



The United States Department *of the* Treasury

TERRORIST FINANCE TRACKING PROGRAM

Questions and Answers

After the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, the United States Department of the Treasury initiated the Terrorist Finance Tracking Program (TFTP) to identify, track, and pursue terrorists—such as Al-Qaida—and their networks. An agreement between the European Union (EU) and the United States (U.S.) on the transfer and processing of data for purposes of the TFTP (the Agreement) entered into force on August 1, 2010. This document is intended to answer many of the most common questions about the TFTP and the Agreement.

Q.1: What is the value of the TFTP?

A.1: Since its inception in 2001, the TFTP has provided valuable lead information that has helped discover planned terrorist attacks and has been used in the investigation of many notorious and violent terrorist attacks and attempted attacks, including, for example:

- the February 2020 attack in Vienna, Austria;
- the August 2017 terror attack in Turku, Finland;
- the August 2017 La Rambla attack in Barcelona;
- the 2016 attacks in Brussels;
- the January and November 2015 attacks in Paris;
- the 2013 Boston Marathon bombings;
- threats to the 2012 London Summer Olympic games;

A significant number of TFTP-derived leads have been shared with European authorities and EU Member State Governments—more than 160,930 through December 2022.

Q.2: What European bodies approved the Agreement?

A.2: Following the completion of negotiations, the Agreement was approved by the European Commission. The Agreement was then approved by the Council of the European Union and signed by the U.S. and the EU on June 28, 2010. The European Parliament gave its consent to the Agreement on July 8, 2010. The Agreement entered into force on August 1, 2010.

Q.3: Have any reviews of the TFTP taken place?

A.3: Yes. The EU and U.S. have conducted six Joint Reviews of the implementation and effectiveness of the Agreement, pursuant to Article 13 of the Agreement: February 2011, October 2012, April

2014, March 2016, February 2019, and March 2022. In accordance with the Agreement, the EU delegations included European Commission officials, two data protection experts from EU member state data protection authorities. The EU delegations of the Joint Review teams reported their findings to the European Commission, and in March 2011, December 2012, August 2014, January 2017, July 22, 2019, and November 2022 the European Commission made those reports public. Those reports are available on the European Commission's website: ec.europa.eu.

The U.S. government agrees with the reports' findings that the operation and implementation of the Agreement are consistent with the U.S. commitment to implement the robust data protection safeguards contained in the Agreement. The U.S. Treasury Department carefully considers the EU delegations' recommendations as it continues to implement the Agreement, including continuing to engage in joint reviews.

It should be noted that the U.S. government committed itself to allow review of the TFTP even before the Agreement. The U.S. government invited an independent person appointed by the EU to conduct a review of the TFTP in 2008 and 2009. Reports issued by this independent person in 2008 and in early 2010 concluded that the U.S. had implemented significant and effective controls and safeguards which ensure respect for the protection of personal data. The reports also stated that TFTP leads shared with EU authorities had not only been extremely valuable in investigating terrorist attacks which have taken place in Europe over the eight years preceding the reports, but had also been instrumental in preventing a number of terrorist attacks in Europe and elsewhere.

Q.4: How does the TFTP operate?

A.4: Under its domestic legal authorities, the U.S. Treasury Department prepares certain requests for data directed at data

providers (Requests). Under the Agreement, the U.S. Treasury Department provides a copy of any Requests that concerns data stored in the EU, along with supplemental documents relating to the Requests, to Europol to verify that the Requests: clearly identify the data requested, is narrowly tailored, substantiates the necessity of the data, and does not seek Single Euro Payments Area data. Once Europol verifies that the Requests complies with the Agreement, it notifies the data provider and the data provider transmits the data to the U.S. Treasury Department. The U.S. Treasury Department coordinates closely with Europol, since the entry into force of the Agreement, including by providing additional clarifying information in response to Europol inquiries.

Q.5: What are the safeguards protecting the data?

A.5: The protection of privacy and civil liberties is a top priority of the U.S. government. Consistent with this decision, and in accordance with past practice, the U.S. Treasury Department has applied strict controls to ensure data security and integrity, as well as to enforce appropriate limits on processing of data. Safeguards in the Agreement include the following:

- Data are maintained in a physically secure, stand-alone computer network—not connected to any other data system—and subject to highly limited access rights;
- Data may be searched only for counter-terrorism purposes and not for any other type of criminal activity or for any other purpose, including counter-proliferation;
- No search may be conducted on data unless a TFTP personnel provides pre-existing information demonstrating a nexus between the subject of the search and terrorism or its financing;
- The TFTP does not involve data mining or any other type of algorithmic or automated profiling or computer filtering;

- Detailed logs are maintained of all searches made, including the nexus to terrorism or its financing that is required to initiate the search;
- A select group of independent overseers, including one person appointed by the European Commission, have access to and authority to review all searches of the provided data undertaken by TFTP personnel. Independent overseers can block searches if they do not satisfy all of the safeguards; and
- The EU and the U.S. jointly review the implementation of the Agreement—with particular regard to the safeguards, controls, and reciprocity provisions set out in the Agreement—on a regular basis, and the European Commission thereafter presents a report on the review to the European Parliament and the Council.

The 2022 report prepared by the EU delegation of the Joint Review team and adopted by the European Commission expressed the Commission's full satisfaction that the TFTP Agreement and its robust data protection safeguards are being properly implemented, and that the oversight mechanism is effective and functioning smoothly.

An external auditing firm appointed by the data provider continues to perform a separate, independent audit. The external auditors have full access to all TFTP systems and personnel.

Q.6: What redress provisions are available to EU citizens and residents?

A.6: Under the Agreement, persons may seek a confirmation whether their data protection rights have been respected, as well as rectification, erasure, or blocking of inaccurate data. Requests for confirmation or rectification may be submitted to the relevant European national data protection authority, which shall transmit

the requests to the privacy officer of the U.S. Treasury Department. After an appropriate review, the privacy officer then must: (a) inform the relevant European national data protection authority whether personal data may be disclosed to the data subject or whether data have been rectified, as appropriate; (b) confirm whether the data subject's rights have been duly respected; and (c) when access to or rectification of personal data is refused based on reasonable legal limitations, explain the refusal in writing and provide information on the means available for seeking administrative and judicial redress in the United States.

The Agreement further provides that any person who considers his or her personal data to have been processed improperly may seek effective administrative or judicial redress in accordance with the laws of the EU, its Member States, and the U.S. The U.S. Treasury Department will treat all persons equally in the application of its administrative redress processes, regardless of nationality or country of residence.

Under U.S. law, any person, regardless of nationality or country of residence, can seek judicial redress from an adverse administrative action of the U.S. government. How best to do so involves answering legal questions—for example whether to make a claim under the Freedom of Information Act, the Judicial Redress Act, the Administrative Procedure Act, or some other law—for which it is often necessary to assess the specific circumstances of the adverse action. Other processes may also be available under U.S. law.

Q.7: What does rectification mean in the context of the TFTP?

A.7: In the event that it is notified of an error warranting rectification in the financial payment messaging data it has received, the U.S. Treasury Department will take appropriate steps to prevent the future use or dissemination of the erroneous data, and will

annotate any existing documents produced from the erroneous data. To date, the U.S. Treasury Department has received no such notice.

Q.8: How can I find out more about available redress options?

A.8: The U.S. Treasury Department has made available on its website a detailing the procedures for seeking administrative redress under the Agreement (see “Redress Procedures for Seeking Access, Rectification, Erasure, or Blocking,” available at [treasury.gov/tftp](https://www.treasury.gov/tftp)). For additional information or inquiries regarding procedures for seeking access, rectification, erasure, blocking, or redress under the Agreement, you may also contact the U.S. Department of the Treasury or your national data protection authority (“NDPA”). Contact information for each NDPA in each EU Member State can be found via the official website of the European Commission at ec.europa.eu.

Q.9: To whom should request for access, rectification, erasure, or blocking be sent?

A.9: Appropriate requests for access, rectification, erasure, or blocking should be transmitted through express courier (or any delivery service that provides confirmation tracking numbers) by the relevant NDPA to the following address: Privacy Officer / TFTP, JBAB, Building 410 (Door 123), 250 Murray Lane SW, Washington, DC, USA 20222.

Q.10: How long are data stored under the TFTP?

A.10: The U.S. has agreed to destroy data after five years, which is the same time period the EU uses under Directive 2015/849/EC (on the prevention of the use of the financial system for the purpose of money laundering and terrorist financing) and Regulation (EC) No.1781/2006 (on information on the payer accompanying transfers of funds). Leads generated for use in

specific matters are retained for no longer than necessary for specific investigations or prosecutions for which they are used.

Q.11: I heard that the TFTP may be the reason my bank blocked a transaction to my account and my goods were stopped at a border crossing. Is that possible?

A.11: No. The TFTP cannot interdict or view “live” transactions as they occur; instead, it involves a narrow review of specific, financial transactions that already have occurred, in order to assist investigations of terrorist plots and activity.

Q.12: Does the U.S. send an EU customer’s transaction data to countries outside of the EU?

A.12: The U.S. shares counter-terrorism leads generated by the TFTP with relevant governments for counter-terrorism purposes only. We do this consistent with UN Security Council Resolution 1373 (2001), which includes provisions stating:

- that States shall take the necessary steps to prevent the commission of terrorist acts, including by provision of early warning to other States by exchange of information;
- that States shall afford one another the greatest measure of assistance in connection with criminal investigations or criminal proceedings relating to the financing or support of terrorist acts;
- that States should find ways of intensifying and accelerating the exchange of operational information;
- that States should exchange information in accordance with international and domestic law; and
- that States should cooperate, particularly through bilateral and multilateral arrangements and agreements, to prevent and suppress terrorist attacks and to take action against perpetrators of such attacks.

The Agreement limits the transfer to third countries of EU

persons' data and authorizes such transfers only for counter-terrorism purposes and subject to a variety of additional safeguards.

Q.13: Is the U.S. assisting the EU to develop an equivalent to the TFTP?

A.13: If the EU decides to establish an EU system, the U.S. has agreed to provide assistance and advice to contribute to the system's effective establishment. U.S. and EU authorities would cooperate to ensure that the U.S. and EU systems are complementary and efficient in a manner that further enhances citizens' security.

