiality" (citing Garcia, 181 F. Supp. 2d at 377)); Peltier v. FBI, No. 03-905S, 2005 WL 735964, at *19 (W.D.N.Y. Mar. 31, 2005) (concluding that "sources are precisely the type of individuals who reasonably would fear retaliation in the event of disclosure . . . given the highly charged emotions, ongoing exposure, and public attention in th[is] case"); Wickline v. FBI, 923 F. Supp. 1, 3 (D.D.C. 1996) (finding withholding proper based on violent nature of crime when requester had been convicted of multiple dismemberment murders); Putnam v. DOJ, 873 F. Supp. 705, 716 (D.D.C. 1995) (fearing retribution, FBI properly withheld "names and information provided by relatives and close associates of the victim and of the plaintiff" when former FBI Special Agent pled guilty to first degree manslaughter of informant); Landano v. DOJ, 873 F. Supp. 884, 888 (D.N.J. 1994) (stating on remand from Supreme Court that "violent nature of the crime, the potential involvement of the motorcycle gang, and the broad publicization of the murder persuade the court that an implied assurance of confidentiality is warranted").

⁶² See, e.g., Jones, 41 F.3d at 248; Anderson v. DEA, No. 92-0225, slip op. at 11 (W.D. Pa. May 18, 1994); Lesar v. DOJ, No. 92-2216, slip op. at 11 (D.D.C. Oct. 18, 1993).

⁶³ See Fischer v. DOJ, 596 F. Supp. 2d 34, 49 (D.D.C. 2009) (finding "inherent risk of harm" sufficient to infer confidentiality of cooperative witnesses).

⁶⁴ See, e.g., Ortiz, 70 F.3d at 733; Hamilton v. Weise, No. 95-1161, 1997 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 18900, at *28 (M.D. Fla. Oct. 1, 1997).

⁶⁵ Ortiz, 70 F.3d at 733 (citing Irons v. FBI, 880 F.2d 1446, 1451 (1st Cir. 1989)); see Grand Cent. P'ship, 166 F.3d at 488 (recognizing that retaliation "may constitute work place harassment, demotions, job transfers or loss of employment"); Council on Am.-Islamic Relations, Cal. v. FBI, 749 F. Supp. 2d 1104, 1122 (S.D. Cal. 2010) (concluding that risk of competitive harm to commercial institutions justified withholding information on basis of implied confidentiality); Schrecker v. DOJ, 74 F. Supp. 2d 26, 35 (D.D.C. 1999) (finding

Indeed, in post-Landano cases, courts have found implied confidentiality in circumstances involving organized crime,⁶⁶ murder,⁶⁷ drug trafficking,⁶⁸ extortion,⁶⁹

implied confidentiality in case involving passport fraud and contempt of Congress when disclosure of source's identity "would likely subject him to potential reprisal from others"), aff'd in part, rev'd in part & remanded on other grounds, 254 F.3d 162 (D.C. Cir. 2001); see also United Techs. Corp. v. NLRB, 777 F.2d 90, 94 (2d Cir. 1985) (concluding that "employee-informant's fear of employer retaliation can give rise to a justified expectation of confidentiality").

⁶⁶ See, e.g., Clemente v. FBI, 741 F. Supp. 2d 64, 87 (D.D.C. 2010) (finding implied confidentiality for informants who provided information regarding Mafia); Amuso v. DOJ, 600 F. Supp. 2d 78, 99 (D.D.C. 2009) (finding implied confidentiality where informants reported on activities of organized crime families including murder, extortion and labor racketeering); Peay v. DOJ, No. 04-1859, 2007 WL 788871, at *6 (D.D.C. Mar. 14, 2007) (finding implied promise of confidentiality because of violent nature of organized crime/drug investigation); Homick v. DOJ, No. 98-0557, slip op. at 29 (N.D. Cal. Sept. 16, 2004) (agreeing with agency's position that confidentiality was "reasonably inferred" because of "violent nature of plaintiff and his associates, and his connections with members of organized crime"); Brunetti v. FBI, 357 F. Supp. 2d 97, 107 (D.D.C. 2004) (inferring confidentiality based on plaintiff's forty-year conviction for Racketeering Influenced and Corrupt Organizations crimes); Pray v. FBI, No. 95-0380, 1998 WL 440843, at *4-5 (S.D.N.Y. Aug. 3, 1998) (racketeering investigation); Delviscovo v. FBI, 903 F. Supp. 1, 3 (D.D.C. 1995) (major racketeering investigation), summary affirmance granted, No. 95-5388 (D.C. Cir. Jan. 24, 1997); Cudzich v. INS, 886 F. Supp. 101, 107 (D.D.C. 1995) (suspected alien smuggling ring); Landano, 873 F. Supp. at 888 (possible motorcycle gang-related violence); Anderson, No. 92-0225, slip op. at 11 (W.D. Pa. May 18, 1994) (magistrate's recommendation) (gang-related shootings), adopted, (W.D. Pa. June 27, 1994), appeal dismissed, No. 94-3387 (3d Cir. Sept. 12, 1994); Manna v. DOJ, 832 F. Supp. 866, 876 (D.N.J. 1993) (organized crime activity), aff'd, 51 F.3d 1158 (3d Cir. 1995).

⁶⁷ See, e.g., Hale, 226 F.3d at 1204-05; Plunkett v. DOJ, No. 11-0341, 2013 WL 628546, at *8 (D.D.C. Feb. 20, 2013) (finding 7(D) properly applied to protect "witness to a murder for hire conspiracy" under an implied confidentiality analysis); Richardson v. DOJ, 730 F. Supp. 2d 225, 238 (D.D.C. 2010) (attempted murder); Lewis-Bey v. DOJ, 595 F. Supp. 2d 120, 137 (D.D.C. 2009) (murder of grand jury witness); Kishore v. DOJ, 575 F. Supp. 2d 243, 258 (D.D.C. 2008) (murder for hire); Miller v. DOJ, 562 F. Supp. 2d 82, 123 (D.D.C. 2008) (kidnapping, torture, murder and dismemberment of bodies); Peltier v. FBI, No. 02-4328, slip op. at 24 (D. Minn. Oct. 24, 2006); Peltier, 2005 WL 735964, at *18-19; Shores v. FBI, 185 F. Supp. 2d 77, 84 (D.D.C. 2002); Burke v. DOJ, No. 96-1739, 1999 WL 1032814, at *8 (D.D.C. Sept. 30, 1999); Coleman, 13 F. Supp. 2d at 82; Wickline, 923 F. Supp. at 3; Linn v. DOJ, No. 92-1406, 1995 WL 417810, at *11 (D.D.C. June 6, 1995); Putnam, 873 F. Supp. at 716; Landano, 873 F. Supp. at 888.

⁶⁸ See, e.g., Ibarra-Cortez v. DEA, 36 F. App'x 598, 598 (9th Cir. 2002); Mays, 234 F.3d at 1331; Engelking v. DEA, 119 F.3d 980, 981 (D.C. Cir. 1997); Bell v. FBI, No. 93-1485, 1993 U.S. App. LEXIS 27235, at *5 (6th Cir. Oct. 18, 1993); Moffat v. DOJ, No. 09-12067, 2011 WL 3475440, at*18 (D. Mass. Aug. 5, 2011) (holding that FBI properly withheld records

illegal possession of firearms,⁷⁰ domestic terrorism,⁷¹ international terrorism,⁷² national security,⁷³ loan sharking and gambling,⁷⁴ armed robbery,⁷⁵ bribery,⁷⁶ interstate

based upon both express and implied promises of confidentiality for sources who provided information concerning murder and illegal drug trafficking); Sellers v. DOJ, 684 F. Supp. 2d 149, 162 (D.D.C. 2010) (concluding that it was reasonable to find implied assurance of confidentiality given "plaintiff's convictions for violent felonies" including drug trafficking, firearms violations, and kidnapping); Lasko v. DOJ, 684 F. Supp. 2d 120, 134 (D.D.C. 2010) (finding that violence and risk of retaliation attendant to drug trafficking warrant implied grant of confidentiality); Concepcion v. FBI, 606 F. Supp. 2d 14, 42 (D.D.C. 2009) (stating that "given the drug trafficking activity in which plaintiff and his co-conspirators engaged, it is reasonable to conclude that the cooperating witness and confidential source provided information to the FBI with an expectation that their identities would not be disclosed"); Fischer, 596 F. Supp. 2d at 49 (promise of confidentiality inferred where foreign authority provided information to FBI in connection with large scale narcotics trafficking investigation); McCoy v. United States, No. 04-101, 2006 WL 463106, at *11 (N.D. W. Va. Feb. 24, 2006); Gonzalez v. ATF, No. 04-2281, 2005 WL 3201009, at *9 (D.D.C. Nov. 9, 2005); Butler v. DOJ, 368 F. Supp. 2d 776, 786 (E.D. Mich. 2005); Rugiero v. DOJ, 234 F. Supp. 2d 697, 702 (E.D. Mich. 2002); Gansterer v. DOJ, No. 95-1614, slip op. at 16, 21 (C.D. Cal. July 6, 1998); McNamara, 974 F. Supp. 946, 963 (W.D. Tex. 1997); Jimenez, 938 F. Supp. at 30; Perrone v. FBI, 908 F. Supp. 24, 27 (D.D.C. 1995); Delviscovo, 903 F. Supp. at 3; Badalamenti v. Dep't of State, 899 F. Supp. 542, 549-50 (D. Kan. 1995); Linn, 1995 WL 417810, at *11.

⁶⁹ See, e.g., Wolfson v. United States, 672 F. Supp. 2d 20, 34 (D.D.C. 2009) (observing that "courts have concluded that the investigation of crimes such as racketeering, loan sharking, and extortion are circumstances under which sources have provided information under an implied assurance of confidentiality"); Perrone, 908 F. Supp. at 27; Delviscovo, 903 F. Supp. at 3.

⁷⁰ See Mendoza v. DEA, 465 F. Supp. 2d 5, 13 (D.D.C. 2006); Perrone, 908 F. Supp. at 27.

⁷¹ See, e.g., Judicial Watch, Inc. v. Reno, No. 00-0723, 2001 WL 1902811, at *9 (D.D.C. Mar. 30, 2001) (finding implied confidentiality to be established for "confidential informant who reported a possible terrorist threat against the INS Miami District Office"); Blanton v. DOJ, 63 F. Supp. 2d 35, 49 (D.D.C. 1999) (finding implied confidentiality for sources who assisted in investigation of bombing of an African-American church "during a time of great unrest in the South"), on motion for partial reconsideration, 182 F. Supp. 2d 81, 88 (D.D.C. 2002), aff'd, 64 F. App'x 787 (D.C. Cir. 2003); Ajluni v. FBI, 947 F. Supp. 599, 602, 606 (N.D.N.Y. 1996).

⁷² See Owens v. DOJ, No. 04-1701, 2007 WL 778980, at *10-11 (D.D.C. Mar. 9, 2007) (finding implied confidentiality arising from risk of violence and retaliation as "[t]errorist bombings that kill large numbers of civilians, even more so than the types of crimes already accorded a categorical presumption by the D.C. Circuit, are violent in nature and implicate a grave risk of retaliation").

⁷³ See Campbell v. DOJ, No. 89-3016, 1996 WL 554511, at *9 (D.D.C. Sept. 19, 1996) (finding implied confidential relationship "given the customary trust" that exists for relaying

transportation of stolen property,⁷⁷ tax evasion,⁷⁸ kidnapping,⁷⁹ financial crimes,⁸⁰ corruption by state law enforcement officials,⁸¹ passport fraud, and contempt of Congress.⁸²

information between nonfederal and foreign law enforcement agencies and the FBI), rev'd on other grounds, 164 F.3d 20 (D.C. Cir. 1998).

⁷⁴ See Delviscovo, 903 F. Supp. at 3.

⁷⁵ See Thomas v. DOJ, 531 F. Supp. 2d 102, 111 (D.D.C. 2008) (finding that agency properly applied Exemption 7(D) to protect identities of eyewitnesses who provided information about violent and intimidating armed robbery); Anderson v. DOJ, No. 95-1880, 1999 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 5048, at *9 n.8 (D.D.C. Apr. 12, 1999) (finding Exemption 7(D) properly applied when witnesses to armed bank robbery provided information during police line-up).

⁷⁶ See Melius v. Nat'l Indian Gaming Comm'n, No. 98-2210, 1999 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 17537, at *17-18 (D.D.C. Nov. 3, 1999) (holding that criminal investigation involving allegations of bribery suggests implied promise of confidentiality).

⁷⁷ See Delviscovo, 903 F. Supp. at 3.

⁷⁸ See CREW v. DOJ, 870 F. Supp. 2d 70, 85 (D.D.C. 2012) (agreeing that implied confidentiality was warranted in case involving "high profile political corruption charges of conspiracy, fraud, and tax evasion"); McQueen v. United States, 264 F. Supp. 2d 502, 523 (S.D. Tex. 2003) (holding that diesel tax fraud operation inspired "very real" fear in agency's confidential sources, and then reasoning that "[t]his particular kind of tax fraud -- involving big dollars, complex operations, vast numbers of transactions, and many people -- is not qualitatively unlike other crimes on the 'categorical list,' such as organized crime, loan sharking and gambling, and bribery").

⁷⁹ See Hale, 226 F.3d at 1204-05.

⁸⁰ See LaRouche, No. 90-2753, slip op. at 11-12 (D.D.C. Nov. 17, 2000). But see Billington, 233 F.3d at 586 n.7 (stating in dicta that "[w]e have doubts that [LaRouche political organization's] members' participation in financial crimes [after organization publicly disavowed violence], without more, would support an inference that sources received an implied assurance of confidentiality"); Canning v. DOJ, No. 01-2215, slip op. at 11 (D.D.C. Mar. 9, 2004) (reasoning that "prior convictions of members of the LaRouche organization for financial crimes does not rise to the level of creating . . . an implied assurance of confidentiality"); Davis v. DOJ, No. 00-2457, slip op. at 20-21 (D.D.C. Mar. 21, 2003) (requiring agency to provide more detail regarding circumstances of interviews with sources for nonviolent financial crimes).

⁸¹ See Garcia, 181 F. Supp. 2d at 377 (finding implied confidentiality in case involving "investigation . . . into serious allegations of corruption within the state police").

⁸² See Schrecker, 74 F. Supp. 2d at 35 (holding "passport fraud and contempt of Congress" are "serious enough crimes to warrant . . . implied confidentiality"). But see Singh v. FBI, 574 F. Supp. 2d 32, 51 (D.D.C. 2008) (holding passport fraud does not establish significant risk of violence or retaliation necessary for implied confidentiality).

Moreover, implied confidentiality has been found where former members of targeted organizations disclosed self-incriminating information,⁸³ where sources provided information as a result of plea-bargains,⁸⁴ where sources provided information in response to a subpoena,⁸⁵ where sources were interviewed during an unfair labor practice investigation,⁸⁶ where sources provided information to an inspector general during a criminal investigation⁸⁷ and where an employee provided information about an employer.⁸⁸

Some courts, however, have found the agency attestations before them as to the circumstances surrounding a claim of implied confidentiality to be insufficient, holding that a more "specific" showing as to the nature of the crime and the source's relation to it is required under Landano.⁸⁹ For example, the Court of Appeals for the First Circuit

⁸³ See Campbell, 1996 WL 554511, at *9.

⁸⁴ See Homick v. DOJ, No. 98-0557, slip op. at 8 (N.D. Cal. Oct. 27, 2004) (finding that "informant and attorney [names] are properly withheld under Exemption 7(D) due to an inference of confidentiality from the proffer discussion"); Engelking v. DEA, No. 91-0165, 1997 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 1881, at *2 (D.D.C. Feb. 21, 1997) (finding implied confidentiality and observing that plea bargains frequently are only way to obtain information about other suspected criminals).

⁸⁵ See LaRouche v. DOJ, No. 90-2753, slip op. at 15 (D.D.C. Aug. 8, 2002) (stating that "need for a subpoena indicates the desire for confidentiality").

⁸⁶ See Means v. Segal, No. 97-1301, slip op. at 14-15 (D.D.C. Mar. 18, 1998) (magistrate's recommendation) (finding withholding consistent with written policy of FLRA), adopted, (D.D.C. Apr. 14, 1998), aff'd per curiam on other grounds, No. 98-5170 (D.C. Cir. Oct. 6, 1998).

⁸⁷ See United Am. Fin., Inc. v. Potter, 667 F. Supp. 2d 49, 61 (D.D.C. 2009) (determining that promise of confidentiality in Inspector General Act and pendency of criminal investigation were circumstances supporting implied assurance of confidentiality).

⁸⁸ See, e.g., Government Accountability Project v. NRC, No. 86-1976, No. 86-3201, 1993 WL 13033518, at *4 (D.D.C. July 2, 1993).

⁸⁹ See, e.g., Billington, 233 F.3d at 585-86 (instructing FBI on remand to "supply evidence that informants predicated their assistance on an implied assurance of confidentiality" where the organization about which information was provided had "publicly disavowed violence"); Neely v. FBI, 208 F.3d 461, 467 (4th Cir. 2000) (remanding with observation that "district court would be well within its discretion to require the FBI . . . to fully shoulder its responsibility -- which to date it has not done -- to provide specific justifications" for claim of implied confidentiality); Hale, 99 F.3d at 1033 (finding that government's claim of implied confidentiality lacked particularized justification); Hetzler v. Record/Info. Dissemination Section, FBI, No. 07-6399, 896 F. Supp. 2d 207, 220 (W.D.N.Y. 2012) (determining that information provided by foreign source could not be withheld without

has held that "[i]t is not enough . . . for the government simply to state blandly that the source's relationship to the crime permits an inference of confidentiality. Rather, the government has an obligation to spell out that relationship . . . [without] compromising the very interests it is seeking to protect."⁹⁰

Scope of Protection

As mentioned above, once a source has been deemed confidential, based on either an express or implied grant of confidentiality, Exemption 7(D) can be invoked to protect the identity of the source, and in certain circumstances, all of the information obtained by the source.⁹¹ The first clause of Exemption 7(D) protects the identity of a

additional justification given age of documents); Island Film, S.A. v. U.S. Dep't of Treasury, 869 F. Supp. 2d 123, 137 (D.D.C. 2012) (noting that acts at issue are "economic in nature and not inherently violent" and directing Treasury to supplement affidavit with more details as to why correspondence concerning blocked assets should be withheld on basis of implied confidentiality); McRae v. DOJ, No. 09-2052, 869 F. Supp. 2d 151, 167-68 (D.D.C. 2012) (denying ATF's motion for summary judgment with regard to its assertion of implied confidentiality because ATF's "declaration is silent . . . as to the confidential source's relationship to or knowledge of plaintiff's criminal activities"); Lazaridis v. DOJ, 766 F. Supp. 2d 134, 148 (D.D.C. 2011) (rejecting agency's assertion of implied confidentiality because "[i]t is unknown what relationship the source had to [plaintiff] and his or her knowledge of any alleged activity from which a reasonable fear of retaliation may be found"); DiPietro v. EOUSA, 357 F. Supp. 2d 177, 186 (D.D.C. 2004) (rejecting agency's unsupported assertion of expressed and implied assurances of confidentiality); Raulerson v. Ashcroft, 271 F. Supp. 2d 17, 27 (D.D.C. 2002) (ruling that "dispositive issue . . . must be more than simply whether the crime is violent," and that an agency cannot generalize circumstances from one source to all but rather must demonstrate fear of retaliation for each source); Morales Cozier v. FBI, No. 1:99-0312, slip op. at 19 (N.D. Ga. Sept. 25, 2000) (holding that FBI's "mere[] state[ment] that the sources were associates or acquaintances of plaintiff with knowledge of her activities" is insufficient to justify inference of confidentiality); Hall v. DOJ, 26 F. Supp. 2d 78, 81 (D.D.C. 1998) (finding that "FBI's generalized assertion of crimes relating to Communist Party activities is not enough to support . . . 'reasonable assumption'" that sources expected confidentiality); Kern v. FBI, No. 94-0208, slip op. at 11-12 (C.D. Cal. Sept. 14, 1998) (stating that agency's justification for application of Exemption 7(D) is "vague and fails to sufficiently describe the circumstances from which an inference of implied confidentiality could be made"); see also Computer Prof'ls, 72 F.3d at 906 (holding that agency offered no evidence that fear of retaliation was "sufficiently widespread" to justify inference of confidentiality for sources of information and information they provided); Ajluni v. FBI, No. 94-CV-325, slip op. at 13 (N.D.N.Y. July 13, 1996) (finding agency's statements "unacceptably conclusory" when circumstances surrounding its receipt of information were not described), summary judgment granted, 947 F. Supp. 599, 606 (N.D.N.Y. 1996) (holding, after in camera review, that information was provided under implied assurance of confidentiality).

⁹⁰ Church of Scientology Int'l v. DOJ, 30 F.3d 224, 234 (1st Cir. 1994).

⁹¹ 5 U.S.C. § 552(b)(7)(D) (2006 & Supp. IV 2010).

confidential source.⁹² Courts have recognized that this clause of Exemption 7(D) safeguards not only such obviously identifying information as an informant's name and address,⁹³ but also all information that would "tend to reveal" the source's identity,⁹⁴ including source symbol numbers,⁹⁵ telephone numbers,⁹⁶ the time and place of events

⁹² [Id.](#)

⁹³ See, e.g., [Cuccaro v. Sec'y of Labor](#), 770 F.2d 355, 359-60 (3d Cir. 1985); [Piper v. DOJ](#), 374 F. Supp. 2d 73, 81 (D.D.C. 2005) (protecting name and address); [Cleveland & Vicinity Dist. Council v. U.S. Dep't of Labor](#), No. 1:87-2384, slip op. at 12-14 (N.D. Ohio Apr. 22, 1992) (magistrate's recommendation) (protecting names and addresses), [adopted](#), (N.D. Ohio May 11, 1992).

⁹⁴ See, e.g., [Pollard v. FBI](#), 705 F.2d 1151, 1155 (9th Cir. 1983) (holding that entire document properly was withheld where disclosure "would tend to reveal [source's] identity"); [Palacio v. DOJ](#), No. 00-1564, 2002 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 2198, at *25 n.15 (D.D.C. Feb. 8, 2002) (withholding cooperating witness' "aliases, date of birth, address, identification numbers, . . . physical description, and [information which sets] forth his or her involvement in other investigations"), [summary affirmance granted](#), No. 02-5247, 2003 U.S. App. LEXIS 1804 (D.C. Cir. Jan. 31, 2003); [Lodi v. IRS](#), No. 96-2095, 1998 WL 419618, at *1-2 (E.D. Cal. Apr. 14, 1998) (finding entire pages of material properly withheld because release would disclose identity of confidential source); [Spirko v. USPS](#), No. 96-0458, slip op. at 2 (D.D.C. Apr. 11, 1997) (ruling that agency properly withheld location where certain event took place and specific information imparted by informant because release would allow "knowledgeable person to deduce informant's identity"), [aff'd on other grounds](#), 147 F.3d 992 (D.C. Cir. 1998); [Ajluni v. FBI](#), 947 F. Supp. 599, 606 (N.D.N.Y. 1996) (finding information properly withheld where disclosure could result in narrowing sources "to a limited group of individuals"); [Mavadia v. Caplinger](#), No. 95-3542, 1996 WL 592742, at *3 (E.D. La. Oct. 11, 1996) (ordering protection for information that would identify informants); [Kitchen v. FBI](#), No. 93-2382, slip op. at 13 (D.D.C. Mar. 18, 1996) (ruling that "Exemption 7(D) protects more than the names of confidential sources; it protects information . . . that might identify such sources"); [Doe v. DOJ](#), 790 F. Supp. 17, 21 (D.D.C. 1992) (stating that where source is well known to investigated applicant, agency must protect "even the most oblique indications of identity").

⁹⁵ See [Skinner v. DOJ](#), 744 F. Supp. 2d 185, 212 (D.D.C. 2010) (concluding that agency properly withheld "information pertaining to the cooperating witnesses or informants . . . and the numbers assigned to them"); [Amuso v. DOJ](#), 600 F. Supp.2d 78, 99 (D.D.C. 2009) (finding that "FBI establishe[d] that the confidential sources to whom the agency has assigned file numbers and permanent source symbol numbers, and the information provided by these symbol numbered sources, properly are withheld under Exemption 7(D)"); [Halpern v. FBI](#), No. 94-365A(F), slip op. at 25-26 (W.D.N.Y. Aug. 31, 2001) (accepting FBI's assertion that release of source symbol designations would permit "individuals who were the target of the investigations . . . to determine dates, times and places that information pertaining to them was obtained, resulting in knowledge as to the informant's identity"); [Accuracy in Media v. FBI](#), No. 97-2107, slip op. at 5 (D.D.C. Mar. 31, 1999) (reasoning that if informant symbol numbers "were routinely released, over time an informant may be identified by revealing the informant's connections with dates, times, places, events, or names connected with certain cases"); [Putnam v. DOJ](#), 873 F. Supp. 705,

or meetings,⁹⁷ and other information provided by the source that could allow the source's identity to be deduced.⁹⁸

Accordingly, courts have found that protection for source-identifying information extends beyond information that is merely a substitute for the source's name.⁹⁹ For

716 (D.D.C. 1995) (finding "coded identification numbers, file numbers and information that could be used to identify sources" properly withheld).

⁹⁶ See Crooker v. IRS, No. 94-0755, 1995 WL 430605, at *6 (D.D.C. Apr. 27, 1995) (determining that agency properly "deleted . . . telephone numbers, recent activities, and other information tending to reveal the identity of confidential informants").

⁹⁷ See, e.g., Halpern, No. 94-365A(F), slip op. at 25-26 (W.D.N.Y. Aug. 31, 2001) (protecting times and places that information was obtained); Accuracy in Media, No. 97-2107, slip op. at 5 (reasoning that "informant may be identified by . . . dates, times, places, events, or names connected with certain cases").

⁹⁸ See, e.g., Ibarra-Cortez v. DEA, 36 F. App'x 598, 599 (9th Cir. 2002) (withholding documents where requester "might be able to deduce the identity of the informants because they detail specific events and circumstances"); Hale v. DOJ, 226 F.3d 1200, 1204 n.2 (10th Cir. 2000) (finding that "public dissemination of the documents [supplied by sources] would reveal the[ir] identit[ies]" because "case took place in a small town where most everyone knew everyone else"); Barnett v. U.S. Dep't of Labor, No. 09-146, 2010 WL 985225, at *1 (E.D. Tex. Mar. 15, 2010) (withholding "substantive factual information that reasonably can be expected to disclose the identity of a witness" including handwritten statement because handwriting analysis could be used to link statement to source); Lewis-Bey v. DOJ, 595 F. Supp. 2d 120, 137 (D.D.C. 2009) (withholding dates and accounts of interviews that could be used to identify sources); Bullock v. F.B.I., 577 F. Supp. 2d 75, 80 (D.D.C. 2008) (finding withholding proper where requested information could enable plaintiff to identify confidential source); Billington v. DOJ, 69 F. Supp. 2d 128, 138 (D.D.C. 1999) (finding that "FBI is well within its rights to withhold [the city of origin of various teletypes] where revealing the city would reveal the identity of the source," and protecting identities of foreign agencies that requested law enforcement information where disclosure would "reveal that they have also agreed to provide such information in return" and therefore would "betray these foreign entities' status as confidential sources"), aff'd in pertinent part, vacated in part & remanded on other grounds, 233 F.3d 581 (D.C. Cir. 2000).

⁹⁹ See, e.g., L&C Marine Transp., Ltd. v. United States, 740 F.2d 919, 923-25 (11th Cir. 1984) (holding that employee-witnesses interviewed during Occupational Safety and Health investigation and expressly promised confidentiality were confidential sources and accordingly "names and other identifying information relating to the witnesses are exempt from disclosure"); Concepcion v. FBI, 606 F. Supp. 2d 14, 41 (D.D.C. 2009) (finding agency properly withheld identifying information and specific information provided by cooperating witness as "[t]he witness provided 'detailed information that is singular in nature concerning the criminal activities of plaintiff, his associates, and/or other subjects of this investigation,' such that disclosure of the information provided 'could enable others to discern [the witness'] identity'" (quoting agency declaration)); Stone v. Def. Investigative Serv., 816 F. Supp. 782, 788 (D.D.C. 1993) (protecting "information so singular that to

example, to prevent indirect identification of a source, even the name of a third party who is not a confidential source -- but who acted as an intermediary for the source in his dealings with the agency -- has been protected.¹⁰⁰

Additionally, when circumstances warrant, a law enforcement agency may employ a "Glomar" response -- refusing to confirm or deny the very existence of records about a particular individual or possible source entity -- if a more specific response to a narrowly targeted request would disclose whether that individual acted as a confidential source.¹⁰¹ However, some courts have warned that a Glomar response is unavailable when an individual has been identified as a confidential informant at trial.¹⁰²

The second clause of Exemption 7(D) broadly protects all the information provided by confidential sources when it is "compiled by a criminal law enforcement authority in the course of a criminal investigation"¹⁰³ or is compiled by an agency

release it would likely identify the individual"); Barrett v. OSHA, No. C2-90-147, slip op. at 13 (S.D. Ohio Oct. 18, 1990) (protecting statements obtained from witnesses regarding single incident involving only three or four persons).

¹⁰⁰ See Birch v. USPS, 803 F.2d 1206, 1212 (D.C. Cir. 1986); United Techs. Corp. v. NLRB, 777 F.2d 90, 95 (2d Cir. 1985) (concluding that " identity of [an NLRB] agent was properly withheld as information in an investigatory record that could lead to the disclosure of a confidential source").

¹⁰¹ See, e.g., Benavides v. DEA, 769 F. Supp. 380, 381-82 (D.D.C. 1990), rev'd & remanded on procedural grounds, 968 F.2d 1243 (D.C. Cir. 1992), modified, 976 F.2d 751 (D.C. Cir. 1992).

¹⁰² Pickard v. DOJ, 653 F.3d 782, 787 (9th Cir. 2011) (concluding that Glomar response was unavailable where individual was called at trial and identified as confidential informant in testimony); North v. DOJ, 810 F. Supp. 2d 205, 208-09 (D.D.C. 2011) (refusing to affirm Glomar response where trial testimony identified individual's status as informant).

¹⁰³ 5 U.S.C. § 552(b)(7)(D); see, e.g., Hulstein v. DEA, 671 F.3d 690, 695 (8th Cir. 2012) (holding that second clause of exemption permits withholding of information obtained from sources in course of criminal investigations and finding that DEA properly withheld "Details" section of report provided by source who had implied assurance confidentiality); Shaw v. FBI, 749 F.2d 58, 63-65 (D.C. Cir. 1984) (explaining that law enforcement undertaking satisfies "criminal investigation" threshold if agency can identify individual or incident as object of investigation as well as connection between individual or incident and violation of federal or state law); Reiter v. DEA, No. 96-0378, 1997 WL 470108, at *6-7 (D.D.C. Aug. 13, 1997) (holding all source-supplied information protectible under Exemption 7(D)'s second clause when source is confidential), summary affirmance granted, No. 97-5246, 1998 WL 202247 (D.C. Cir. Mar. 3, 1998); see also Kuffel v. BOP, 882 F. Supp. 1116, 1125-26 (D.D.C. 1995) (finding that "qualifying criminal investigation" exists because "FBI was gathering information on criminals who violated specific state crimes for the purpose of using the information as possible leads in investigations of robberies and burglaries that could be in violation of federal law").

"conducting a lawful national security intelligence investigation."¹⁰⁴ Confidential source information that falls within the broad coverage of this second clause of Exemption 7(D) need not necessarily be source-identifying to be found protectable.¹⁰⁵ For the purposes of this clause, criminal law enforcement authorities include federal agencies' inspector generals, as well as state law enforcement agencies.¹⁰⁶ Additionally, the statutory

¹⁰⁴ [5 U.S.C. § 552\(b\)\(7\)\(D\)](#); see, e.g., Ferguson v. FBI, 957 F.2d 1059, 1069 (2d Cir. 1992) (finding that "[o]nce it is shown that information was provided by a confidential source [during a criminal or lawful national security intelligence investigation], the information itself is protected from disclosure, despite the fact that there is no danger that the identity of the source could be divulged"); Judicial Watch, Inc. v. Reno, No. 00-0723, 2001 WL 1902811, at *9 (D.D.C. Mar. 30, 2001) (finding agency properly withheld information pertaining to "confidential informant who reported a possible terrorist threat against the INS Miami District Office"); Campbell v. DOJ, No. 89-3016, 1996 WL 554511, at *9 (D.D.C. Sept. 19, 1996) (concluding that the government properly withheld identities and information provided by third parties and non-federal and foreign law enforcement agencies in connection with investigations related to national security) rev'd on other grounds, 164 F.3d 20 (D.C. Cir. 1998); Meeropol v. Smith, No. 75-1121, slip op. at 76-78 (D.D.C. Feb. 29, 1984) (finding that CIA employee background investigations are "lawful national security investigations" and thus information obtained from sources as part of these investigations may be withheld under the second clause of exemption 7(D)), aff'd in pertinent part & remanded in part on other grounds sub nom. Meeropol v. Meese, 790 F.2d 942 (D.C. Cir. 1986); see also [Attorney General's Memorandum on the 1986 Amendments to the Freedom of Information Act](#) at 14 (Dec. 1987) (explaining that modifications made in the FOIA Reform Act were intended to make "clear beyond any possible doubt that all information furnished by a confidential source is exempt, so long as it was furnished in connection with a criminal or lawful national security investigation").

¹⁰⁵ See, e.g., Parker v. DOJ, 934 F.2d 375, 380 (D.C. Cir. 1991) (noting that circuits agree that "once the agency receives information from a 'confidential source' during the course of a legitimate criminal investigation . . . all such information obtained from the confidential source receives protection" (quoting Lesar v. DOJ, 636 F.2d 472, 492 n. 114 (D.C. Cir. 1980))); Shaw, 749 F.2d at 62; (noting that the Exemption "establishes two separate categories of exemption: (1) information that would 'disclose the identity of a confidential source,' and (2) information that would 'disclose information . . . [provided by] source'" and opining that "[r]equiring the second category to come within the first as well would render it entirely redundant"); Radowich v. U.S. Attorney, Dist. of Md., 658 F.2d 957, 964 (4th Cir. 1981) (noting that information provided by source in criminal investigation is protected); Simon v. DOJ, 752 F. Supp. 14, 22 (noting that "[e]ven if the information supplied by the confidential source could in no way identify him, the second clause of Exemption 7(D) nevertheless allows the defendant to withhold this information"); see also [FOIA Update, Vol. XIV, No. 3](#), at 10 (pointing out breadth of Exemption 7(D) coverage).

¹⁰⁶ See Ortiz v. HHS, 70 F.3d 729, 732 (2d Cir. 1995) (ruling that Exemption 7(D) properly applied when "HHS's Office of Inspector General . . . used [anonymous] letter to launch a criminal investigation"); Providence Journal Co. v. U.S. Dep't of the Army, 981 F.2d 552, 563 n.13 (1st Cir. 1992) (deeming inspectors general same as criminal law enforcement authorities); Brant Constr. Co. v. EPA, 778 F.2d 1258, 1265 (7th Cir. 1985) (recognizing "substantial similarities between the activities of the FBI and the OIGs" and noting that it is

requirement of an "investigation," while not a component of Exemption 7's threshold language, is "a predicate of exemption under the second clause of paragraph (D)."¹⁰⁷

In an important elaboration on the definition of a "criminal investigation," courts have recognized that information originally compiled by local law enforcement authorities in conjunction with a nonfederal criminal investigation fully retains its criminal investigatory character when subsequently obtained by federal authorities.¹⁰⁸ In addition, protection for source-provided information has been extended to information supplied to federal officials by state or local enforcement authorities seeking assistance in pursuing a nonfederal criminal investigation.¹⁰⁹

"beyond cavil" that the [FBI and United States Attorney's Office] are 'criminal law enforcement authorities'"); Harvey v. DOJ, 747 F. Supp. 29, 38 (D.D.C. 1990) (treating records compiled by local police department as compiled by criminal law enforcement authority); Dayo v. INS, No. C-2-83-1422, slip op. at 5-6 (S.D. Ohio Dec. 31, 1985) (same).

¹⁰⁷ Keys v. DOJ, 830 F.2d 337, 343 (D.C. Cir. 1987); see also ACLU of Wash. v. DOJ, No. 09-0642, 2011 WL 887731, at *6 (W.D. Wash. Mar. 10, 2011) (rejecting FBI attempt to withhold document in its entirety and not just source-identifying information because FBI "ha[d] not alleged, much less shown, that the information was compiled 'in the course of a criminal investigation' or 'lawful national security intelligence investigation'" to satisfy second clause of Exemption 7(D)).

¹⁰⁸ 5 U.S.C. § 552(b)(7)(D); see, e.g., Harvey v. DOJ, 747 F. Supp. 29, 38 (D.D.C. 1990) (finding that investigatory records from local police department provided to the United States Attorney's office were properly withheld in order to protect "identity of and information provided by a confidential source"); Dayo v. INS, No. C-2-83-1422, slip op. at 5-6 (S.D. Ohio Dec. 31, 1985) (holding that information from confidential source in records compiled by local sheriff's office during criminal investigation may be withheld under second clause of Exemption 7(D) when subsequently obtained and used for deportation hearing).

¹⁰⁹ See, e.g., Hopkinson v. Shillinger, 866 F.2d 1185, 1222 (10th Cir. 1989) (protecting state law enforcement agency's request for FBI laboratory evaluation of evidence from state law enforcement investigation and results of FBI's analysis); Gordon v. Thornburgh, 790 F. Supp. 374, 377-78 (D.R.I. 1992) (emphasizing that "[w]hen a state law enforcement agency sends material to an FBI lab for testing [here, arson records in connection with plaintiff's criminal case], confidentiality is 'inherently implicit'" and that "all information from another agency must be protected to provide the confidence necessary to law enforcement cooperation"); Rojem v. DOJ, 775 F. Supp. 6, 12 (D.D.C. 1991) (finding that disclosure of criminal files provided to FBI by state authorities "would unduly discourage" states from enlisting FBI's assistance), appeal dismissed for failure to timely file, No. 92-5088 (D.C. Cir. Nov. 4, 1992); Payne v. DOJ, 722 F. Supp. 229, 231 (E.D. Pa. 1989) (stating that "requirement is met . . . [when] the documents sought are FBI laboratory and fingerprint examinations of evidence collected by local law enforcement agencies" as part of homicide investigation), aff'd, 904 F.2d 695 (3d Cir. 1990) (unpublished table decision).

However, in an important limitation on the reach of Exemption 7(D), in Landano the Supreme Court specifically stated that when "institutional" sources -- such as local law enforcement agencies and private commercial enterprises -- are involved, greater disclosure should occur, because these sources typically provide a "wide variety of information" under circumstances that do not necessarily warrant confidentiality.¹¹⁰

Waiver of Confidentiality

Once courts determine the existence of confidentiality under Exemption 7(D), they are reluctant to find a subsequent waiver of the exemption's protections.¹¹¹ This restraint stems both from the potentially adverse repercussions that may result from additional disclosures and from a recognition that any "judicial effort to create a 'waiver' exception" to exemption 7(D)'s language runs afoul of the statute's intent to provide 'workable' rules."¹¹² As the Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit has declared, a waiver of Exemption 7(D)'s protections should be found *only* upon "absolutely solid evidence showing that the source...has manifested complete disregard for confidentiality."¹¹³ Accordingly, because Exemption 7(D) "mainly seeks to protect law enforcement agencies in their efforts to find future sources,"¹¹⁴ acts of

¹¹⁰ DOJ v. Landano, 508 U.S. 165, 176 (1993); see, e.g., Hale v. DOJ, 99 F.3d 1025, 1032-33 (10th Cir. 1996) (finding that agency did not adequately justify withholding information provided by commercial and financial institutions); Linn v. DOJ, No. 92-1406, 1995 WL 417810, at *32 (D.D.C. June 6, 1995) (noting that agency disclosed "much of the information it previously withheld... in light of Landano," but ordering disclosure of institutional source document, "particularly in light of the fact that this document obviously originated from the Louisiana state authorities, and the application of Exemption 7(D) depends on the source of the information rather than its contents"); see also FOIA Update, Vol. XIV, No. 3, at 10 ("Landano Decision Requires Greater Disclosure") (discussing applicability of Landano standards to "institutional" sources).

¹¹¹ See, e.g., Reiter v. DEA, No. 96-0378, 1997 WL 470108, at *6 (D.D.C. Aug. 13, 1997) (stating that "once an informant's confidentiality has been established, almost nothing can eviscerate Exemption 7(D) protection").

¹¹² Irons v. FBI, 880 F.2d 1446, 1455 (1st Cir. 1989) (citing FTC v. Grolier, Inc., 462 U.S. 19, 27 (1983)); see also Parker v. DOJ, 934 F.2d 375, 380 (D.C. Cir. 1991) (same); Neely v. FBI, 208 F.3d 461, 466 (4th Cir. 2000) (observing that "statute by its terms does not provide for... waiver").

¹¹³ Parker, 934 F.2d at 378 (quoting Dow Jones & Co. v. DOJ, 908 F.2d 1006, 1011 (D.C. Cir. 1990), superseded, 917 F.2d 571 (D.C. Cir. 1990)); see, e.g., Ray v. FBI, 441 F. Supp. 2d 27, 37 (D.D.C. 2006) (stating that court is not inclined to protect source's confidentiality, because source clearly stated that "he ha[d] waived any reliance he may have had" and that "FBI has no such duty to afford" source continued confidentiality against his will); Billington v. DOJ, 69 F. Supp. 2d 128, 139 (D.D.C. 1999) (concluding that plaintiff's allegation that source was "unafraid," even if true, does not constitute "absolutely solid evidence" that source "manifested complete disregard for confidentiality").

¹¹⁴ Irons, 880 F.2d at 1453.

implied "'waiver' by 'sources' will not automatically prove sufficient to release the [source-provided] information."¹¹⁵ (See the discussion of this point under Discretionary Disclosure and Waiver, below.)

Additionally, in order to demonstrate a waiver by disclosure through authorized channels, courts have required the requester to demonstrate both that "'the exact information given to the [law enforcement authority] has already become public, and the fact that the informant gave the same-information to the [law enforcement authority] is also public."¹¹⁶

Thus, "[t]he per se limitation on disclosure under 7(D) does not disappear if the identity of the confidential source becomes known through other means"¹¹⁷ or because

¹¹⁵ Irons, 880 F.2d at 1452; see, e.g., Billington v. DOJ, 11 F. Supp. 2d 45, 69 (D.D.C. 1998) (finding that alleged source did not exhibit "complete disregard for confidentiality" by giving newspaper interview); Freeman v. DOJ, No. 92-0557, 1993 WL 260694, at *3-4 (D.D.C. June 28, 1993) (ruling that the "fact that federal, state, and local authorities were publicly cooperating in the... investigation, or that certain individuals publicly acknowledged that they were 'working closely' with the investigation . . . does not 'manifest complete disregard for confidentiality'"), vacated in other part on denial of reconsideration, No. 92-0557, 1994 WL 35871 (D.D.C. Jan. 26, 1994); Canning v. DOJ, No. 01-2215, slip op. at 12 (D.D.C. Mar. 9, 2004) (stating that "informant's later actions do not waive an agency's right to withhold information"). But see Providence Journal Co. v. U.S. Dep't of the Army, 981 F.2d 552, 567 n.16 (1st Cir. 1992) (holding that express waiver of confidentiality by source vitiates Exemption 7(D) protection); Blanton v. DOJ, 63 F. Supp. 2d 35, 49 (D.D.C. 1999) (ruling that sources "have waived any assurance of confidentiality, express or implied, by writing books about their experiences as confidential FBI informants").

¹¹⁶ Parker, 934 F.2d at 378; accord Dow Jones & Co. v. DOJ, 917 F.2d 571, 577 (D.C. Cir. 1990); see also Davis v. DOJ, 968 F.2d 1276, 1281 (D.C. Cir. 1992) (holding that government is entitled to withhold tapes obtained through informant's assistance "unless it is specifically shown that those tapes, or portions of them, were played during the informant's testimony"); Span v. DOJ, 696 F. Supp. 2d 113, 122 (D.D.C. 2010) (rejecting plaintiff's waiver argument for failure to identify "'specific information in the public domain that appears to duplicate that being withheld'" (quoting Cottone v. Reno, 193 F.3d 550, 555-56 (D.C. Cir. 1999))); Sellers v. DOJ, 684 F. Supp. 2d 149, 162 (D.D.C. 2010) (same); Sanderson v. IRS, No. 98-2369, 1999 WL 35290, at *3-4 (E.D. La. Jan. 25, 1999) (ordering disclosure of "exact information to which [source] testified in her deposition"); cf. Hale v. DOJ, No. 89-1175, slip op. at 6 (W.D. Okla. Jan. 17, 1995) (stating that "individuals who testified in court could not be expected to have their identities or the topic of their testimony withheld"), rev'd in part on other grounds, 99 F.3d 1025 (10th Cir. 1996).

¹¹⁷ L&C Marine Transp., Ltd. v. United States, 740 F.2d 919, 925 (11th Cir. 1984) (citing Radowich v. U.S. Attorney, Dist. of Md., 658 F.2d 957, 960 (4th Cir. 1981)); see, e.g., Rimmer v. Holder, 700 F.3d 246, 261 (6th Cir. 2012) (affirming that "district court correctly dispensed with [plaintiff's] claim that his personal knowledge of the identity of most of the government's sources neutralized the personal-privacy protection afforded them under Exemption 7(D)"); Lesar v. DOJ, 636 F.2d 472, 491 (D.C. Cir. 1980) (finding that no waiver of confidentiality occurs when confidential information finds its way into public domain);

the requester knows the source's identity.¹¹⁸ Likewise, the protection of Exemption 7(D) has been found not to be forfeited by "court-ordered and court-supervised" disclosure to an opponent in civil discovery.¹¹⁹ Moreover, even authorized or official disclosure of some information provided by a confidential source does not open the door to disclosure of any of the other information the source has provided.¹²⁰ In this vein, it is well

Keeney v. FBI, 630 F.2d 114, 119 n.2 (2d Cir. 1980) (declaring that Exemption 7(D) continues to protect confidential sources even after their identification).

¹¹⁸ See, e.g., Jones v. FBI, 41 F.3d 238, 249 (6th Cir. 1994) (explaining that Exemption 7(D) "focuses on the source's intent, not the world's knowledge"); L&C Marine, 740 F.2d at 923, 925 (noting that fact that employee witnesses "could be matched to their statements" does not diminish Exemption 7(D) protection); Radowich v. U.S. Attorney, Dist. of Md., 658 F.2d 957, 960 (4th Cir. 1981) (declaring that Exemption 7(D) applies even when "identities of confidential sources . . . [are] known"); Keeney v. FBI, 630 F.2d 114, 120 n.2 (2d Cir. 1980) (ruling that Exemption 7(D) applies to "local law enforcement agencies [that] have now been identified"); Bullock v. FBI, 577 F. Supp. 2d 75, 80 (D.D.C. 2008) (holding "Exemption 7(D) applies even when the source's identity is no longer a secret"); Butler v. DOJ, Crim. Div., No. 02-0412, slip op. at 10 (D.D.C. Mar. 29, 2004) (finding Exemption 7(D) properly invoked to withhold information regardless of fact that confidential sources are known); Ortiz v. DOJ, No. 97-140-A-3, slip op. at 10 (M.D. La. Aug. 25, 1998) (stating that "[i]t is irrelevant that the identity of the confidential source is known"); Crooker v. IRS, No. 94-0755, 1995 WL 430605, at *6 (D.D.C. Apr. 27, 1995) (stating that "agency may withhold confidential information even if the requester or the public know[s] the source's identity"); Wickline v. FBI, No. 92-1189, 1994 WL 549756, at *4 n.8 (D.D.C. Sept. 30, 1994) (reiterating that "confidentiality is not waived or revoked when a [requester] already knows the protected names"); Shafmaster Fishing, 814 F. Supp. 182, 185 (D.N.H. 1993) (stating that source's identity need not be secret to justify withholding information under Exemption 7(D)); Church of Scientology v. IRS, 816 F. Supp. 1138, 1161 (W.D. Tex. 1993) (declaring it "irrelevant that the identity of the confidential source is known").

¹¹⁹ Donohue v. DOJ, No. 84-3451, 1987 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 15185, at *11 (D.D.C. Dec. 23, 1987); see Glick v. DOJ, No. 89-3279, 1991 WL 118263, at *4 (D.D.C. June 20, 1991) (finding that disclosure "pursuant to discovery in another case . . . does not waive the confidentiality of the information or those who provided it"); see also Parker, 934 F.2d at 380 (observing that judicial efforts to create "waiver" exception run "contrary to the statute's intent to provide workable rules" (citing Irons, 880 F.2d at 1455-56)); Sinito v. DOJ, No. 87-0814, slip op. at 24 (D.D.C. July 12, 2000) (holding that "[n]o further release of information . . . is warranted" even though "names of certain informants were made a matter of public record through release of civil discovery material"), summary affirmance granted in pertinent part, No. 00-5321 (D.C. Cir. Apr. 11, 2001).

¹²⁰ See Neely v. FBI, 208 F.3d 461, 466 (4th Cir. 2000) (explaining that statute does not provide for waiver and that "once the prerequisites of a 'confidential source' and a record compiled 'in the course of a criminal [or national security] investigation' are satisfied, Exemption 7(D) protects from disclosure 'information furnished by [that] confidential source.'" (citing Parker at 380)); Ferguson v. FBI, 957 F.2d 1059, 1068 (2d Cir. 1992) (holding that subsequent disclosure of source's identity or of some of information provided by source does not require "full disclosure of information provided by such a source");

established that source-identifying and source-provided information remains protected even when some of it has been the subject of testimony in open court.¹²¹

Cleary v. FBI, 811 F.2d 421, 423 (8th Cir. 1987) (finding that fact that identity of source is known "does not prevent the confidential source exemption from protecting the information that [the sources] gave to the F.B.I. 'under circumstances from which assurances of confidentiality could reasonably be inferred'" (quoting Parton v. DOJ, 727 F.2d 774, 776 (8th Cir. 1984))); Brant Constr. Co. v. EPA, 778 F.2d 1258, 1265 n.8 (7th Cir. 1985) (ruling that "subsequent disclosure of the information, either partially or completely, does not affect its exempt status under 7(D)"); Shaw v. FBI, 749 F.2d 58, 62 (D.C. Cir. 1984) (holding that "[d]isclosure of one piece of information received from a particular party -- and even the disclosure of that party as its source -- does not prevent that party from being a 'confidential source' for other purposes"); Johnson v. DOJ, 758 F. Supp. 2, 5 (D.D.C. 1991) (stating that fact that someone made public statement concerning incident "does not constitute a waiver of the Bureau's confidential file [because a] . . . press account may be erroneous or false or, more likely, incomplete"); cf. United Techs. Corp. v. NLRB, 777 F.2d 90, 95-96 (2d Cir. 1985) (finding release of informant-related material to party aligned with agency in administrative proceeding in no way diminished government's ability to invoke Exemption 7(D) in response to subsequent request by nonallied party); Adamowicz v. IRS, 672 F. Supp. 2d 454, 476 (S.D.N.Y. 2009) (rejecting argument that Exemption 7(D) protections no longer apply to source after IRS may have inadvertently disclosed source's identity because "privilege belongs to the beneficiary of the promise of confidentiality and continues until he or she waives it" (quoting United Techs. Corp. at 95-96)).

¹²¹ See, e.g., Peltier v. FBI, 563 F.3d 754, 762 (8th Cir. 2009) (noting that "several courts of appeals have held that public testimony does not 'waive' the applicability of Exemption 7(D) to information provided to the FBI by a confidential source, or to information that would disclose the identity of a confidential source"); Neely, 208 F.3d at 466 (recognizing that source can "remain a 'confidential source' . . . even if the source's communication with [the agency] is subsequently disclosed at trial"); Jones, 41 F.3d at 249 (holding that Exemption 7(D) "provides for nondisclosure of all sources who provided information with an understanding of confidentiality, not for protection of only those sources whose identity remains a secret at the time of future FOIA litigation [because they do not testify]"); Davis, 968 F.2d at 1281 (concluding that informant's testimony in open court did not "'waive the [government's] right to invoke Exemption 7(D)'" (quoting Parker, 934 F.2d at 379-80)); Ferguson, 957 F.2d at 1068 (affirming that local law enforcement officer does not lose status as confidential source by testifying in court); Parker, 934 F.2d at 379 (stating that "government agency is not required to disclose the identity of a confidential source or information conveyed to the agency in confidence in a criminal investigation notwithstanding the possibility that the informant may have testified at a public trial"); Irons, 880 F.2d at 1454 (recognizing that "[t]here is no reason grounded in fairness for requiring a source who disclosed information during testimony to reveal, against his will (or to have the FBI reveal for him), information that he did not disclose in public"); Kimberlin v. Dep't of the Treasury, 774 F.2d 204, 209 (7th Cir. 1985) (determining that "disclosure [prior to or at trial] of information given in confidence does not render non-confidential any of the information originally provided"); Dent v. EOUSA, No. 12-0420, 2013 WL 782625, at *10 (D.D.C. Mar. 2, 2013) (rejecting plaintiff's argument that FBI may not invoke Exemption 7(D) and stating that "[e]ven if the identity of or information provided by a source had been disclosed at trial, for example, a government agency still invokes

Consequently, the D.C. Circuit has found that the government is not required even to "confirm or deny that persons who testify at trial are also confidential informants."¹²² When an individual has been expressly identified as a confidential source during trial, however, the Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit and the District Court for the District of Columbia have both concluded that a Glomar response was unavailable.¹²³

Significantly, Exemption 7(D)'s protection for sources and the information they have provided is not diminished by the fact that an investigation has been closed.¹²⁴

Exemption 7(D) to protect the source's identity"); Smith v. FBI, 663 F. Supp. 2d 1, 2 (D.D.C. 2009) (determining that plaintiff failed to "carry his burden of identifying with specificity the exact testimony that is duplicated in withheld materials" in order to show that he is entitled to withheld confidential source material); Bretti v. DOJ, 639 F. Supp. 2d 257, 264 (N.D.N.Y. 2009) (noting that "information obtained from a source does not become subject to disclosure" simply because of trial testimony) (citing Scherer v. Kelley, 584 F.2d 170, 176 n.7 (7th Cir. 1978)); Doolittle v. DOJ, 142 F. Supp. 2d 281, 285-86 (N.D.N.Y. 2001) (protecting identities of confidential sources that "prosecutors [had] disclosed . . . in open court during [plaintiff's] sentencing hearing"); Johnson v. BOP, No. 90-645, 1990 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 18358, at *8-9 (N.D. Ala. Nov. 1, 1990); see also LaRouche v. DOJ, No. 90-2753, slip op. at 12 (D.D.C. Nov. 17, 2000) (noting that agency is not obliged to identify sources "[e]ven if another agency ha[s]" done so); cf. Sanderson, 1999 WL 35290, at *3 (concluding that source's deposition testimony in civil action did not act as "wholesale waiver" of information provided to agency). But see Calhoun v. DEA, No. 08-01059, slip op. at 16-17 (N.D. Ohio June 25, 2009) (rejecting DEA's attempt to withhold entirety of subject's interview on basis of his status as confidential source because plaintiff demonstrated that source testified against plaintiff at his trial); Homick v. DOJ, No. 98-0557, slip op. at 4 (N.D. Cal. Oct. 27, 2004) (concluding that FBI's source waived confidentiality by later testifying).

¹²² Schmerler v. FBI, 900 F.2d 333, 339 (D.C. Cir. 1990) (reasoning that testimony by source does not automatically waive confidentiality because source may be able "to camouflage his true role notwithstanding his court appearance" (quoting Irons v. FBI, 811 F.2d 681, 687 (1st Cir. 1987))); see also Parker, 934 F.2d at 381.

¹²³ See Pickard v. DOJ, 653 F.3d 782, 787 (9th Cir. 2011) (concluding that Glomar response was unavailable where individual was called at trial and identified as confidential informant in testimony); North v. DOJ, 810 F. Supp. 2d 205, 208-09 (D.D.C. 2011) (refusing to affirm Glomar response where trial testimony identified individual's status as informant).

¹²⁴ See Ortiz v. HHS, 70 F.3d 729, 733 (2d Cir. 1995) (noting that "status of the investigation is . . . immaterial to the application of the exemption"); KTVY-TV v. United States, 919 F.2d 1465, 1470-71 (10th Cir. 1990) (rejecting argument that confidentiality was no longer needed because investigation has ended); Akron Standard Div. of Eagle-Picher Indus. v. Donovan, 780 F.2d 568, 573 (6th Cir. 1986) (examining whether confidentiality existed even though investigation was closed); Ortiz v. DOJ, No. 97-140-A-3, slip op. at 10 (E.D. La. Aug. 25, 1998) ("information and/or identity of the individual remains confidential subject to Exemption 7(D) after the investigation is concluded"); Almy v. DOJ, No. 90-0362, 1995 WL 476255, at *13 (N.D. Ind. Apr. 13, 1995) (protection "not diminished" when investigation closed); Church of Scientology, 816 F. Supp. at 1161 (source identity and information

Courts have also consistently recognized that its protections cannot be lost through the mere passage of time.¹²⁵ Additionally, unlike with Exemption 7(C),¹²⁶ the safeguards of Exemption 7(D) remain undiminished by the death of the source.¹²⁷

provided "remains confidential . . . after the investigation is concluded"); Soto v. DEA, No. 90-1816, slip op. at 7 (D.D.C. Apr. 13, 1992) ("[i]t is of no consequence that these sources provided information relating to a criminal investigation which has since been completed"); Gale v. FBI, 141 F.R.D. 94, 98 (N.D. Ill. 1992) (statements protected even "while no investigation is pending" under Exemption 7(D)).

¹²⁵ See, e.g., Hulstein v. DEA, No. 11-2039, 2012 WL 671964, at *3 (8th Cir. Mar. 2, 2012), (noting that implied confidentiality was still warranted "even after the passage of time and whether or not the allegations were acted upon by the authorities"); Halpern v. FBI, 181 F.3d 279, 300 (2d Cir. 1999) (declaring that "it makes no difference in our analysis whether now, in hindsight, the objective need for confidentiality has diminished; what counts is whether then, at the time the source communicated with the FBI, the source understood that confidentiality would attach"); Schmerler, 900 F.2d at 336 (indicating that Exemption 7(D) "contains no sunset provision"); Keys v. DOJ, 830 F.2d 337, 346 (D.C. Cir. 1987) (stating that "Congress has not established a time limitation for exemption (7)(D) and it would be both impractical and inappropriate for the Court to do so" (quoting Keys v. DOJ, No. 85-2588, slip op. at 7 (D.D.C. May 12, 1986))); Irons v. FBI, 811 F.2d 681, 689 (1st Cir. 1987) (applying Exemption 7(D) protection to information regarding 1948-1956 Smith Act trials); Brant Constr., 778 F.2d at 1265 n.8 (emphasizing that "policy of [Exemption] 7(D) [is] to protect future sources of information" and that passage of time "does not alter the status" of source-provided information); McGehee v. DOJ, 800 F. Supp. 2d 220, 235 (D.D.C. 2011) (rejecting claim that implied assurance of confidentiality is lost once source becomes less afraid of reprisal); Fitzgibbon v. U.S. Secret Serv., 747 F. Supp. 51, 60 (D.D.C. 1990) (protecting information regarding alleged 1961 plot against President Kennedy by Trujillo regime in Dominican Republic); Abrams v. FBI, 511 F. Supp. 758, 762-63 (N.D. Ill. 1981) (protecting twenty-seven-year-old documents).

¹²⁶ See, e.g., Schrecker v. DOJ, 14 F. Supp. 2d 111, 118 (D.D.C. 1998) (noting that "FBI does not withhold third party information concerning Exemption 7(C) if it can determine that the third party's age would exceed 100 years").

¹²⁷ See, e.g., Blanton v. DOJ, 64 F. App'x 787, 790 (D.C. Cir. 2003) (rejecting plaintiff's "claim that the death of a confidential source eliminates the applicability of Exemption 7(D)"); McDonnell v. United States, 4 F.3d 1227, 1258 (3d Cir. 1993) (holding that issue of whether source is "deceased does not extend to the information withheld pursuant to Exemption 7(D)"); Kiraly v. FBI, 728 F.2d 273, 279 (6th Cir. 1984) (finding information provided by deceased source who also testified at trial properly withheld); Cohen v. Smith, No. 81-5365, slip op. at 4 (9th Cir. Mar. 25, 1983); Bloomer v. DHS, No. 11-35, 2012 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 62543, at *19 (D. Vt. May 3, 2012) (noting that death of source does not alter confidentiality analysis); Bullock v. FBI, 577 F. Supp. 2d 75, 80 (D.D.C. 2008) (recognizing Exemption 7(D) continues to apply after death of confidential source); see also FOIA Update, Vol. IV, No. 3, at 5; cf. Allen v. DOD, 658 F. Supp. 15, 20 (D.D.C. 1986) (protecting identities of deceased intelligence sources under Exemption 1). But see Homick v. DOJ, No. 98-0557, slip op. at 4 (N.D. Cal. Oct. 27, 2004) (concluding that Exemption 7(D) is inapplicable to deceased source).

Exclusion Considerations

Finally, the FOIA affords special source-identification protection through the "(c)(2) exclusion,"¹²⁸ which permits a criminal law enforcement agency to exclude records from the requirements of the FOIA under specified circumstances when necessary to avoid divulging the existence of a source relationship. (See the discussion of this provision under Exclusions, below.)

¹²⁸ [5 U.S.C. § 552\(c\)\(2\) \(2006 & Supp. IV 2010\)](#); see also DOJ, OIP Guidance: [Implementing FOIA's Statutory Exclusion Provisions](#) (2012).