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April 28, 2026

VIA ELECTRONIC SUBMISSION

Federal Aviation Administration

National Freedom of Information Act Office

Headquarters Service Center

800 Independence Avenue SW

Washington, DC 20591

RE: Freedom of Information Act Request

Dear Sir or Madam:

On behalf of Public Citizen, Inc., and pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), 5 U.S.C. § 552, I request copies of records, as described below, concerning the reported visit by Robert James Ritchie (publicly known as “Kid Rock”) and Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth to Fort Belvoir, Virginia, on Monday, April 27, 2026, and the AH-64 Apache helicopter flights operating from or adjacent to Davison Army Airfield (KDAA) on that date during which Mr. Ritchie and Secretary Hegseth reportedly were aboard. Public Citizen has separately submitted a request for air traffic control voice and radar records concerning the same operations directly to the FAA Air Traffic Organization, Eastern Service Area FOIA Coordinator; the records sought in this request are different and broader in scope.

Because this request implicates records held by multiple FAA lines of business, please route the appropriate portions to (a) the Air Traffic Organization (ATO) for airspace-coordination, NOTAM, and waiver records; (b) Flight Standards (AFS) for civil-aircraft operator and registration records; (c) the Office of Security and Hazardous Materials Safety (ASH) for VIP movement and security-coordination records; and (d) any other FAA line of business reasonably likely to hold responsive records.

Records Requested

For the period beginning April 1, 2026 through the date of your office’s search, please provide:

1. All Notices to Air Missions (NOTAMs), Temporary Flight Restrictions (TFRs), special-use airspace activations, and other airspace notices issued, requested, or coordinated for the airspace of or adjacent to Davison Army Airfield (KDAA) and Fort Belvoir, Virginia, applicable to operations on April 27, 2026.

2. All FAA waivers, letters of agreement, letters of authorization, special-procedure authorizations, and operations specifications, and all communications relating to the issuance, modification, or invocation of any such instrument, concerning the AH-64 Apache helicopter operations conducted from or adjacent to Davison Army Airfield on April 27, 2026.
3. All records concerning FAA coordination with the Department of Defense, the Department of the Army, the United States Secret Service, the White House Military Office, or any other federal entity regarding the movement, transportation, or VIP escort of Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth on April 27, 2026, including but not limited to coordination concerning helicopter operations or fixed-wing operations at or near Davison Army Airfield, and any related distinguished-visitor or VIP movement coordination memoranda.
4. All records concerning the registration, ownership, and operational status of the civil aircraft used by Robert James Ritchie to travel to and from Fort Belvoir, Virginia on April 27, 2026, including but not limited to (a) FAA aircraft registration files for the relevant tail number(s); (b) any operator certificate, air-carrier certificate, or letter of authorization issued under 14 C.F.R. Part 91, Part 125, Part 135, or any other applicable part; (c) any lease, charter, or operating-control agreement on file with the FAA; (d) any Flight Standards District Office (FSDO) inquiry, surveillance record, or enforcement file concerning the aircraft or its operator created on or after January 1, 2025; and (e) any Part 91(K) fractional-ownership program records on file concerning the aircraft.
5. All complaints, hotline reports, NASA Aviation Safety Reporting System (ASRS) referrals, Mandatory Occurrence Reports (MORs), preliminary accident/incident notifications, and other safety-related communications received or generated by the FAA on or after April 27, 2026 concerning either (a) the AH-64 Apache helicopter operations described above, or (b) the civil aircraft operations described in Item 4.
6. All internal FAA communications, including emails and text messages, sent or received by FAA personnel at the Air Traffic Organization, Flight Standards Service, Office of Security and Hazardous Materials Safety, or the Office of the Administrator concerning the operations described in Items 1 through 5 above. For purposes of this item, “communications” includes records held in personal email accounts or on personal devices to the extent they were used to conduct official agency business.

If it is your position that responsive records exist but that those records (or portions of those records) are exempt from disclosure, please identify the records that are being withheld and state the basis for the denial for each record being withheld. In addition, please note that Public Citizen seeks each record *in its entirety*. Accordingly, please provide all nonexempt portions of the records, without redacting portions of any record as “non-responsive,” “out of scope,” or the like.

To the extent records are produced on a rolling basis, please produce records as they become available rather than waiting for completion of all searches. To the extent your office determines

that responsive records are within the custody or control of another federal agency, please refer this request, or the appropriate portion of it, to that agency, and please notify me of the referral. I request that any records produced in response to this request be provided in electronic form wherever possible, in their native format with metadata intact, or, where that is not possible, as searchable text-recognized PDFs.

Public Citizen requests that all fees in connection with this FOIA request be waived in accordance with 5 U.S.C. § 552(a)(4)(A)(iii) because Public Citizen does not seek the records for a commercial purpose and disclosure “is in the public interest because it is likely to contribute significantly to public understanding of the operations or activities of the government.” The requested records would shed light on the use of Department of Defense personnel, taxpayer-funded combat aircraft, and federal airspace and air traffic control resources to facilitate a recreational flight by a private celebrity in the company of the Secretary of Defense; on the regulatory status of the civil aircraft used to transport that celebrity; on the manner in which FAA, in its capacity as the steward of the National Airspace System, coordinated with DoD and other federal entities regarding the operations at issue; and on whether public funds and federal property were used to confer a personal benefit on a political ally of President Trump. The records sought are not otherwise publicly available. The use of military assets and personnel by the Secretary of Defense and questions of military aviation oversight are subjects of demonstrated and continuing interest to a broad audience of journalists, members of Congress, taxpayers, military-affairs researchers, and the general public, as evidenced by sustained national press coverage of the Visit and the related March 2026 incident involving Apache helicopters and Mr. Ritchie’s Nashville-area residence.¹

Public Citizen is a nonprofit research, litigation, and advocacy organization that represents the public interest before Congress, the executive branch, and the courts. Public Citizen has considerable expertise in the issues relevant to this records request — including federal ethics, conflicts of interest in the executive branch, the use of federal resources for private benefit, and government transparency. Public Citizen’s Trump Accountability project has produced extensive research and public commentary on conflicts of interest involving the Trump administration and on the use of federal resources to benefit Trump-aligned individuals and businesses.²

¹See, e.g., Ryan Grim, *Scoop: Kid Rock flew to Fort Belvoir this morning on his private jet and took a little joy ride on 2 Apache helicopters with War Secretary Pete Hegseth*, X (Apr. 27, 2026), x.com/ryangrim/status/2048847394641412290; Hafiz Rashid, *WTF Was Kid Rock Doing on an Apache Helicopter With Pete Hegseth?*, New Republic (Apr. 27, 2026), newrepublic.com/post/209569/kid-rock-apache-helicopter-pete-hegseth; *Kid Rock scores ride in Apache helicopter with Trump defense chief: Army sources*, AlterNet (Apr. 27, 2026), alternet.org/kid-rock-helicopter/. The reported flight follows a March 2026 incident in which two AH-64 Apache helicopters from the 101st Combat Aviation Brigade conducted a low-altitude flight near Mr. Ritchie’s Nashville-area residence; the Army initially suspended the aircrew pending an investigation, but Secretary Hegseth publicly directed that there be “no punishment” and “no investigation,” telling the aircrew to “carry on, patriots.”

²See, e.g., Public Citizen, *Banquet of Greed: Trump Ballroom Donors Feast on Federal Funds and Favors* (Nov. 2025), citizen.org/article/banquet-of-greed-trump-ballroom-donors-feast-on-federal-funds-and-favors/ (analyzing federal contracts, dropped enforcement actions, and policy benefits flowing to corporate and individual donors to a Trump-directed White House project); Public Citizen, *Trump Administration Finally Discloses White House Ballroom Funding Contract in Response to Public Citizen’s FOIA Lawsuit* (Apr. 22, 2026), citizen.org/news/trump-administration-finally-discloses-white-house-ballroom-funding-contract-in-response-to-public-citizens-foia-lawsuit/;

Public Citizen does not have a commercial interest in the requested records.

Public Citizen has a strong record of effectively conveying information to the public, including information obtained through Public Citizen's use of FOIA, and Public Citizen intends to share the information received from this request with the public free of charge. Public Citizen distributes information through its website,³ Facebook,⁴ Bluesky,⁵ and email listservs. It also maintains multiple blogs,⁶ publishes a bi-monthly newspaper,⁷ and issues frequent press releases.⁸ Many of Public Citizen's reports, petitions, or other research products grab headlines in major newspapers, broadcast media, social media, and academic journals.⁹ Nearly every day, print and broadcast media around the world mention Public Citizen or quote its experts.¹⁰ Public Citizen also makes its experts available to speak to the media, to speak at conferences, and to testify before Congress.

Accordingly, I request that you waive all fees for locating and duplicating the requested records because Public Citizen is entitled to a public interest fee waiver. If, however, a waiver is not granted, please advise me of the amount of any proposed search, review, and reproduction charges before you conduct those activities.

Public Citizen further requests expedited processing of this request pursuant to 5 U.S.C. § 552(a)(6)(E) and 49 C.F.R. § 7.31. A compelling need exists on at least two independent grounds. First, Public Citizen is "primarily engaged in disseminating information," as established by the record of public dissemination described above, and there is an urgency to inform the public concerning

Public Citizen & Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington, *We Can Trump-Proof the Presidency: Executive Branch Ethics Laws That Require Immediate Fixes*, citizen.org/news/we-can-trump-proof-the-presidency-executive-branch-ethics-laws-that-require-immediate-fixes/.

³See citizen.org.

⁴See facebook.com/publiccitizen (Public Citizen's Facebook page). Public Citizen's Facebook page has more than 145,000 followers.

⁵See bsky.app/profile/did:plc:mt3o2cf5fqpyqbyalwkegzef (Public Citizen's Bluesky page). Public Citizen's Bluesky page has more than 69,000 followers.

⁶See, e.g., Public Citizen: Consumer Law & Policy Blog, clpblog.citizen.org.

⁷See, e.g., Public Citizen News, November/December 2025, citizen.org/wp-content/uploads/Nov-PC-News-2025-final.pdf.

⁸See Public Citizen, Press Releases, citizen.org/news/type/press/.

⁹See, e.g., Mikella Schuettler, *White-Collar Enforcement Sinks Under Trump, Group Says*, Bloomberg (Jan. 15, 2026), bloomberg.com/news/articles/2026-01-15/white-collar-enforcement-sinks-under-trump-public-citizen-says; Jacob Gardenswartz, *Trump promised to 'drill, baby, drill.' But Americans' gas costs are up, new report finds*, Scripps News (Dec. 16, 2025), scrippsnews.com/politics/trump-promised-to-drill-baby-drill-but-americans-gas-costs-are-up-new-report-finds; Jonathan Edwards, *Report: Donors to Trump's White House ballroom have \$279B in federal contracts*, Wash. Post (Nov. 3, 2025), washingtonpost.com/politics/2025/11/03/trump-ballroom-donors-contracts-enforcement/; *More than 40 Trump administration picks tied directly to oil, gas and coal, analysis shows*, The Guardian (Oct. 9, 2025), theguardian.com/us-news/2025/oct/08/trump-administration-fossil-fuels-climate.

¹⁰See, e.g., In the News, Public Citizen, citizen.org/news/type/in-the-news/.

actual federal-government activity. Second, this request concerns a matter of widespread and exceptional national media interest in which there exist possible questions about the government's integrity that affect public confidence: the Secretary of Defense's reported use of armed Army combat aircraft to provide a recreational flight to a private celebrity has been the subject of sustained coverage by major national news outlets, has prompted public statements from Members of Congress and at least one sitting governor,¹¹ and follows by less than a month a separate Apache-helicopter incident involving the same private individual in which Secretary Hegseth publicly intervened to halt an ongoing Army investigation. The records sought will lose much of their value to public understanding if they are not produced promptly. Pursuant to 5 U.S.C. § 552(a)(6)(E)(vi), I certify that the foregoing statements, and the statements made elsewhere in this letter in support of expedited processing, are true and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief.

I expect a determination as to the request for expedited processing within 10 calendar days, as required by 5 U.S.C. § 552(a)(6)(E)(ii)(I). If expedited processing is granted, please process this request as soon as practicable. If expedited processing is denied, I expect a substantive response within 20 working days as otherwise required by law. If you have any questions regarding this request, please contact me by phone at (202) 804-2744 or by e-mail at zeverson@citizen.org.

Thank you very much for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Zach Everson

On behalf of Public Citizen

¹¹See, e.g., Jason Crow (@RepJasonCrow), X (Apr. 27, 2026), x.com/RepJasonCrow/status/2048891961038278990 (post by Rep. Jason Crow, D-Colo., a member of the House Armed Services Committee and former Army Ranger, questioning Secretary Hegseth's use of taxpayer dollars to give Mr. Ritchie "joy rides" on Apache helicopters); Governor Newsom Press Office (@GovPressOffice), X (Apr. 27, 2026), x.com/GovPressOffice/status/2048863356241821878 (post by the press office of California Governor Gavin Newsom questioning why taxpayers were paying to fly Mr. Ritchie aboard \$100 million helicopters).