



ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE OF THE  
UNITED STATES COURTS

HONORABLE ROSLYNN R. MAUSKOPF  
Director

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20544

April 29, 2021

Honorable Jerrold Nadler  
Chair  
Committee on the Judiciary  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

I herewith transmit the annual report for 2020 regarding the activities of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Courts as required in 50 U.S.C. § 1873. Enclosed is a copy of the version of the report that we are making available online at <https://www.uscourts.gov/statistics-reports/analysis-reports/directors-report-foreign-intelligence-surveillance-courts> pursuant to 50 U.S.C. § 1873(a)(2). We are separately providing to you a classified version of the report.

The report indicates that in calendar year 2020 the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court denied 13 applications in full and 24 applications in part. The Court modified the orders sought in an additional 138 applications and granted the orders sought without modifications for 404 applications. Two amicus curiae were appointed during the reporting period, and no findings were made under 50 U.S.C. § 1803(i)(2)(A).

The Executive Branch has conducted the declassification review specified in 50 U.S.C. § 1873(a)(1). The Department of Justice advised us that two numbers in the report are classified at this time. We are not reporting these numbers in the public version of the report, but we are including them in the classified version.

Honorable Jerrold Nadler

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If we may be of further assistance to you in this or any other matter, please contact me or the Office of Legislative Affairs at (202) 502-1700.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Roslynn R. Mauskopf". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent "R" at the beginning.

Roslynn R. Mauskopf  
Director

Enclosure

cc: Honorable Jim Jordan

Identical letters sent to:

Honorable Richard J. Durbin  
Honorable Adam B. Schiff  
Honorable Mark R. Warner

## **Report of the Director of the Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts on Activities of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Courts for 2020**

### **Introduction**

Under [50 U.S.C. § 1873\(a\)\(2\)](#), enacted as part of the USA FREEDOM Act of 2015 (Pub. L. No. 114-23), the Director of the Administrative Office of the United States Courts (AO) is required to publish statistical information on certain activities of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court (FISC or the Court) and Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court of Review (FISCR) (collectively referred to as the FISA courts) as detailed in [50 U.S.C. § 1873\(a\)\(1\)](#). This includes the number of applications or certifications submitted to the FISC and whether those requests were granted, modified, or denied. It also includes information on amicus curiae appointments by the FISA courts. This is the Director's report for calendar year 2020.

### **Summary of Findings**

The FISC disclosed that it received 579 applications in 2020. After consideration by the court, 404 orders were granted, 138 orders were modified, 24 orders were denied in part, and 13 applications were denied in full. After completing the declassification review specified in 50 U.S.C. § 1873(a)(1), the U.S. Department of Justice advised the AO that the number of certifications submitted and the number of orders modified under [50 U.S.C. § 1881a](#) are classified for national security reasons and so are not included in these totals. Two appointments of a total of two individuals to serve as amici curiae were made by the FISA courts during this period.

### **Explanation of Selected Terms**

More detailed statistics appear in the table below. An explanation of selected terms is provided as a reference to help readers understand what is included and excluded in the stated totals.

#### ***Applications or Certifications***

The reported numbers include:

- (1) applications or certifications that were filed in signed, final form pursuant to Rule 9(b) of the FISC Rules of Procedure; and
- (2) proposed applications or certifications (submitted pursuant to Rule 9(a) of the FISC Rules of Procedure) for which the government decided not to submit a corresponding signed, final application or certification pursuant to Rule 9(b) after being advised that the Court, based on its assessment of the proposed application or certification, would not grant the application or certification as proposed by the government.

The reported numbers do not include motions or other requests for relief made after the Court acted on the application or certification in that docket.

#### ***Orders Granted***

The reported numbers include orders granted without substantive modifications to the orders proposed by the government. They do not include any action taken by the Court in response to motions or other requests for relief made after the Court acted on the application or certification in a docket.

## ***Orders Modified***

The reported numbers include:

- (1) any substantive modifications to proposed orders that accompanied a signed, final application or certification submitted by the government pursuant to Rule 9(b), including when such modifications were effected through a supplemental order issued by the Court; and
- (2) any substantive modifications to proposed orders that accompanied proposed applications or certifications submitted by the government pursuant to Rule 9(a) when such modifications resulted from the Court's assessment of such a submission, including when such modifications were subsequently reflected in a proposed order that accompanied a signed, final application or certification submitted by the government pursuant to Rule 9(b).

The following Court actions are among those that would be regarded as substantive modifications to an order:

- (1) imposing a new reporting requirement or modifying one proposed by the government;
- (2) changing the description or specification of a targeted person, of a facility to be subjected to electronic surveillance or of property to be searched;
- (3) modifying the minimization procedures proposed by the government; or
- (4) shortening the duration of some or all of the authorities requested.

The numbers of modification in the table below *do not* include dispositions in which the Court granted in part and denied in part the authorizations requested by the government by approving some targets, some facilities, places, premises, property or specific selection terms, and/or some forms of collection, but not others. As discussed below, these modifications are reported separately as partial denials of the relief sought in the application or certification.

The reported numbers of orders modified likewise do not include:

- (1) any actions taken by the Court in response to motions or other requests for relief made after the Court acted on the application or certification in that docket; or
- (2) any modifications made by the government to an application or certification that it had submitted pursuant to Rule 9(a) or Rule 9(b) – as opposed to modifications to the proposed orders submitted therewith.

In some instances, the Court examination resulted in the government making material changes to applications and certifications; for example, proffering additional facts to support a required judicial finding of probable cause or to address minimization concerns. Consistent with the statutory mandate in 50 U.S.C. § 1873(a), however, the number reported in this category includes only cases in which there were substantive modifications to the government's proposed orders.

### ***Orders Denied in Part***

As noted above, consistent with the Director's reports since 2016, partial denials of the relief sought by the government are captured separately under the heading "Orders Denied in Part." These are dispositions in which the Court granted in part and denied in part the authorizations requested by the government by approving some targets, some facilities, places, premises, property or specific selection terms, and/or some forms of collection, but not others.

### ***Applications or Certifications Denied***

The reported numbers include:

- (1) any cases in which the Court denied in its entirety a final, signed application or certification submitted by the government pursuant to Rule 9(b);
- (2) any cases in which the government withdrew a final, signed application or certification it had submitted pursuant to Rule 9(b) after being advised that the Court would not grant the application or certification as submitted by the government; and
- (3) any cases in which the government decided not to submit a final, signed application or certification pursuant to Rule 9(b) after being advised that the Court, based on its assessment of the corresponding proposed application or certification submitted pursuant to Rule 9(a), would not grant the application or certification as proposed by the government.

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**Table 1**

In accordance with the reporting requirements specified in 50 U.S.C. § 1873(a)(1), the statistics in this table are itemized by section of the statute. Some of the statistics reported herein differ from those in comparable reports prepared by the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) and the Director of National Intelligence (DNI) because those agencies track and tabulate actions taken only with respect to final applications and certifications filed pursuant to Rule 9(b).

Section	Applications or Certifications	Orders Granted	Orders Modified	Orders Denied in Part	Applications or Certifications Denied
<a href="#">1805</a> only	52	38	12	1	1
<a href="#">1824</a> only	25	18	5	0	2
1805 and 1824 <sup>†</sup>	412	278	104	21	9
<a href="#">1842</a>	15	12	3	0	0
<a href="#">1861</a>	28	16	10	2	0
<a href="#">1881a</a>	██████████ <sup>‡</sup>	0	██████████ <sup>‡</sup>	0	0
<a href="#">1881b</a>	0	0	0	0	0
<a href="#">1881c</a>	47	42	4	0	1

<sup>†</sup>Requests for combined authority to conduct electronic surveillance and physical searches under 50 U.S.C. § 1805 and § 1824, respectively, are included in this row and are not separately reflected in the rows addressing requests for authority to conduct electronic surveillance (Section 1805) and physical search (Section 1824) above.

<sup>‡</sup> After completing the declassification review specified in 50 U.S.C. § 1873(a)(1), the U.S. Department of Justice has advised the AO that these numbers are currently classified for national security reasons.

## Amicus Curiae

[50 U.S.C. § 1803\(i\)\(2\)](#) authorizes the FISA courts to appoint individuals to serve as amici curiae. Under 50 U.S.C. § 1803(i)(2)(A), a FISA court must appoint an individual to serve as amicus curiae to assist the court in the consideration of any application for an order or review that, in the opinion of such court, presents a novel or significant interpretation of the law, unless it issues a finding that such appointment is not appropriate. Furthermore, a FISA court may appoint an individual or organization to serve as amicus curiae in any instance as such court deems appropriate or, upon motion, permit an individual or organization leave to file an amicus curiae brief. 50 U.S.C. § 1803(i)(2)(B).

For purposes of reporting under 50 U.S.C. § 1873(a)(1)(E), each instance of an individual receiving an appointment is counted separately, such as when more than one individual is appointed in the same matter, or when the same individual is appointed by the FISC and the FISCR at different stages of the same case.

During the reporting period, there were two appointments of two individuals to serve as amici curiae by the FISA courts. The names of the individuals appointed during the reporting period to serve as amici curiae are as follows: Amy Jeffress and Tianyi Xin. No findings were made in 2020, pursuant to 50 U.S.C. § 1803(i)(2)(A), that an amicus curiae appointment was not appropriate.

Consistent with the Director's reports since 2017, this report also specially notes instances in which the Court advised the government that it was considering appointment of an amicus curiae to address a novel or significant question of law raised in a proposed application, but the government ultimately did not proceed with the proposed application or modified the final application such that it did not present a novel or significant question of law, thereby obviating a requirement for consideration as to the appropriateness of appointment of amicus. There was one such instance in 2020, which is reflected in the table above as a partial denial of the application at issue.