UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
DISTRICT OF MASSACHUSETTS

GHASSAN ALASAAD, et al.,

Plaintiffs,

V.

ELAINE DUKE, et al.,

Defendants.

Civil Action
No. 17-11730-DJC

April 23, 2018
2:56 p.m.

TRANSCRIPT OF MOTION HEARING

BEFORE THE HONORABLE DENISE J. CASPER

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT

JOHN J. MOAKLEY U.S. COURTHOUSE

1 COURTHOUSE WAY

BOSTON, MA 02210

DEBRA M. JOYCE, RMR, CRR, FCRR
Official Court Reporter
John J. Moakley U.S. Courthouse
1 Courthouse Way, Room 5204
Boston, MA 02210
joycedebra@gmail.com

1 APPEARANCES:

2 FOR THE PLAINTIFFS:

3 ADAM SCHWARTZ, ESQ.
AARON MACKEY, ESQ.
4 Electric Frontier Foundation
815 Eddy Street
5 San Francisco, CA 94109
415-436-9333
6
ESHA BHANDARI, ESQ.
7 HUGH HANDEYSIDE, ESQ.
ACLU Foundation
8 125 Broad Street 18th Floor
New York, NY 10004
9 212-549-2500

10 JESSIE J. ROSSMAN, ESQ.
ACLU of Massachusetts
11 211 Congress Street
3rd Flr.
12 Boston, MA 02110
617-482-3170
13
NATHAN FREED WESSLER, ESQ.
14 ACLU Foundation of Massachusetts
211 Congress Street
15 3rd Floor
Boston, MA 02110
16 212-519-7847

17 FOR THE DEFENDANTS:

18 MICHAEL DREZNER, ESQ.
Department of Justice- Federal Programs Branch
19 20 Massachusetts Ave. NW
Washington, D.C. 20001
20 202-514-4505

21 ANNAPURNA BALAKRISHNA, ESQ.
U.S. Attorney's Office
22 Civil Division
One Courthouse Way
23 Suite 9200
Boston, MA 02110
24 617-748-3111

25

1 P R O C E E D I N G S

2 (The following proceedings were held in open

3 court before the Honorable Denise J. Casper, United States

4 District Judge, United States District Court, District of

5 Massachusetts, at the John J. Moakley United States Courthouse,

6 1 Courthouse Way, Boston, Massachusetts, on April 23, 2018.)

7 THE CLERK: Court is in session. Please be seated.

8 Civil action 17-11730, Ghassan Alasaad, et al. v.

9 Elaine Duke, et al.

10 Would counsel please state your name for the record.

11 MR. SCHWARTZ: Good morning, your Honor. Adam

12 Schwartz from the Electronic Frontier Foundation for the

13 plaintiffs.

14 MS. BHANDARI: Esha Bhandari from the ACLU for the

15 plaintiffs. If the Court will grant permission, plaintiffs'

16 counsel would like to split oral argument with Mr. Schwartz on

17 standing, and I would argue the merits.

18 THE COURT: Thank you. Good afternoon to you both.

19 MR. SCHWARTZ: And, your Honor, I would just like to

20 introduce the other counsel who are with us today. We have

21 Aaron Mackey from the EFF; and also Hugh Handeyside, Nate

22 Wessler, and Jessie Rossman from the ACLU; and we have two of

23 our plaintiffs here today, Sidd Bikkannavar and Matt Wright.

24 THE COURT: Good afternoon.

25 MR. DREZNER: Good morning, your Honor. Michael

1 Drezner from the Department of Justice for defendants.
2 MS. BALAKRISHNA: Good afternoon, your Honor. AUSA
3 Annapurna Balakrishna, local counsel.
4 THE COURT: Good afternoon.
5 Counsel, I know we're here on the defendants' motion
6 to dismiss.
7 Counsel, I'm fine to have you split argument. I was
8 thinking about 20 minutes either side. If you'd like to
9 reserve some time for rebuttal, just let me know.
02:57 10 I will tell you that I have read the papers on both
11 sides, as well as the policies, as well as the amicus briefs.
12 So I understand the parties' positions, but I am more than
13 happy to hear argument today.
14 Counsel.
15 MR. DREZNER: Thank you, your Honor. I'll reserve
16 five minutes for rebuttal.
17 THE COURT: Sure.
18 MR. DREZNER: Thank you, your Honor. May it please
19 the Court.
02:58 20 This case concerns the government's authority to
21 conductor searches of electronic devices at the international
22 border. Eleven plaintiffs have brought facial challenges to
23 that authority here under three legal claims. As your Honor
24 said, I think you're well aware of what they are, so I'll move
25 right into standing and why your Honor need not even reach

1 those claims.
2 The first argument that they bring is they are going
3 to go through a future search of their electronic devices at
4 the border. But I think it's important to note that their
5 burden here is a bit higher than it would otherwise be to show
6 standing.
7 First, as the court noted in Clapper, the inquiry has
8 to be especially rigorous where a court is asked to find
9 unconstitutional the acts of another branch of government, and
02:58 10 that's certainly what they're asking for here.
11 Second, Lyons held that past injury in and of itself
12 does not provide an entitlement to prospective injunctive
13 relief, rather, plaintiffs have to show a sufficient likelihood
14 of injury. And Clapper clarifies on this score that the injury
15 has to be certainly impending and that allegations of possible
16 future injury do not suffice. And plaintiffs --
17 THE COURT: But isn't there a showing here in that
18 regard? My recollection -- I don't remember the exact number,
19 but there are a number of the plaintiffs here that were
02:59 20 subjected to multiple searches. So what do you say to that
21 argument?
22 MR. DREZNER: I think, your Honor, they would have to
23 make some allegation in the complaint to say that they are
24 somehow at a heightened risk of search in the future, and not
25 just that, but that that risk indicates that that search is

1 certainly impending.

2 So, first, they haven't brought any allegation in the

3 complaint, they don't say anything in the complaint about why

4 they are more at risk in the future, they simply bring that up

5 in one of their briefs. But even there, your Honor, they're

6 simply speculating. They say, you know, whatever prompted

7 these searches in the past may prompt a search in the future.

8 So when plaintiffs have to speculate about the likelihood of

9 their own injury, standing is clearly lacking.

03:00 10 So I think plaintiffs try and argue for this realistic

11 risk standard quoting the Burner v. Delahanty case from the 1st

12 Circuit, but to the extent that is less than the certainly

13 impending requirement from the Supreme Court, that's simply

14 incompatible. But looking to that case, the Court --

15 THE COURT: But isn't it imminent or a substantial

16 risk that harm will occur?

17 MR. DREZNER: That's right, your Honor. In the

18 Clapper decision there's a footnote saying, Well, in certain

19 instances we found that a substantial risk could suffice where

03:00 20 plaintiffs took or incurred reasonable costs due to the

21 substantial risk of a harm. And so I think the court was

22 strongly implying at least that the substantial risk standard

23 applies where plaintiffs may incur some cost due to the risk of

24 a future injury.

25 Plaintiffs haven't alleged they have incurred any

1 costs here, and so I'm not sure that that standard applies.
2 Even if it would, even if it could, we would argue they haven't
3 met it either. That standard is certainly less than even an
4 objectively reasonable likelihood of harm, which the Clapper
5 court said was not consistent with their requirement that an
6 injury be certainly impending. So plaintiffs have to show, I
7 think, at bottom to this Court that if it were to reach the
8 merits of this case, it would not be rendering an advisory
9 opinion, but rather directly addressing a concrete injury that
03:01 10 will occur in the future and not simply something that may
11 occur in the future.
12 And so plaintiffs, I think, in the end resort to this
13 probabilistic injury theory of harm. But, in fact, that theory
14 has been very narrowly applied. Kerin v. Titeflex quoted the
15 D.C. circuit to say were all heightened risks of injury enough
16 to get into federal court, the entire requirement of Article
17 III injury would be rendered moot. And it's for that reason
18 that this theory has only come up in environmental and other
19 health and safety sort of cases. And plaintiffs don't point to
03:02 20 any similar cases on First or Fourth Amendment grounds applying
21 this 1 in 10,000 chance as being sufficient to establish a
22 concrete and particularized injury.
23 So with that said, I'll move on.
24 Plaintiffs' only other basis of injury is this idea of
25 expungement, to get the government to destroy or return the

1 information they claim may have been retained, and I think
2 there's a couple of points to note here.
3 First, even if plaintiffs have standing to seek
4 expungement, that would only give them standing to seek
5 expungement. They won't have standing to seek the other type
6 of injunctions and declarations they're looking for here. But
7 more importantly, your Honor, they don't have standing on this
8 ground for two reasons: First, all plaintiffs, except one,
9 have not even alleged any injury on this ground. They haven't
03:03 10 stated that the government actually retained any of their
11 information. So, indeed, all plaintiffs, I think it's 10 of
12 the 11, have failed to establish an injury on this ground.
13 THE COURT: But where we're at the motion to dismiss
14 stage and I have to take all of the allegations as true in the
15 amended complaint, and I think I can take judicial notice,
16 which I think most parties are comfortable with me doing of the
17 various policies, isn't that the reasonable implication from
18 the allegations about the length of time at which certain
19 border agents had access and in some cases manually viewed the
03:03 20 electronic devices in front of the plaintiffs? And my memory
21 is, counsel, correct me if this is wrong, there's actually some
22 language in the policies about agents documenting what they
23 find. So isn't that the reasonable upshot of all of those
24 things?
25 MR. DREZNER: I don't believe so, your Honor.

1 Respectfully, if plaintiffs wanted the Court to find those
2 facts or draw those inferences, they could have stated as much
3 in the complaint. They state very clearly where they think
4 they have any basis for an allegation that some information was
5 retained, and they do so with respect to plaintiff Matthew
6 Wright. But every other plaintiff they simply don't allege
7 that information was or even could have been retained. Some of
8 these searches were short, 15 minutes, others were a bit
9 longer. But plaintiffs don't say anything in the complaint as
03:04 10 to which ones information have been retained in and why. So
11 it's simply not proper for the Court to assume facts that
12 plaintiffs haven't even alleged I would say.
13 THE COURT: But I guess, counsel, what I'm struggling
14 with this argument is if the case -- is this an issue that I
15 can decide at this juncture if I find that it's been plausibly
16 alleged here or the reasonable inference can be drawn from the
17 complaint?
18 MR. DREZNER: Your Honor, I think it's something you
19 can decide. I think the Clapper court dealt with this. In a
03:05 20 footnote it says, Well, gosh, why don't we have the government
21 submit something to the Court in camera and basically explain
22 whether or not they've intercepted plaintiff's communications
23 and whether they have standing. And the Court said very
24 plainly it is plaintiff's burden to establish standing by
25 pointing to specific facts. It's not the government's burden

1 to disprove standing by revealing its surveillance priorities.
2 And so I don't think discovery would allow plaintiffs to get
3 any further. They have to stick with what they know and what
4 they can allege in the complaint, and that's simply not
5 sufficient enough to state an injury here. I think, further,
6 all plaintiffs, including Matthew Wright, lack standing on this
7 ground because they cannot show redressability. I don't think
8 they dispute that in general it is not unlawful for the
9 government to use information even when it's obtained
03:05 10 unlawfully in official proceedings like parole revocation
11 proceedings or immigration proceedings. That's Hornbook law.
12 And so while certainly the government would maintain that any
13 information retained here was done so legally, even if they
14 could show that all of their claims are meritorious, they
15 simply could not receive the remedy of expungement because they
16 haven't brought a claim to say that the retention of that
17 information is itself unlawful. So there's simply no basis for
18 this Court to find at this stage that it could likely grant the
19 remedy of expungement that they now seek. So it's for that
03:06 20 reason they lack standing --
21 THE COURT: Both as to the Fourth Amendment
22 allegations and the First Amendment allegations?
23 MR. DREZNER: That's correct, your Honor.
24 THE COURT: I suppose I might follow you as to the
25 Fourth Amendment, but why would that be true as to the First?

1 MR. DREZNER: I'm sorry, your Honor, could you
2 clarify?
3 THE COURT: Meaning, I understand your argument that
4 you're saying essentially it wouldn't be illegal for them to
5 retain unlawfully obtained information, is sort of the crux of
6 your argument. Is that true as to both the Fourth Amendment
7 and the First Amendment allegations?
8 MR. DREZNER: Your Honor, I think their claims are
9 very precisely worded, and both the Fourth and the First
03:07 10 Amendment claim say only that the search of the electronic
11 device was itself unlawful. And so even if the Court were to
12 agree with them that on that, that would not provide a basis to
13 then expunge information that had been retained. I think
14 plaintiffs would need to bring a further argument to argue
15 legally that retention of this information is unlawful, as your
16 Honor said, under the First Amendment. But they haven't
17 brought any legal claim that the government can address, so we
18 can't either discuss whether that's a valid claim or not
19 because it hasn't been brought. So, yes, your Honor, I think
03:07 20 it would apply equally in both contexts.
21 I think even if this Court were to reach the merits,
22 the complaint should be dismissed nonetheless. Your Honor
23 properly recognized in the House decision that the border is a
24 unique context under the Fourth Amendment, and so I'll turn to
25 that claim first.

1 I think Flores-Montano, Montoya de Hernandez, and a
2 host of other cases have emphasized that the government's
3 interest in preventing unwanted persons and effects is at its
4 zenith at the international border, and it's for that reason
5 that the court held in Ramsey there has never been any
6 additional requirement that the reasonableness of a border
7 search depended on the existence of probable cause. Put
8 another way, there's never been a warrant requirement at the
9 border, and that's exactly what plaintiffs are arguing for
03:08 10 here.
11 I think it's also for this reason in light of all of
12 this case law that the vast majority of searches at the border
13 do not require any individualized suspicion, that's in light
14 both of the government's compelling interests and the
15 traveler's diminished interest in privacy at the border.
16 As your Honor recognized in House, it's only the most
17 intrusive searches that impinge on travelers' dignity that
18 require even reasonable suspicion, and those are strip-searches
19 and body cavity searches under the Braks holding. Indeed, a
03:09 20 border search that is less intrusive than those requires no
21 reasonable suspicion at all, that's pursuant to Braks.
22 And so it's in light of all these standards, your
23 Honor, that numerous courts have considered this precise
24 question, and all have uniformly held that probable cause and a
25 warrant is not required to do a search of electronic devices at

1 the border. This dates as far back as the Hampe case in 2007
2 in the District of Maine, and I think we cite maybe 20-plus
3 cases all to this effect in our brief. Plaintiffs simply
4 doesn't distinguish this.
5 I would highlight --
6 THE COURT: I guess, counsel, and I'm still -- I
7 understand all of the cases you cited, but I believe some of
8 them predate the Supreme Court's decision in Riley.
9 What do you say -- I know you take the position that
03:09 10 Riley doesn't support on its face or by extension the
11 plaintiffs' position, but what do you say in light of Riley?
12 There seem to be -- I mean, it's -- obviously it's not dealing
13 with the border, but it's certainly dealing with another
14 exception to the warrant requirement where Chief Justice
15 Roberts seem to be pointing out the ways in which the digital
16 devices in our lives are very different in terms of the balance
17 between governmental interests and privacy. So what do you say
18 in light of Riley?
19 MR. DREZNER: I think there's a couple of things.
03:10 20 First, the 1st Circuit's decision in Molina-Gomez in
21 2015 postdates Riley. That case primarily dealt with the
22 physical disassembly and search of a laptop, but it's important
23 to note that that border search also involved the officers
24 turning on the laptop, seeing there was no data on it, looking
25 at the traveler's cell phones, seeing suspicious text messages,

1 and those factors, along with others, prompted further
2 searches. That was of no moment to the 1st Circuit. So I
3 think even after Riley the 1st Circuit either held or very
4 strongly implied that these types of electronic searches don't
5 require even reasonable suspicion, let alone probable cause and
6 a warrant.
7 To answer your Honor's question more directly, I
8 think, as you noted, Riley only applies to the search incident
9 to arrest exception. So several courts have held that it
03:11 10 simply does not narrow the limits of the border search
11 doctrine. That's precisely what Lopez in the Southern District
12 of California held. Saboonchi, Kolsuz, and others all said
13 that while this is an interesting and novel argument, there has
14 never been a court that has found that more than reasonable
15 suspicion is required for a border search of any extent. And
16 so you simply couldn't extend Riley to this type of search at
17 the border.
18 And I think, further, if we were to look at what Riley
19 did, it devaluated the justifications for the search incident
03:11 20 to arrest exception, the destruction of evidence, and officer
21 safety and found they simply didn't translate where an
22 electronic device was at issue.
23 By contrast, the purposes underlying the border search
24 doctrine are far broader: preventing the entry of contraband
25 and safeguarding national security. And as the Feiten court

1 held in the Eastern District of Michigan, applying the border
2 search doctrine in this context is utterly consistent with its
3 historical moorings. So I think your Honor's decision --
4 THE COURT: But even where it goes to the vast array
5 of personal information that would be in someone's electronic
6 device where none of the policies -- I think only the more
7 recent 18 policy applies reasonable suspicion to the advance
8 search. So why -- so I guess that's what I'm asking you, is
9 how do the rationales for the border exception, how are they
03:13 10 effectuated by a standardless search of electronic devices at
11 the border of U.S. citizens?
12 MR. DREZNER: I think it makes just as much sense,
13 your Honor, to search a suitcase as it does a cell phone at the
14 border because both can be used to transport contraband across
15 the border.
16 THE COURT: Contraband like what?
17 MR. DREZNER: Child pornography has often been found
18 in electronic devises.
19 THE COURT: Is that common post the digital age in
03:13 20 terms of child pornography?
21 MR. DREZNER: Your Honor, I can't speak to how common
22 it is, but I think if we look to the host of cases that we've
23 cited in our brief, the vast majority arise in the context of a
24 defendant having something discovered on their electronic
25 device, sometimes --

1 THE COURT: I think that's true, but how many of those
2 folks are being stopped at the border?
3 MR. DREZNER: I think all the cases we cite in our
4 briefs concern border searches, and they're making the argument
5 that plaintiffs make now, which is, you needed a warrant; and
6 the court says, no, that the border search doctrine applies
7 equally to electronic devices. Some have said at most
8 reasonable suspicion is required for certain types of searches,
9 but none have held that probable cause and a warrant is
03:14 10 required. So the Court isn't writing on a blank slate here.
11 This question has been asked and answered consistently in the
12 same way.
13 I think plaintiffs similarly fail --
14 THE COURT: Counsel, I'm aware of the time, so I'll
15 give you another minute. I recognize that I've been asking you
16 a lot of questions, so I'll give you a minute or two, counsel.
17 MR. DREZNER: Thank you, your Honor. I'll just finish
18 quickly.
19 Under the First Amendment, your Honor, plaintiffs
03:14 20 similarly fail to state a claim. They cannot show that there
21 should be additional requirements under the Fourth Amendment
22 for items that may be protected by the First Amendment. Ickes
23 and Arnold and Seljan held very clearly that that would have
24 staggering consequences for the government's authority at the
25 border, I think as your Honor probably recognized in House.

1 In addition, plaintiffs cannot state a claim with
2 regard to this idea that whenever a device is detained past the
3 time the traveler leaves the border, all of a sudden you have a
4 probably cause requirement. Even if there could be any limits
5 on the authority of the government to detain a device to
6 effectuate a search at the border, Montoya de Hernandez says
7 the courts are asked to use their common sense and experience
8 and there are no hard-and-fast time limits. But plaintiffs
9 would obviate that precedent and impose this arbitrary
03:15 10 bright-line requirement, and there's simply no support for
11 that.
12 So for those reasons, your Honor, we ask that the
13 complaint be dismissed. Thank you.
14 THE COURT: Thank you.
15 Counsel.
16 MR. SCHWARTZ: May it please the Court. I will be
17 speaking for 10 minutes about injunctive standing at which
18 point my co-counsel, Ms. Bhandari, will cut me off.
19 THE COURT: Okay.
03:15 20 MR. SCHWARTZ: So there are several reasons why the
21 plaintiffs have injunctive standing. I'd like to make a few
22 quick points.
23 Number one, there are a host of law enforcement cases
24 which the defendants address neither in their brief nor at this
25 oral argument which hold that standing to seek an injunction

1 against law enforcement officials rests on the combination of a
2 policy or practice plus the plaintiffs' exposure to it. So if
3 there is a policy of traffic stops or sidewalk stops, it is
4 those policies themselves plus the exposure of the plaintiffs
5 because they walk on that sidewalk or they drive on that
6 highway that grants them standing. There is not an analysis of
7 the statistical likelihood that a given traveler will be
8 stopped.
9 Number two, an additional parallel doctrine to give
03:16 10 injunctive standing to challenge the future injury is the
11 probabilistic cases. They have odds of injury caused by
12 something that the defendant has done which are similar to the
13 alleged odds from the defendants in this case of 1 in 10,000,
14 cases giving standing where there's a 1 in 10,000 chance of
15 injury, even a 1 in 200,000 chance of injury. Contrary to what
16 the defendant has said, these cases transcend the environment
17 law context. They appear in voting rights cases, in airport
18 traffic cases, in cases about identity theft after data
19 breaches.
03:17 20 Number three, the plaintiffs have among them four
21 individuals who have suffered injury on multiple occasions. As
22 this Court noted earlier today, this is a strong factor
23 weighing in favor of the existence of injury. As the Supreme
24 Court in <u>O'Shea</u> said, while past injury does not prove future
25 injury, it is relevant to future injury. And if one looks at

1 the experiences, for example, of Mr. Shibly, the plaintiff, or
2 of Mr. Dupin, one of the plaintiffs, they crossed a border and
3 their devices were searched and a day or two later they crossed
4 the border and their device was searched again. What this
5 shows is that when border agents look at their computers and
6 see that a previous border agent took an action against this
7 traveler, that puts them at an enhanced risk of future injury.
8 This isn't just common sense, this is the holding of the
9 Western District of New York in the Tabbaa case. So these past
03:18 10 injuries are critical.
11 Number four, in addition to all of this, this standing
12 to seek an injunction based on future injury, we have the
13 independent standing to seek expungement of the records the
14 government has retained about the plaintiffs from their
15 devices. This is an ongoing injury that derives from the
16 constitutional violations of searching the devices in the first
17 place. There are three Circuit Court opinions that we cite in
18 our briefs. From the D.C. Circuit, Hedgepeth, written by then
19 Judge Roberts, now, of course, Chief Justice Roberts; Paton
03:18 20 from the 3rd Circuit; Tabbaa from the 2nd Circuit, all agreeing
21 that if the allegation is that some law enforcement officials
22 have unlawfully seized information, that there is continuing
23 injury in the retention of that information, whether it's an
24 FBI file, a police report, or, in the case of Tabbaa, a border
25 stop --

1 THE COURT: And what do you say to your brother's
2 argument in terms of the allegations made in the amended
3 complaint that don't clearly allege as to I think it's everyone
4 except perhaps Mr. Wright about the retention of information?
5 MR. SCHWARTZ: Yes. The complaint squarely alleges as
6 to all plaintiffs that they all are suffering the retention of
7 information, and that pleading is based in additional
8 allegations, number one, that each of the plaintiffs has been
9 subjected to a border device search; and number two, that each
03:19 10 of them is subject to the government's own policies, which
11 include I think as -- which include a provision that says if
12 information that the agents find in a traveler's device is
13 relevant to customs, immigration and other enforcement, then
14 the government can retain that information even in the absence
15 of probable cause. And so the combination of their searches of
16 their devices plus a policy authorizing the retention of
17 information from those devices for purposes of Iqbal, Twombly
18 are specific and plausible bases to support our ultimate
19 allegation which is that information has been retained.
03:20 20 And in addition to all of this as to all of the
21 plaintiffs, we have for Mr. Wright, as you noted, the
22 additional allegation that we have documentation of what
23 happened with his device, which includes --
24 THE COURT: That's a response to the FOIA request.
25 MR. SCHWARTZ: Correct.

1 THE COURT: Okay.
2 And what do you say to your brother's argument, I
3 think he was making a distinction in your allegations between
4 an argument that the search itself violated the Fourth
5 Amendment and the First Amendment versus the retention being a
6 violation of law? Do you agree with that distinction and does
7 it make any difference in the plaintiffs' view as to standing
8 for expungement?
9 MR. SCHWARTZ: It does not make a legal difference.
03:21 10 What the defendants do not do in their brief or at this
11 argument is address Hedgepeth or Paton or Tabbaa, all of which
12 explain that it is the continuing injury from the original
13 violation which gives the standing for expungement. We don't
14 also need to show that the retention is itself a separate and
15 independent constitutional violation.
16 So in Paton, you know, the court explains, for
17 example, with an FBI record, that the retention of this
18 information puts at risk the defendant seeking future
19 employment or education. In the Hedgepeth case, which involved
03:21 20 an adolescent who was arrested in a train station, the
21 expungement of the arrest report obviously would protect them
22 from future harm to their lifetime opportunities. In Tabbaa,
23 the retention of the information about agents -- about
24 travelers by border agents, as we've explained, puts travelers
25 at risk of future searches and seizures by those border agents.

1 And there's nothing about the Herring and the Pennsylvania
2 Parole Board cases that the government cites that are to the
3 contrary. Those are suppression cases. Of course there is a
4 suppression rule that ordinarily applies that says generally
5 the government cannot use the illegally collected information
6 in a criminal prosecution. But what's controlling here is not
7 those criminal cases on suppression, but Hedgepeth, Tabbaa, and
8 Paton.
9 Your Honor, there is one additional issue I want to
03:22 10 make sure I touch on, which is this 1 in 10,000 figure. I want
11 to be clear, this is not the plaintiffs' alleged number, this
12 is what the defendant has put forward. We have only put
13 forward 30,000 searches last year and 18,000 searches a few
14 years before by way of showing the widespread nature of this
15 practice, which is relevant to injunctive standing under the
16 law enforcement cases.
17 We believe this 1 in 10,000 figure as a matter of law
18 is no barrier to our standing and that as a matter of fact it's
19 misleading. As a matter of law under the law enforcement
03:23 20 cases, they simply don't look at these numbers. So, for
21 example, in Ortega, the District of Arizona says what matters
22 is the exposure, quote-unquote, of the plaintiff even though as
23 to any particular driver the chances of being stopped again
24 are, quote, not high.
25 In the probabilistic cases, under NRDC, 1 in 200,000

1 risk, under Sierra Club, 1 in 10,000. Our 1 in 10,000 is not a
2 barrier to standing.
3 Finally, I just want to emphasize this figure as a
4 factual matter is misleading for three reasons.
5 Number one, the rate of boarder device searches is
6 going up every single year. Five years ago it was 5,000; this
7 past year it was 30,000, sixfold increase.
8 Number two, as I've said, the risk to the plaintiffs
9 is higher than the risk to other travelers because when agents
03:23 10 look at their names, they're going to see the past searches
11 which makes them more likely to be searched again. Again,
12 that's Tabbaa and common sense and the experiences of Mr. Dupin
13 and Mr. Shibly.
14 Number three, this 1 in 10,000 figure is the risk for
15 each crossing of the border, but we need to be aggregating risk
16 over a lifetime, which is exactly what the D.C. Circuit said in
17 the NRDC case.
18 So for all of these reasons, the 1 in 10,000 figure is
19 very misleading and the actual risk being faced by the
03:24 20 plaintiffs is much higher. But, again, as a matter of law,
21 under the probabilistic cases, that risk is adequate, and under
22 the law enforcement standing cases it just doesn't matter at
23 all.
24 Unless this Court has more questions on standing, my
25 half of the argument has passed, and I'd like to pass the baton

1 to Ms. -- to Esha.
2 THE COURT: Thank you, counsel.
3 Counsel.
4 MS. BHANDARI: May it please the Court, Esha Bhandari
5 for plaintiffs.
6 Riley did two critical things that bear on this case.
7 In Riley, the Supreme Court made clear that any warrant
8 exception under the Constitution doesn't automatically apply to
9 digital data, that, in fact, a warrant exception has to be
03:25 10 considered in light of the category effects. And then
11 secondly, Riley went on to do that balancing in the context of
12 digital data where it weighed the privacy harms against the
13 government's interest and found that a warrant is required.
14 Taking the guidance from Riley, it is clear that the
15 Constitution requires a warrant for searches of digital devices
16 at the border. The privacy interests are identical to those
17 that were at stake in Riley.
18 Riley involved a manual search of a cell phone, and
19 the Supreme Court very clearly lays out both the quantitative
03:25 20 and qualitative privacy risks. But I do want to note a few
21 critical things. One, the Riley court made clear that searches
22 of digital devices can provide information that would be more
23 extensive than that would even be found in a house unless the
24 device were found in the house. You know, the type of
25 information that is available, including metadata, is of a

1 nature that might provide access to someone's perfect memory.
2 So for this reason, this weighed heavily in the court's
3 consideration.
4 But the really critical step that the Riley court took
5 which did not -- was not clear at the time that Ickes and
6 Arnold and House were decided, is that you look at the category
7 of effects as a whole, you look at the privacy harms from
8 digital searches as a whole. Even if that might lead to the
9 types of anomalies that the court in Ickes identified, such as
03:26 10 an individual carrying papers on them which could be subject to
11 a search, where the same content if it were on a digital device
12 could not be searched. The Riley court was comfortable with
13 that distinction in part because it said there is a physical
14 limitation on how much information people could simply be
15 carrying on them, which didn't exist with digital data.
16 So it rejected this concern with what the Ickes court
17 called an exception for expressive materials, and it looked at
18 the privacy harms from digital searches as a whole and it took
19 a categorical approach.
03:27 20 So that is a really critical distinction from the
21 earlier cases that the government cites. And, most notably,
22 the 1st Circuit made that distinction and decided in Wurie,
23 which was later upheld in Riley, that for that reason searches
24 incident to arrest of cell phones required a warrant.
25 And the second point from Riley, which is about the

1 government's interests having to be tethered to the
2 justification for the exception, is relevant here as well. The
3 border search exception dates back -- you know, it's discussed
4 in Boyd in the 1880s, the Supreme Court case, it dates back
5 from 1789. It has always been strictly limited. It's about
6 the power of the sovereign to keep out people and goods, and
7 it's always been about searches of tangible goods. Boyd in the
8 1880s made clear that there is a difference between searches of
9 goods and searches of information that might be used against an
03:28 10 individual. And that distinction has carried over, that
11 concern has carried over. So the Supreme Court has never
12 suggested that reasonable suspicion is the highest level of
13 suspicion available at the border. In Ramsey, in
14 Flores-Montano the Supreme Court reiterated that some searches
15 may be per se unreasonable at the border. So certainly
16 reasonable suspicion has never been a ceiling, it is, in fact,
17 a floor for certain category of searches.
18 THE COURT: So I guess, just to go back to Riley for a
19 moment and then move forward to this argument about the scope
03:28 20 of the governmental interests at the border, what is it about
21 the Supreme Court's reasoning in Riley which is squarely in the
22 law enforcement category, is it clear from the precedent about
23 the border that the Supreme Court would view the security of
24 the border squarely in the law enforcement context? Meaning,
25 the law enforcement context is different in the sense of being

1 clearly individualized. Is there any suggestion that the
2 Supreme Court used the border in the same way? Particularly,
3 particularly where you're encountering at the border both
4 citizens and non-citizens, meaning, both people who are
5 entering and returning.
6 MS. BHANDARI: I think that the Supreme Court has made
7 it clear that it would view both warrant exceptions the same,
8 meaning that the balancing has to be done. So in Ramsey, the
9 Supreme Court equated the border search exception to the
03:29 10 warrant requirement to the search incident to arrest exception.
11 It put it in the same category of considerations. And then in
12 Riley, the Supreme Court showed when you have a warrant
13 exception and you're considering whether that applies to
14 digital data, here's how you do that. So even though the
15 justifications underlying the exceptions might be different,
16 the Supreme Court showed that you have to look at the
17 tethering.
18 Now, in Riley, the concerns that were animating the
19 government there were officer safety and destruction of
03:30 20 evidence. And the Supreme Court very carefully looked at
21 whether both of those justifications would be effectuated
22 sufficiently by warrantless device searches, and it decided
23 that even though there might be certain circumstances in which
24 there might be evidence that could be acquired from warrantless
25 searches, that interest was not serious enough or widespread

1 enough to justify dispensing with a warrant requirement as a
2 categorical matter.
3 Now, when we're talking about the border search
4 exception, as I mentioned, the justification of keeping out
5 physical goods has run through all of the Supreme Court's
6 decisions. And despite the defendants' arguments that digital
7 contraband is the justification for these searches, one,
8 there's no -- there is no reason to believe that the
9 government's interests can't be effectuated by a warrant
03:31 10 requirement, in the first instance, that the problem contraband
11 is so great that it would overwhelm the very significant and
12 acute privacy interests that are on the other side. Because,
13 again, the government asserts the power to search all
14 travelers, innocent travelers, without suspicion. So there's a
15 massive and acute privacy concern on the other side.
16 But even with respect to digital contraband, digital
17 contraband does not need to be carried across the border. When
18 it comes to physical goods, the sovereign has to inspect them
19 at the border. But with digital contraband, it can be sent
03:31 20 over the internet. And furthermore, even if it is found or
21 searched at the border, that doesn't prevent it from entering
22 the country. So the government's interests aren't even
23 effectuated. I think even with the CBP and ICE policies which
24 explicitly allow for copying and retaining the information and
25 sending the devices back, that demonstrates that, in fact,

1 there's no interest in those instances of keeping digital
2 contraband out. It's simply a dragnet search. It allows the
3 government to copy and retain the contents of devices, keep
4 that information, send that device with its information back.
5 And I also want to note --
6 THE COURT: But I guess -- and not to go back to
7 what's troubling me, but, counsel, what about the distinction
8 between the scenario with law enforcement, where you have sort
9 of these different levels of inquiry, right, so if you need to
03:32 10 stop someone, it's reasonable suspicion; if you're going to
11 arrest someone, it's probable cause; if you're going to search
12 with the exceptions carved out, you otherwise need to get a
13 warrant. But at the border, aren't the levels different?
14 Meaning, there's no particular standard, right, that applies,
15 at least from a constitutional standpoint, for taking someone
16 into secondary inspection. So why -- I guess back to my
17 question about why do we think that the Supreme Court -- you
18 want me to extrapolate from Riley, right, to say that if the
19 Supreme Court were to get this case, they would extend Riley.
03:33 20 Why -- have you said all that you can say in regards to why we
21 think the Supreme Court would move in this direction?
22 MS. BHANDARI: Well, I think that a warrant for
23 certain searches at the border is not unprecedented. So, in
24 fact, while searches of goods have been done without any
25 suspicion, certainly courts have required reasonable suspicion

1 for certain other intrusive physical bodily searches. So there
2 is, in fact -- there are gradations under existing law.
3 But in Ramsey, the Supreme Court contemplated a
4 potential First Amendment harm if border agents were able to
5 read incoming international mail. And it was concerned that
6 that would pose a problem under the First Amendment, and it
7 explicitly noted if there were not a regulation flatly
8 prohibiting customs agents from reading incoming international
9 mail, that a warrant requirement could perhaps address that
03:34 10 First Amendment harm.
11 Similarly, the government cites 19 USC 1583, which is
12 a statute governing searches of outgoing international mail.
13 And that statute, in fact, requires a warrant before the
14 contents of mail can be read. It sets out that if there is --
15 if there are packages above a certain weight, they can be
16 searched, presumably, again, because there's the possibility of
17 physical goods being in them, but that agents cannot read those
18 without a warrant.
19 In Montoya de Hernandez I think it's important to note
03:35 20 that while the Supreme Court said that a 16-hour detention upon
21 reasonable suspicion was permissible, in that case border
22 agents had actually gotten a court order before the physical
23 elementary canal search.
24 Similarly in United States v. Arnold, the older 9th
25 Circuit case, border agents had gotten a warrant before

1 conducting a forensic examination of the device, the laptop at
2 issue.
3 So a warrant requirement is not unheard of at the
4 border; it imposes no practical impediments. And the Supreme
5 Court has made clear it's not a sort of one size fits all to
6 the reasonableness of searches at the border.
7 And certainly I think Ramsey's concerns about the
8 power to read mail, to read all incoming international mail,
9 are applicable here.
03:36 10 And if there are no further questions on the Fourth
11 Amendment point, I would like to just mention the point about
12 confiscation.
13 In United States v. Place, it was clear that you have
14 to look at the -- both the reasonableness of a confiscation and
15 its scope and duration.
16 Here we have two plaintiffs, the Alasaads, whose
17 unlocked devices were kept for 15 days. Mr. Allababidi's
18 unlocked device was kept for two months and his locked device
19 for 10 months. And Mr. Wright's locked device was kept for 56
03:36 20 days. And these confiscations were unreasonable under the
21 Fourth Amendment.
22 And lastly on the First Amendment point, I think
23 Ramsey shows that the First Amendment has to be considered as
24 an independent constitutional protection.
25 Ickes had no occasion to consider the subsequent 2009

1 ICE and CBP policies which explicitly allow for suspicionless
2 searches of electronic devices. That is the regime that now
3 travelers operate under in which any innocent traveler crossing
4 the border can be searched without suspicion whatsoever and the
5 entire contents of their devices can be copied and retained.
6 The First Amendment cases that we cite in our brief
7 make clear that government demands for expressive information
8 of the type contained on electronic devices always has to be
9 subject to a heightened level of scrutiny. And at various
03:37 10 times courts have imposed a requirement of a compelling
11 interest and narrow tailoring. And certainly a policy and
12 practice of suspicionless searches of electronic device does
13 not meet that standard.
14 We think the warrant requirement is the proper
15 solution here, because a warrant based on probable cause can,
16 in some instances, address acute First Amendment harms. The
17 court in Zurcher stated as much; and the court in Ramsey nodded
18 toward that solution if, in fact, incoming international mail
19 was being read.
03:38 20 So in light of the First Amendment interest at stake,
21 a warrant based on probable cause is the only remedy to address
22 the harms that plaintiffs and millions of travelers are
23 suffering, otherwise, the risks of self-censorship are too high
24 and impede on everyone's First Amendment rights.
25 THE COURT: Thank you.

1 MS. BHANDARI: Thank you.
2 THE COURT: Counsel, I think you had retained some
3 time.
4 MR. DREZNER: Thank you, your Honor. Just a few
5 points.
6 First, plaintiffs are advancing this theory that all
7 they need to show to establish injury is the existence of a
8 government policy and their exposure to that policy. That's
9 simply not the law. I think the Frank case from the 1st
03:38 10 Circuit in 1992 said it's not pertinent whether there's some
11 official policy at issue, the question is whether plaintiffs
12 themselves will be injured by application of that policy.
13 And indeed, they say, Well, this 1 in 10,000 figure is
14 the government's statistic, so I think what they're saying is
15 we don't know what the chances are of a future search, we're
16 not going to put them before the Court and the Court should
17 simply speculate that some injury might happen in the future,
18 and therefore, we have standing. Again, there's no basis for
19 that certification. Again, they say that simply because people
03:39 20 were searched in the past there may be a basis that they can be
21 searched in the future. Again, your Honor, even an objectively
22 reasonable likelihood of a search doesn't pass muster under the
23 Clapper test.
24 On the issue of expungement of information, I think
25 plaintiff spent some time arguing that this could be an injury

1 but they don't say whether it is a legal violation and under
2 what theory it would be a legal violation for the government to
3 remain information. Certainly if they had brought that claim,
4 we might have argued against it. We could have should shown
5 this Court why the government can retain this information and
6 why it should not grant the remedy of expungement. But, again,
7 they never brought that claim, so the issue of expungement
8 isn't properly before this Court.
9 I think quickly on the merits, they point to Ramsey a
03:40 10 lot and say that, you know, it's sort of nodded or winked in a
11 certain direction. I think what Ramsey said and held is most
12 clearly appropriate, and that is that a warrant is not required
13 at the border. They said we reaffirm that principle today. In
14 addition, in Ramsey they said this doesn't impose a chill on
15 First Amendment rights because there was no allegation of a
16 chill there. And similarly, when defendants said to
17 plaintiffs, Look, there have not been sufficient allegations of
18 a First Amendment chill, they essentially conceded that point
19 and said, We're not claiming injury based on a chill. So just
03:40 20 as in Ramsey, there's been no showing that defendants' policies
21 somehow impact First Amendment rights.
22 And I think plaintiffs pointed to a statute that says
23 in certain instances a warrant may be required, and certainly
24 statutes can impose tighter requirements on searches and
25 seizures than the Constitution necessitates. And plaintiffs

1 are free to petition Congress if they want to have such a
2 statute passed in this case. But the constitutional answer is
3 clear. It's been asked and answered in Braks, in Molina-Gomez,
4 and by this Court this 2012.
5 I think your Honor got it right. The question is what
6 would the Supreme Court do? And I think it would not uphold a
7 system where you need only reasonable suspicion to search a
8 traveler's elementary canal but a warrant to search their
9 laptop. Plaintiffs haven't argued anything that could resolve
03:41 10 that incoherence, I think as a result, the complaint should be
11 dismissed.
12 Thank you, your Honor.
13 THE COURT: Thank you, counsel.
14 Just give me a moment, counsel.
15 (Pause.)
16 THE COURT: But, counsel, do you think that last point
17 is correct in light of Riley where the Supreme Court is
18 addressing the instance where someone is already under arrest?
19 Meaning, there's already been an articulation of probable cause
03:42 20 and the court is saying even in that scenario you need a
21 separate showing of probable cause as to the device?
22 MR. DREZNER: Your Honor, are you asking --
23 THE COURT: Yes, and I guess what I'm saying is,
24 hypothetically, why do you think the Supreme Court would take a
25 different position as to a U.S. citizen returning to the United

1 States for which there is no suspicion articulated at all? And
2 is the answer, in the defendants' view, it's the border, the
3 border is different in the way the plaintiffs say digital is
4 different? What's the answer to that from the defendants'
5 point of view?
6 MR. DREZNER: You summarized it pretty well. I think
7 you got to the question correctly when you asked plaintiffs is
8 this just about law enforcement, and I don't think necessarily
9 that's the case. The justifications underlying the search
03:43 10 incident to arrest exception were much narrower than those
11 underlying the border search exception which are generally the
12 integrity of the nation and safeguarding the border, preventing
13 the entry of terrorists and contraband, terrorist
14 communications. There's a whole host of reasons undergirding
15 the border search exception. So to question, well, would the
16 court hold the same, I think the answer is clearly no. Both as
17 your Honor said, because the court -- because the border is
18 different, but also because the regime that has been created at
19 the border has explicitly said that the highest level of
03:43 20 suspicion is indeed reasonable suspicion that's required to
21 conduct any search. Indeed, I didn't hear from plaintiffs a
22 single case where a warrant is required at the border for any
23 type of search, even a body cavity search. That's the 1st
24 Circuit's decision. So, again, I seriously doubt the court
25 would create this incongruity were they to hear this case.

1 THE COURT: Thank you.
2 Counsel, I appreciate the arguments today on either
3 side and the briefing on either side. You certainly have given
4 me a lot to think about, which I will and I'll go back to your
5 papers with your arguments today in mind and take the matter
6 under advisement.
7 There is one thing that I made a note to note at the
8 beginning of this hearing and then neglected to. I just wanted
9 to state this for the record.
03:44 10 In reviewing one of the *amicus* briefs, I noticed that
11 Jonathan Albano was one of the attorneys on the *amicus* briefs.
12 I just want to note for the record what seems now like a
13 lifetime ago I worked with Mr. Albano at the firm that no
14 longer exists, Bingham -- what was at one time Bingham Dana. I
15 don't have an ongoing relationship with Mr. Albano, but I
16 wanted to note, as I have in other cases, that prior
17 affiliation.
18 I don't think there's any basis for me to recuse
19 myself in this matter, but I certainly wanted to let counsel on
03:45 20 both sides know this. If counsel on either side thinks I
21 should re-examine this issue, I'd give you two weeks from today
22 to file something to that effect. Okay.
23 But, otherwise, I'm going to keep the matter under
24 advisement.
25 Thank you.

1 THE CLERK: All rise.
2 (Court adjourned at 3:45 p.m.)
3 - - - - - - - - - - - - -
4 CERTIFICATION
5 I certify that the foregoing is a correct transcript
6 of the record of proceedings in the above-entitled matter to
7 the best of my skill and ability.
8
9
10
11 /s/Debra M. Joyce May 21, 2018
Debra M. Joyce, RMR, CRR, FCRR Date
12 Official Court Reporter
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