Page: 3001-3034 *URL: www.lijdlr.com*

LAWFOYER INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF DOCTRINAL LEGAL RESEARCH

ISSN: 2583-7753

LawFoyer International Journal of Doctrinal Legal Research

[ISSN: 2583-7753]

Volume 4 | Issue 3

2026

DOI: https://doi.org/10.70183/lijdlr.2026.v04.375

© 2026 LawFoyer International Journal of Doctrinal Legal Research

Follow this and additional research works at: www.lijdlr.com
Under the Platform of LawFoyer – www.lawfoyer.in

After careful consideration, the editorial board of LawFoyer International Journal of Doctrinal Legal Research has decided to publish this submission as part of the publication.

In case of any suggestions or complaints, kindly contact (info.lijdlr@gmail.com)
To submit your Manuscript for Publication in the LawFoyer International Journal of Doctrinal Legal Research, To submit your Manuscript Click here

TRANSPARENCY VERSUS INVESTIGATIVE CONFIDENTIALITY: RETHINKING THE LIMITS OF LIBERIA'S FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT IN CRIMINAL INVESTIGATIONS—LESSONS FROM THE US$19.2 MILLION COCAINE SEIZURE AT ROBERTS INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

Ambrues Monboe Nebo[1]

I. ABSTRACT

This study examines the limits of Liberia's Freedom of Information Act (2010) in criminal investigations, using the US$19.2 million cocaine seizure at Roberts International Airport as a case study. It is grounded in the transparency–accountability nexus theory, public interest theory, and institutional theory, which collectively explain the interaction between access to information, governance accountability, and the need for investigative confidentiality. The study adopts a qualitative doctrinal legal research design, relying on statutory provisions, policy documents, official reports, and relevant scholarly literature. Findings reveal that Liberia's legal framework pairs a categorical constitutional guarantee of the public right to be informed (Article 15(c)) with a narrow, justification-based statutory exemption for criminal investigations under the FOI Act of 2010. However, that statutory test governs requests for records held by public bodies and does not reach the unofficial circulation of investigative materials, including CCTV footage and operational records circulated on social media. These disclosures pose risks to evidentiary integrity, chain of custody, fair trial rights, and public confidence in law enforcement institutions. The study further finds that while the FOI Act provides a normative basis for balancing competing interests, it was not designed to regulate digital-era information flows or third-party dissemination of sensitive investigative content, which fall instead to cyber, criminal and contempt law. Reported compliance gaps, including

[1] Ph.D. Student -Security Studies with an emphasis on International Security, Hill-City University, Benin Republic, Adjunct Faculty, Department of Sociology and Criminology & Political Science, University of Liberia, Department of Criminal Justice & Forensic Science Program, African Methodist Episcopal University, Liberia. Email: neboambrues@gmail.com

© 2026. LawFoyer International Journal of Doctrinal Legal Research (ISSN: 2583-7753)

the limited appointment of public information officers, further limit the effectiveness of existing safeguards. The study concludes that Liberia's FOI regime requires legal and institutional reforms to better align transparency with investigative confidentiality in the digital age. It recommends strengthening digital evidence protection, clarifying exemption procedures, and establishing robust information governance protocols to safeguard both public accountability and criminal justice integrity.

II. KEYWORDS

Accountability; Criminal Investigations; Digital Evidence; Freedom of Information Act; Liberia; Transparency.

III. INTRODUCTION

Across contemporary governance systems, the tension between state transparency and investigative confidentiality remains a defining challenge in democratic accountability and criminal justice administration. Freedom of Information (FOI) regimes are designed to enhance openness by granting public access to government-held information, thereby strengthening trust, participation, and institutional accountability (Neuman & Calland, 2007). However, these regimes are not absolute. Most legal frameworks recognize exemptions for law enforcement proceedings, particularly where disclosure could compromise ongoing investigations, endanger witnesses, or undermine prosecutorial strategy (Roberts, 2006).

Globally, FOI systems therefore attempt to strike a delicate balance between openness and secrecy. Jurisdictions such as the United States and the United Kingdom explicitly restrict access to records that could reasonably interfere with active criminal investigations or national security operations (U.S. Department of Justice, 2024). Despite these safeguards, the rise of digital media ecosystems has complicated traditional information control mechanisms, as non-state actors increasingly participate in the circulation of sensitive investigative materials, often outside formal legal authorization.

In recent years, the proliferation of social media platforms has intensified concerns about unauthorized disclosure of evidentiary materials, including surveillance footage, police documents, and investigative reports. Such leaks raise complex

questions about legality, ethics, and the integrity of criminal proceedings, particularly when private citizens rather than institutional actors disseminate materials. While some view such disclosures as enhancing transparency and public accountability, others argue they risk prejudicing investigations and undermining due process.

These dynamics are especially pronounced in West Africa, where institutional capacity constraints intersect with expanding transnational organized crime networks. The region has increasingly become a key transit corridor for cocaine trafficking from Latin America to Europe, placing significant pressure on border security and criminal justice institutions (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime [UNODC], 2024). In such contexts, information governance becomes a central pillar of both security and legitimacy.

Liberia provides a particularly illustrative case. The country's Freedom of Information Act (2010) was enacted to promote transparency and accountability in public institutions. However, its application in criminal investigations remains contested, especially in high-profile and politically sensitive cases. This tension became highly visible following the US$19.2 million cocaine seizure at Roberts International Airport (RIA) in June 2026, one of the most significant narcotics interceptions in the country's history.

While the operation was publicly celebrated as a major enforcement success by the Liberia Drug Enforcement Agency (LDEA), it simultaneously triggered intense public debate over the limits of disclosure in ongoing investigations. Of particular significance was the circulation of closed-circuit television (CCTV) footage and an accompanying investigative document on social media, reportedly released by a private citizen outside official channels. The materials appeared to depict elements of the seizure operation and related investigative details, rapidly generating public commentary, media amplification, and political scrutiny.

Arguably, this unauthorized dissemination raised critical questions about the boundaries of Liberia's FOI framework and broader information governance system. On one hand, the circulation of such materials was interpreted by some segments of the public as enhancing transparency and exposing state action to scrutiny. On the other hand, it raises concern that the release of sensitive investigative content could

compromise ongoing inquiries, endanger operational integrity, and potentially expose broader transnational criminal networks under investigation.

This case therefore highlights a growing policy dilemma in Liberia's justice and governance architecture: how to reconcile the statutory right to information with the operational necessity of investigative confidentiality in the digital age. It also raises deeper questions about whether existing FOI provisions adequately address the realities of citizen-driven information dissemination, particularly in high-stakes criminal investigations involving organized crime.

Against this backdrop, this study examines the intersection of transparency, investigative confidentiality, and unauthorized digital disclosure within Liberia's FOI regime, using the US$19.2 million cocaine seizure at RIA as a focal case. It interrogates whether current legal and institutional frameworks are sufficiently robust to manage the competing demands of openness, security, and digital-era information flows, or whether reforms are needed to address emerging vulnerabilities in investigative governance.

The article is structured into four interrelated subsections. The first subsection introduces the background, outlining the problem statement, research objectives, research questions, significance of the study, delimitations, limitations, methodology, and ethical considerations. It culminates with a succinct overview of the context surrounding the RIA Cocaine Seizure investigation, including the release of CCTV footage and other relevant documents within Liberia's social media landscape.

The second subsection presents a comprehensive literature review that incorporates comparative perspectives from both Africa and the West. Following this, it explores the conceptual and legal framework, along with the theoretical foundation of the study.

Considered the heart or core of the paper, the third subsection provides a detailed analysis of the case, integrating findings and discussions that answer the research questions, all framed by the theoretical framework. It concludes with pertinent policy recommendations. Finally, the fourth subsection serves to wrap up the paper or article.

A. Statement of the Problem

Freedom of information (FOI) laws are fundamental to democratic governance because they promote transparency, accountability, and public participation in government affairs. However, these objectives often conflict with the need for investigative confidentiality during criminal investigations, where premature disclosure of sensitive information may compromise evidence, investigative strategies, witness protection, and the administration of justice (Roberts, 2006; United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2019; Pozen, 2017).

This tension has become increasingly complex in the digital era, where social media enables private individuals to rapidly disseminate confidential investigative materials outside formal legal disclosure mechanisms, raising difficult questions about the balance between public oversight and the integrity of criminal investigations (UNESCO, 2023).

The challenge is particularly significant in West Africa, where transnational organized crime and cocaine trafficking continue to threaten governance and national security. According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC, 2024), the region remains a major transit corridor for cocaine destined for international markets, requiring law enforcement agencies to balance operational secrecy with public accountability.

Liberia exemplifies this dilemma. Although the FOI Act of 2010 guarantees public access to government-held information while providing exemptions for law enforcement and national security matters (Republic of Liberia, 2010), its practical application during active criminal investigations remains insufficiently defined. The law offers limited guidance on how public authorities should respond when sensitive investigative materials are disseminated through unauthorized channels rather than through formal FOI requests.

This legal and policy gap became particularly evident following the US$19.2 million cocaine seizure at RIA in June 2026, which the President described as one of the largest narcotics interdictions in Liberia's history. During the investigation, CCTV footage and an investigative document relating to the case were reportedly circulated on social

media by a private citizen, prompting widespread public debate over transparency, accountability, and the protection of investigative integrity. While some viewed the disclosures as promoting public oversight, others argued that they risked compromising ongoing investigations, prejudicing future prosecutions, and exposing sensitive law enforcement operations.

Despite the significance of these issues, there is limited scholarly research examining the intersection of Liberia's FOI regime, investigative confidentiality, and unauthorized digital disclosures in criminal investigations. This gap creates uncertainty for law enforcement agencies, policymakers, the judiciary, the media, and the public regarding the appropriate limits of information disclosure during active investigations.

Accordingly, this study examines the limits of Liberia's FOI Act of 2010 in criminal investigations, using the US$19.2 million cocaine seizure at RIA as a case study. It evaluates how the existing legal framework balances the public's right to information with the need to preserve investigative confidentiality and proposes legal and policy reforms to strengthen both democratic accountability and the integrity of criminal justice administration in the digital age.

B. Research Objectives

This article seeks to examine the limits of the FOI Act of 2010 in criminal investigations, using the US$19.2 million cocaine seizure at RIA as a case study. Specific Objectives:

1. To analyze the legal and institutional provisions governing access to information and investigative confidentiality under Liberia's FOI Act of 2010
2. To assess the implications of the unauthorized circulation of CCTV footage and investigative documents on the integrity of the ongoing criminal investigation.
3. To evaluate the extent to which Liberia's current legal framework balances the public's right to information with the need to protect sensitive law enforcement operations.

4. To propose legal and policy reforms that can strengthen transparency, accountability, and investigative confidentiality in Liberia's criminal justice system.

C. Research Questions

To achieve the general objective of this study, which seeks to examine the limits of Liberia's FOI Act of 2010 in criminal investigations using the US$19.2 million cocaine seizure at RIA as a case study, the study is guided by the following research-specific questions:

1. What legal and institutional provisions govern access to information and investigative confidentiality under Liberia's FOI Act of 2010?
2. What are the implications of the unauthorized circulation of CCTV footage and investigative documents for the integrity of the RIA cocaine seizure investigation?
3. To what extent does Liberia's current legal framework effectively balance transparency with the confidentiality required for criminal investigations?
4. What legal and policy reforms are needed to strengthen both public accountability and investigative confidentiality in Liberia's criminal justice system?

D. Significance of the Study/Contribution to Knowledge

This study contributes to the growing body of scholarship on freedom of information, criminal justice, and governance by critically examining the intersection of transparency and investigative confidentiality within Liberia's legal framework. Using the US$19.2 million cocaine seizure at RIA as a case study, it provides one of the first analyses of how Liberia's FOI Act of 2010 operates in the context of active criminal investigations and unauthorized digital disclosures.

The study fills an important gap in the literature by exploring the legal and policy implications of the unauthorized circulation of CCTV footage and investigative documents during an ongoing criminal investigation. Its findings are expected to inform policymakers, legislators, law enforcement agencies, the judiciary, the media, and civil society on the need to balance the public's right to information with the

protection of investigative integrity, due process, and national security. The study also offers practical recommendations for strengthening Liberia's FOI regime to enhance democratic accountability while safeguarding the effectiveness of criminal investigations in the digital age.

E. Delimitations of the Study

This study is delimited to an examination of the legal and policy dimensions of transparency and investigative confidentiality under Liberia's FOI Act of 2010, using the US$19.2 million cocaine seizure at RIA as a case study. The analysis focuses on the implications of access to information, investigative confidentiality, and the unauthorized circulation of CCTV footage and investigative documents during an active criminal investigation.

It does not assess the criminal liability or culpability of individuals involved in the cocaine seizure, nor does it evaluate the substantive merits of the ongoing criminal proceedings. Instead, the study is confined to analyzing the adequacy of Liberia's legal and institutional framework in balancing the public's right to information with the need to protect the integrity of criminal investigations.

F. Limitations of the Study

This study is subject to several limitations. First, it relies on a doctrinal analysis of legal instruments, official statements, press reports and secondary literature rather than empirical data collected from interviews or surveys. Second, the RIA case has moved from investigation to prosecution, with charges announced in July 2026 and an indictment returned in the August 2026 Term of Criminal Court "C" (AllAfrica, 2026c; Sieh, 2026).

Because the indictment and trial record are not publicly available in full, the study relies on press reports, some resting on a single source, and its account is current only to October 2026. Third, no official finding has been located on how the circulated footage left official custody, so the study states its institutional observations on that question as hypotheses. Despite these limitations, the study draws on primary legal texts and official statements wherever available.

G. Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative doctrinal legal research design complemented by a case study approach. It examines the legal and institutional framework governing transparency and investigative confidentiality under Liberia's FOI Act of 2010, using the US$19.2 million cocaine seizure at RIA as the focal case. Data are drawn from primary sources, including statutes, constitutional provisions, and official government publications, as well as secondary sources such as peer-reviewed journal articles, books, policy reports, and publications from international organizations. The data are analyzed using doctrinal legal analysis and thematic content analysis to evaluate the adequacy of Liberia's legal framework in balancing the public's right to information with the need to preserve the integrity of criminal investigations and to identify potential legal and policy reforms.

H. Ethical Considerations

This study adheres to established principles of research ethics, including integrity, objectivity, accuracy, and respect for the rule of law. As a doctrinal legal study based exclusively on publicly available statutes, official documents, judicial authorities, policy reports, and scholarly literature, it does not involve human participants or the collection of primary personal data and, therefore, does not require informed consent. The analysis is conducted impartially, ensuring that no unsupported conclusions are drawn regarding the guilt, innocence, or criminal liability of any individual connected to the RIA cocaine seizure. Furthermore, the study relies only on lawfully accessible information and does not reproduce or disclose confidential investigative materials, thereby respecting investigative confidentiality while promoting scholarly rigor and responsible legal analysis.

I. Succinct Overview of the Context Surrounding the RIA Cocaine Seizure Investigation

In early June 2026, Liberian authorities intercepted 198 compressed plates of cocaine, weighing approximately 237.6 kilograms and valued at more than US$19 million, concealed in six cargo boxes booked for export to Europe through RIA (Liberia Drug Enforcement Agency [LDEA], 2026; Office of the President of Liberia, 2026a). The

LDEA dates the interception to 8 June, while the Liberia National Police (LNP) reports that the boxes were presented for export on 5 June and searched on 7 June (The New Dawn, 2026b).

The President described the interdiction as one of the largest in Liberia's history, but the seizure of approximately 3,971 kilograms of cocaine, valued at about US$317 million, near Monrovia on 21 July 2026 soon eclipsed it (Doe & Miridzhanian, 2026), and investigators report no established link between the two cases (Sieh, 2026). The RIA case nonetheless reinforced concerns about the use of West African transport corridors to move cocaine from Latin America to Europe (UNODC, 2024).

Beyond its criminal justice significance, the case attracted intense public, political, and media attention. On 16 June 2026, the President placed the investigation with the National Joint Security, operating under the authority of the National Security Council, with the LDEA and the LNP coordinating it and the Ministry of Justice among the supporting institutions (Office of the President of Liberia, 2026a). At the LDEA's request, the 13th Judicial Circuit Court for Margibi County had already issued a writ of subpoena duces tecum, dated 12 June 2026, for the waybills and CCTV footage for 22 May and 5 to 8 June 2026 (The New Dawn, 2026a).

Meanwhile, CCTV footage and an investigative document said to relate to the case circulated on social media through posts attributed to a private citizen, which some commentators welcomed as transparency and others criticized as a threat to the investigation and to prospective judicial proceedings (Verity Online News, 2026; Verity News, 2026).

This institutional picture matters because sections 4.3 and 4.8 of the FOI Act are applied by the authority that holds a record, and the footage was held by airport management and the cargo concessionaire, GLS-Menzies, which reported producing it under the subpoena (AllAfrica, 2026b). The case has since moved beyond investigation. The LNP announced charges against five individuals and a logistics company on 4 July 2026, a Montserrado County grand jury indicted ten defendants in the August 2026 Term of Criminal Court "C", and on 31 July 2026 the President dismissed several airport, police and security officials (AllAfrica, 2026c; Sieh, 2026; Office of the President of Liberia, 2026b). The government also denied any link

between the diplomatic courier system and the probe (Thompson, 2026). In the investigation arising from the July seizure, authorities charged former Vice President Jewel Howard-Taylor on 19 August 2026 (OCCRP, 2026). All defendants are presumed innocent.

The incident brought into sharp focus the competing demands of transparency and investigative confidentiality under Liberia's legal framework. On the one hand, the Freedom of Information Act of 2010 affirms the public's right to access information held by public authorities as a means of strengthening democratic governance and accountability (Republic of Liberia, 2010). On the other hand, the Act recognizes exemptions designed to protect law enforcement investigations, national security, and the administration of justice. The RIA cocaine seizure therefore illustrates the practical challenges of determining the appropriate limits of information disclosure in an era where digital platforms enable the rapid and widespread circulation of sensitive information outside formal legal disclosure mechanisms.

Against this backdrop, the RIA cocaine seizure investigation provides an appropriate case through which to examine whether Liberia's existing legal and institutional framework adequately reconciles the principles of openness and accountability with the operational requirements of effective criminal investigation. It also offers an opportunity to consider whether current legal safeguards remain sufficient in addressing the challenges posed by unauthorized digital disclosures in the administration of criminal justice.

J. Description of the Unofficial Release of CCTV Footage in Liberia's Social Media Landscape

The CCTV footage, operational records, selective videos, screenshots, and investigative details circulated in the Liberian social media space are presented by their poster in a three-episode sequence concerning the alleged movement of a suspected narcotics consignment through RIA on Friday, 22 May 2026, two weeks before the six seized boxes were presented for export (Verity Online News, 2026; The New Dawn, 2026b). This study reports those claims as allegations only. The author has located no public confirmation of them by investigators and no official finding

that their release was unlawful; that characterization is therefore treated here as a premise to be tested.

Episode 1 alleges that a yellow taxicab bearing license plate TX 10609 carried approximately 100 kilograms of suspected cocaine, in four boxes, into the Roberts Air Cargo Center, which the narrative describes as operated by GLS-Menzies, at approximately 15:30 hours and left at approximately 15:49 hours (Verity Online News, 2026). These figures do not describe the official seizure of approximately 237.6 kilograms in six boxes (LDEA, 2026); they concern an earlier consignment.

Documents reported by The Liberian Investigator indicate that a 100-kilogram, four-piece consignment cleared customs at London Heathrow and was collected on 3 June 2026, with no public evidence that its contents were tested (Dodoo, 2026). Prosecutors nonetheless reportedly refer to a similar four-box consignment in May, and the subpoena's reach back to 22 May shows that investigators regarded that movement as relevant (Sieh, 2026; The New Dawn, 2026a).

Episode 2 continues the sequence by alleging the involvement of additional individuals and activities in the delivery and handling of the consignment. The footage is accompanied by claims identifying actors linked to transport and logistics functions as being involved in the movement of the cargo. The episode also introduces a corporate entity referred to as “Emre Venn Group of Companies”, which the narrative presents as the consignor listed on the Air Waybill (AWB). The material further claims that no verifiable registration of this company exists within Liberia’s official business registration and tax systems, although documents reported by The Liberian Investigator list the consignor with a Liberia Revenue Authority taxpayer identification number (Verity Online News, 2026; Dodoo, 2026).

Episode 3 expands the sequence by presenting further narrative claims regarding the logistical chain associated with the shipment. It references the continued use of the aforementioned consignor identity in cargo documentation and outlines additional individuals and entities allegedly connected to the transport and handling process. The footage sequence also references the roles of cargo handling operations at the airport and the movement of goods through the Air Cargo Center under the supervision of the relevant logistics operators (Verity Online News, 2026).

Collectively, the three episodes present an unverified chronological narrative of the alleged movement, handling, and documentation of the suspected consignment at Roberts International Airport, structured around timestamped surveillance footage and the poster's documentary annotations.

From the above descriptions emerge two fundamental concerns that must be addressed in this article. First, it raises significant legal questions concerning the balance between the public's right to information and the protection of active criminal investigations.

Although Liberia's FOI Act of 2010 promotes transparency and public access to government-held information, it also recognizes exemptions intended to safeguard law enforcement investigations, national security, and the administration of justice (Republic of Liberia, 2010). Consequently, the public dissemination of materials purportedly linked to an ongoing investigation, outside established legal disclosure mechanisms, raises questions regarding the lawful acquisition, possession, and dissemination of investigative records, the admissibility and integrity of evidence, the protection of due process rights, and the potential impact on ongoing investigative and prosecutorial activities.

Furthermore, because the materials were reportedly circulated by a private citizen rather than released through official government channels, questions arise as to whether existing Liberian law adequately addresses unauthorized digital disclosures involving sensitive investigative information. The incident therefore exposes a potential gap in the legal framework governing the protection of confidential investigative materials in the digital age, particularly where information can be rapidly disseminated through social media before its authenticity, completeness, or evidentiary status has been officially verified.

Second, the unauthorized disclosure also has important implications for public confidence in Liberia's criminal justice system. On one hand, the circulation of the materials may be perceived by some members of the public as enhancing transparency and facilitating public scrutiny of government actions in a matter of significant national interest. Such perceptions may reinforce demands for greater institutional

accountability, particularly in cases involving transnational organized crime and high-value narcotics seizures.

On the other hand, the unauthorized release of sensitive investigative materials may undermine public confidence by creating uncertainty regarding the security of official records, the professionalism of investigative institutions, and the state's ability to protect confidential information. It may also encourage speculation, misinformation, and premature conclusions about the involvement or culpability of individuals before the completion of the investigative and judicial processes.

If the public perceives that confidential evidence can be selectively disclosed without legal authorization or institutional accountability, confidence in the fairness, impartiality, and integrity of criminal investigations may be diminished. These competing considerations underscore the importance of establishing a legal framework that simultaneously promotes government transparency while preserving investigative confidentiality, due process, and the credibility of the criminal justice system.

K. Literature Review

The relationship between transparency and investigative confidentiality has attracted considerable scholarly attention within the fields of public administration, criminal justice, and constitutional law. While FOI legislation is widely recognized as a cornerstone of democratic governance, scholars argue that the right of access to information is not absolute and must be balanced against competing public interests, including law enforcement, national security, privacy, and the fair administration of justice (Roberts, 2006; Mendel, 2008). Consequently, most FOI regimes incorporate exemptions that permit public authorities to withhold information where disclosure is likely to prejudice criminal investigations or judicial proceedings.

In Western democracies, this balance has evolved through legislation, judicial interpretation, and administrative practice. In the United States, Exemption 7 of the Freedom of Information Act, 5 U.S.C. § 552(b)(7), protects law enforcement records where disclosure could reasonably be expected to interfere with enforcement proceedings, deprive an individual of a fair trial, reveal confidential sources, or endanger life or physical safety (U.S. Department of Justice, 2024). Similarly, sections

30 and 31 of the United Kingdom's Freedom of Information Act 2000 exempt information held for criminal investigations and information whose disclosure would prejudice law enforcement, while the Data Protection Act 2018 provides additional safeguards for personal and investigative information (Information Commissioner's Office, 2024). These jurisdictions demonstrate that transparency is generally pursued alongside carefully defined statutory protections for investigative confidentiality rather than through unrestricted public access to investigative records.

Comparative scholarship further indicates that advances in digital communication have complicated the administration of FOI laws. UNESCO (2019) observes that the rapid dissemination of information through digital platforms has transformed public expectations regarding government openness while simultaneously increasing the risk of unauthorized disclosure of sensitive information. As a result, governments increasingly confront the challenge of maintaining investigative integrity in an environment where confidential materials may be circulated instantly through social media by actors outside formal institutional controls.

Within Africa, the adoption of access-to-information legislation has expanded considerably over the past two decades as part of broader governance and accountability reforms. Countries such as South Africa, Nigeria, Kenya, Ghana, and Liberia have enacted access-to-information statutes that recognize exemptions for law enforcement and national security matters, a trend the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights has sought to consolidate through its Model Law on Access to Information for Africa (African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, 2013). South Africa's Promotion of Access to Information Act 2 of 2000, for example, permits the refusal of access where disclosure could reasonably be expected to prejudice the prevention, detection, or investigation of offences (s 39). Nigeria's Freedom of Information Act 2011 similarly exempts records relating to law enforcement and investigation where disclosure could interfere with ongoing investigations or reveal investigative techniques (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2011, s 12). Kenya's Access to Information Act 2016 limits access where disclosure is likely to impede the due process of law (s 6(1)(b)), and Ghana's Right to Information Act 2019

(Act 989) exempts information whose disclosure could reasonably be expected to prejudice an investigation or impede a prosecution (s 7).

Despite these legislative developments, implementation challenges persist across much of Africa. Weak institutional capacity, inconsistent application of statutory exemptions, political interference, limited judicial oversight, and the growing influence of digital media have complicated efforts to balance openness with investigative confidentiality (Neuman & Calland, 2007; Diallo & Calland, 2013). These challenges are particularly pronounced in West Africa, where transnational organized crime, especially cocaine trafficking, has expanded significantly over the last decade. According to the UNODC (2024), West Africa continues to function as a major transit corridor for cocaine shipments destined for Europe and other international markets, increasing pressure on law enforcement agencies to protect sensitive investigations while maintaining public accountability.

In Liberia, scholarly and civil-society attention has largely focused on the FOI Act as an instrument for promoting democratic governance, media freedom, anti-corruption, and government accountability (Carter Center, n.d.). Comparatively little research has examined the application of the Act within the context of active criminal investigations or the legal implications of unauthorized digital disclosures of investigative materials. Consequently, the intersection of FOI, investigative confidentiality, and social media dissemination remains underexplored within Liberia's legal scholarship.

The present study addresses this gap by examining the tension between transparency and investigative confidentiality through the lens of the US$19.2 million cocaine seizure at RIA. By situating Liberia's experience within broader African and Western approaches to access-to-information law, the study contributes to comparative scholarship on information governance, criminal justice, and the evolving challenges posed by digital information dissemination in the investigation of transnational organized crime.

© 2026. LawFoyer International Journal of Doctrinal Legal Research (ISSN: 2583-7753)

IV. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This study is anchored on four interrelated concepts: transparency, accountability, public interest, and open government, which collectively form the theoretical foundation for understanding the tension between access to information and investigative confidentiality in criminal investigations.

Transparency refers to the degree to which government actions, decisions, and information are accessible and understandable to the public. Contemporary scholarship emphasizes that transparency is no longer merely the passive release of information but a multidimensional governance practice shaped by institutional design, legal frameworks, and digital information flows (Gil-Garcia et al., 2020). Within the context of FOI regimes, transparency is intended to enhance oversight and reduce information asymmetries between the state and citizens.

Accountability is closely linked to transparency and denotes the obligation of public institutions and officials to justify their actions and accept responsibility for their decisions. Recent studies highlight that FOI systems function as accountability mechanisms by enabling citizens, oversight bodies, and the media to scrutinize government conduct and demand explanations for administrative actions (Trautendorfer & Eder, 2025). However, accountability must be balanced against the need to preserve the integrity of sensitive processes such as criminal investigations, where premature disclosure may undermine justice outcomes.

The principle of *public interest* serves as a normative standard for determining when information should be disclosed or withheld. In FOI jurisprudence, public interest considerations require balancing the benefits of disclosure (such as transparency and democratic oversight) against the potential harm to competing interests, including law enforcement effectiveness and individual rights (Borgesius et al., 2015; Mendel, 2008). Liberia's FOI Act gives this standard statutory form by requiring that the harm of disclosure exceed the public interest in disclosure (Republic of Liberia, 2010, s 4.8(c)). In criminal investigations, public interest is therefore not synonymous with full disclosure but rather with a context-sensitive assessment of societal benefit versus harm.

Open government integrates these principles into a broader governance philosophy that emphasizes transparency, participation, and collaboration between the state and citizens. According to recent comparative governance research, open government frameworks enhance legitimacy and trust by promoting structured access to public information while simultaneously recognizing the necessity of legal safeguards for sensitive state functions (Gil-Garcia et al., 2023; Trautendorfer et al., 2025). However, emerging scholarship also cautions that digital technologies and social media have transformed open government environments, creating new risks of unauthorized disclosure and information distortion (UNESCO, 2019).

Collectively, these concepts provide an analytical lens for examining Liberia's Freedom of Information regime in the context of criminal investigations. They illustrate that while transparency and accountability promote democratic governance, their application must be carefully balanced with public interest considerations and the operational requirements of law enforcement, particularly in the digital age where investigative materials can be rapidly disseminated beyond institutional control.

V. INVESTIGATIVE CONFIDENTIALITY AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE

Investigative confidentiality is a foundational principle of criminal justice administration that safeguards the integrity, reliability, and fairness of criminal investigations. It refers to the controlled restriction of sensitive investigative information to authorized actors within the justice system, particularly during active investigations, to prevent interference, contamination of evidence, or compromise of prosecutorial strategy. Scholarship on state secrecy emphasizes that without effective confidentiality safeguards, the legitimacy of criminal justice outcomes may be undermined, particularly in complex transnational crime investigations involving organized networks and digital evidence (Roberts, 2006).

A central concern of investigative confidentiality is the integrity of investigations, which requires that investigative processes remain free from external interference, premature disclosure, or manipulation. Integrity ensures that investigative conclusions are based on verified evidence rather than public speculation or incomplete information. In high-profile cases, unauthorized disclosures can distort

investigative priorities, influence witness behavior, and generate public narratives that may conflict with evidentiary findings (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime [UNODC], 2024). This is particularly relevant in digital environments where investigative materials may circulate rapidly beyond institutional control.

Closely linked to investigative integrity is the chain of custody, which refers to the documented and continuous control of evidence from the point of collection to its presentation in court. Maintaining an unbroken chain of custody is essential for ensuring that evidence is admissible, reliable, and free from tampering. Legal scholarship underscores that breaches in chain of custody, whether through unauthorized access, improper handling, or public dissemination, can significantly weaken prosecution cases and lead to evidentiary exclusion in proceedings (Casey, 2011).

In Liberia, criminal courts apply the evidence rules of the Criminal Procedure Law, then those of the Civil Procedure Law, and finally the common law of evidence (Republic of Liberia, 1969, s 21.1). The study has located no provision in either code addressed specifically to electronic exhibits, so the authentication of CCTV footage, which can be copied and distributed with ease, depends heavily on documented custody.

The rise of digital evidence has further transformed investigative confidentiality requirements. Digital evidence, including surveillance footage, mobile data, and electronic communications, is highly susceptible to unauthorized duplication and dissemination. Unlike physical evidence, digital materials can be replicated without degradation, raising serious concerns about authenticity, integrity, and security (Casey, 2011; UNODC, 2024). Consequently, modern criminal justice systems increasingly rely on digital forensics protocols and cybersecurity safeguards to ensure that sensitive investigative materials are protected throughout the investigative lifecycle.

Finally, investigative confidentiality is directly connected to fair trial rights. Article 21(h) of the Constitution of Liberia guarantees a speedy, public and impartial trial and the presumption of innocence, while Article 20(a) conditions any deprivation of liberty on due process of law (Republic of Liberia, 1986).

Article 14 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which Liberia ratified on 22 September 2004, protects the same guarantees, and the Human Rights Committee requires public authorities to refrain from prejudging trials and expects media coverage not to undermine the presumption of innocence (Human Rights Committee, 2007, para. 30). Premature public disclosure of investigative materials may prejudice these rights by shaping public opinion and influencing potential jurors. Confidentiality therefore protects not only institutional interests but also the right of accused persons to adjudication based solely on admissible evidence presented in court.

Liberian law also offers a partial remedy against prejudicial publicity through contempt. The Supreme Court treats the contempt power as inherent in all courts (*In re Cassell*, 1979) and has punished a newspaper editor for publishing material on a pending case (*In re Contempt Proceedings against Rodney Sieh*, 2011). Yet Article 74 requires contempt penalties to be fixed by the Legislature and to conform to the fundamental rights provisions, and Article 15(e) confines judicial limits on expression to enumerated grounds (Republic of Liberia, 1986). Whether a sub judice remedy may lawfully reach a private citizen's pre-trial publication of investigative footage therefore remains unsettled.

In sum, investigative confidentiality operates as a safeguard that preserves the integrity of investigations, maintains the chain of custody, protects the reliability of digital evidence, and upholds fair trial rights. Within the context of modern FOI regimes, these protections must be carefully balanced against transparency demands, particularly in cases where sensitive investigative materials may be exposed through unauthorized digital dissemination.

VI. LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The legal framework governing transparency and investigative confidentiality in Liberia is anchored on the Constitution of the Republic of Liberia (1986), the Freedom of Information Act of 2010, and statutory provisions regulating access to public information, particularly the exemption regime in Chapter 4 of the Act (sections 4.1 to 4.9) and its oversight and appeal provisions. Together, these instruments establish the

legal balance between the public's right to information and the state's obligation to protect sensitive law enforcement processes.

At the apex of this framework is the Constitution of Liberia (1986). Article 15(a) guarantees freedom of expression and bars the government from curtailing it save during a declared emergency, and Article 15(b) extends the right to knowledge. Article 15(c) provides that there shall be no limitation on the public right to be informed about the government and its functionaries, and Article 15(e) permits this freedom to be limited only by judicial action in proceedings grounded in defamation, invasion of privacy and publicity, or commercial expression (Republic of Liberia, 1986).

Unlike Articles 13 and 14, Article 15 contains no general public-safety or national-security qualification, although the Supreme Court has read its reference to responsibility for abuse together with Articles 5(b) and 14 to hold that expression is not absolute (AllAfrica, 2026a). The sharper question is how a statutory exemption for criminal investigations can be reconciled with the categorical wording of Article 15(c). The FOI Act's own answer is that limitations must be necessary, narrowly established, and justified by an equally or more compelling public interest (Republic of Liberia, 2010, s 1.4(b)), a reading that Liberian courts have yet to test.

Building on this constitutional foundation, the Freedom of Information Act (FOI) of 2010 operationalizes the right of access to public information by granting individuals the legal authority to request and receive information held by public bodies (Republic of Liberia, 2010). The Act is designed to promote transparency, accountability, and good governance by reducing secrecy in public administration. However, it simultaneously recognizes that unrestricted disclosure may undermine critical state functions, particularly law enforcement and national security operations.

Central to this balancing exercise is Chapter 4 of the FOI Act. Section 4.1 makes the list of exempt categories exhaustive, so that a record may be withheld only if it falls within one of them, subject to section 4.8. Section 4.2 covers national defence, security and international relations; section 4.3 covers criminal investigations; and sections 4.4 to 4.6 cover trade secrets, personal information and privileged communications. Of particular relevance to this study, section 4.3 exempts a record "if its disclosure would

cause injury or substantial harm to (1) an ongoing criminal investigation, (2) disclose the identity of a confidential source assisting with criminal investigation, or (3) endanger the lives or physical safety of persons involved in criminal investigation" (Republic of Liberia, 2010, s 4.3).

The Act also prescribes how these exemptions apply. Section 4.7 requires the redaction of only the exempt portion of a record. Section 4.8 requires the authority to demonstrate that the record falls within an exemption, that disclosure will or is likely to cause injury or substantial harm to the protected interest, and that this harm is greater than the public interest in disclosure (s 4.8(c)). Section 4.9 caps non-disclosure at fifteen continuous years, and section 1.7 makes the Act, save for the Constitution, the primary law on access to information. A refused requester may seek internal review, complain to the Independent Information Commissioner, before whom the authority bears the burden of proof, and then seek judicial review in the Civil Law Court or the relevant circuit court (Republic of Liberia, 2010, ss 6.2 to 6.5).

These provisions supply a structured harm-and-public-interest test, so the Act does not lack guidance on balancing. Its limitation is one of scope. The test operates only when a public authority, or a private entity covered by section 1.6, decides a request for a record it holds. It does not regulate a third party who publishes a record obtained outside that procedure, and the Act's offences concern only the wrongful denial of access and the destruction or alteration of requested records (ss 7.1 to 7.4). Leaks of investigative material therefore fall to other bodies of law.

The most relevant of these is the Cybercrime Act of 2025. The Senate passed the bill on 4 November 2025, and the printed Act is reportedly marked as approved on 3 July 2026, although its effective date requires confirmation against the official Handbill (Kwabo, 2026). The Act penalizes unauthorized access, unlawful interception, data modification and misuse of devices, and it creates speech-related offences, including the distribution of "harmful data messages" (s 19), backed by court-ordered takedowns (s 21).

These provisions may reach an insider or intruder who extracts footage from an official system, but none, on the reported text, specifically penalizes onward publication by a person who did not obtain the material unlawfully. Any extension of

section 19 to such conduct would confront Article 15(e) and existing criticism of its falsity-and-harm standard (Kwabo, 2026). Criminal-law and public-service confidentiality obligations may offer further remedies against leaking officials and warrant separate examination against their primary texts.

In sum, Liberia's legal framework combines a categorical constitutional commitment to transparency with a narrow, justification-based statutory exemption for criminal investigations, while leaving unauthorized disclosure to cyber, criminal and contempt law. The interaction between these provisions forms the legal basis for assessing whether the existing framework is sufficiently robust to address emerging challenges posed by high-profile criminal investigations and unauthorized digital disclosures, such as those associated with the Roberts International Airport cocaine seizure.

VII. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is anchored in the Transparency–Accountability Nexus Theory and complemented by elements of the Public Interest Theory of Information Disclosure and Institutional Theory of Governance, which together provide an analytical lens for examining the tension between transparency and investigative confidentiality in criminal investigations.

1. The Transparency–Accountability Nexus

It posits that transparency is a prerequisite for accountability, as access to information enables citizens, oversight institutions, and the media to evaluate and question government actions. Contemporary scholarship argues that transparency mechanisms, including Freedom of Information (FOI) regimes, strengthen democratic governance by reducing information asymmetries and enhancing institutional responsiveness (Bovens et al., 2014; Fung, 2004). However, the theory also acknowledges that transparency is not absolute and must be balanced against legitimate state interests, particularly in contexts involving ongoing criminal investigations where disclosure may undermine justice processes.

2. Public Interest Theory of Information Disclosure

This theory explains that decisions to disclose or withhold information should be guided by a proportional assessment of harm and benefit to society. Under this framework, information is released when its disclosure serves a broader societal benefit, such as accountability or public oversight, but may be lawfully withheld when disclosure would significantly harm public safety, investigative integrity, or judicial fairness (Mendel, 2008; Borgesius et al., 2015). This theory is particularly relevant to FOI exemptions in criminal justice systems, where competing interests must be carefully weighed.

VIII. INSTITUTIONAL THEORY OF GOVERNANCE

Complementing these perspectives, Institutional Theory emphasizes the role of formal and informal structures, including laws, norms, and administrative practices, in shaping how transparency and confidentiality are implemented in practice. In the context of criminal investigations, institutional capacity, digital governance structures, and enforcement culture significantly influence how FOI laws are applied and how investigative confidentiality is maintained (Scott, 2014; OECD, 2023). This is especially important in digitally connected environments where unauthorized dissemination of sensitive materials can occur outside institutional control.

Collectively, these theoretical perspectives provide a comprehensive framework for analyzing Liberia's FOI regime in the context of criminal investigations. They help explain how transparency promotes accountability, how public interest determines disclosure boundaries, and how institutional weaknesses may contribute to tensions between openness and investigative confidentiality, particularly in high-profile cases such as the RIA cocaine seizure.

A. Analysis of Integrated Findings and Discussions

Viewed as the heart or core of the article, this subsection presents and analyzes findings from the RIA cocaine seizure case in relation to Liberia's FOI framework, investigative confidentiality, and the broader theoretical lens of transparency, accountability, public interest, and institutional governance.

1. Legal and Institutional Provisions Governing Access to Information and Investigative Confidentiality

The findings indicate that Liberia's FOI regime rests on the 1986 Constitution and the Freedom of Information Act of 2010. Article 15(c) provides that there shall be no limitation on the public right to be informed about the government and its functionaries, and Article 15(e) confines limitations on expression to judicial action on enumerated grounds that do not include public safety or national security (Republic of Liberia, 1986). This constitutional foundation reflects the transparency–accountability nexus theory, which positions access to information as a mechanism for democratic oversight, and it places a heavy burden of justification on any statutory exemption.

The FOI Act of 2010 operationalizes this principle through an exhaustive exemption list (s 4.1), under which section 4.3 protects ongoing criminal investigations, confidential sources and persons at risk, and section 4.2 protects security information, each subject to the section 4.8 test (Republic of Liberia, 2010). The authority that holds the record applies that test. In the RIA case, those authorities include the LDEA and the LNP under the National Joint Security, and airport management and the cargo concessionaire, so far as it performs a public function within section 1.6, as custodians of the footage (Office of the President of Liberia, 2026a; The New Dawn, 2026a).

However, institutional theory suggests a possible implementation gap. The public record does not show how the footage left official custody or how institutions responded, and the only official comment located is the LDEA's warning that premature disclosure could compromise intelligence operations and the integrity of evidence (Dodoo, 2026). The study therefore treats weak information controls as a hypothesis rather than a finding. Compliance data point the same way: an Independent Information Commission audit of 103 ministries, agencies and commissions found that only 25 had appointed public information officers and that none had established an internal review body (AllAfrica, 2025).

2. Implications of Unauthorized Circulation of CCTV Footage and Investigative Documents

The unauthorized dissemination of CCTV footage, operational records, and investigative documents in the RIA cocaine seizure case presents serious implications for the integrity of criminal investigations. From a doctrinal perspective, such

disclosures may undermine chain of custody principles, compromise evidentiary reliability, and expose investigative methods to public scrutiny and potential manipulation.

Applying the public interest theory, the circulation of investigative materials creates a tension between competing claims: public oversight versus investigatory harm. While transparency advocates may interpret the leak as enhancing accountability, the findings suggest that uncontrolled disclosure risks distorting public understanding of ongoing investigations and may prematurely shape perceptions of guilt or institutional failure.

From an institutional perspective, the episode suggests possible vulnerabilities in Liberia's information governance architecture, particularly in controlling copies of digital exhibits held by several custodians, including the airport, its cargo concessionaire and the investigating agencies. Because the source and route of the leak have not been officially established, this observation remains a hypothesis that official or judicial findings would need to confirm.

3. Effectiveness of Liberia's Legal Framework in Balancing Transparency and Confidentiality

The analysis suggests that Liberia's FOI framework is, on its face, carefully designed: the exemption list is exhaustive (s 4.1), partial disclosure is mandatory (s 4.7), refusals must satisfy a harm test and a public-interest override (s 4.8), non-disclosure is time-limited (s 4.9), refusals are reviewable (ss 6.2 to 6.5), and the Act contains no classification regime. The view that the exemption clauses are broadly framed therefore cannot be sustained. The sounder conclusion is that the section 4.8 test governs only requested records. Had a requester sought the RIA footage during the investigation, the authority would have had to show substantial harm outweighing the public interest; that test does not reach a third party who publishes footage obtained outside the request procedure.

The RIA case demonstrates that while the legal framework is conceptually sound, its operational effectiveness depends on compliance capacity, which remains limited (AllAfrica, 2025), and on legal instruments outside the FOI Act for addressing digital

leaks. Consequently, Liberia's FOI regime functions as a transparency instrument rather than as a mechanism for controlling third-party disclosure.

IX. RECOMMENDATIONS: LEGAL AND POLICY REFORMS TO STRENGTHEN TRANSPARENCY AND INVESTIGATIVE CONFIDENTIALITY

The findings indicate a clear need for targeted legal and institutional reforms. Because the FOI Act governs requests for records rather than the conduct of private publishers, each reform below names the instrument and the institution best suited to it. The first two can proceed in the short term under existing powers, while the third requires legislative action.

First, the Independent Information Commission should issue access guidelines under section 5.2(i) of the FOI Act, and the Legislature may later codify them, to clarify how section 4.3 applies to digital investigative records such as CCTV footage, including when redacted release under section 4.7 becomes appropriate after charges are filed. The Commission should also enforce the appointment of public information officers and internal review bodies, drawing on the guidance and reporting model of the United Kingdom's Information Commissioner's Office (Information Commissioner's Office, 2024).

Second, the Ministry of Justice, the LNP and the LDEA should adopt binding chain-of-custody and access-logging protocols for digital exhibits, including restricted access systems and audit trails, and the Supreme Court should consider rules of court on the authentication of electronic evidence under Article 75 of the Constitution.

Third, for unauthorized disclosure, the Legislature should first test whether existing offences, including the unauthorized-access and interception provisions of the Cybercrime Act of 2025, already reach officials and contractors who leak investigative records. Any tailored offence should target custodians who breach a duty of confidentiality, not citizens or journalists who publish material of public interest, so as to respect Article 15(e) and avoid the vagueness that the ECOWAS Court found objectionable in Nigeria's Cybercrimes Act (Kwabo, 2026). The harm-based drafting

of South Africa's section 39 and Ghana's section 7 offers a model for any accompanying clarification of the exemption.

Fourth, the National Security Council and the Ministry of Information should formalize a public communication protocol for active investigations, so that verified information is released through a single official channel while the courts retain control of material that has become evidence in pending proceedings, thereby reducing misinformation while maintaining transparency.

From a theoretical standpoint, these reforms reinforce the public interest theory, ensuring that disclosure decisions are guided by harm-benefit analysis, while strengthening the institutional capacity required to operationalize the transparency–accountability nexus without undermining investigative integrity.

X. CONCLUSION

This study set out to examine the limits of Liberia's FOI Act (2010) in criminal investigations, using the US$19.2 million cocaine seizure at RIA as a focal case. Guided by the transparency–accountability nexus theory, public interest theory, and institutional theory, the analysis has demonstrated that Liberia's legal framework embodies a formal commitment to transparency while simultaneously recognizing the necessity of investigative confidentiality. However, the findings show that the statutory balance applies only to requested records, leaving unofficial disclosures in high-profile criminal investigations to other, less settled bodies of law.

The RIA cocaine seizure case illustrates that while Liberia's FOI Act provides a narrow, justification-based exemption for ongoing investigations, that exemption cannot govern the circulation of investigative material by third parties. The official record has not traced the circulated CCTV footage and investigative documents to their source, but the episode raises plausible concerns about the control of digital exhibits held by several custodians, and the Independent Information Commission's audit confirms broader compliance gaps. These concerns expose a gap between the normative objectives of transparency and the operational demands of investigative confidentiality.

From a theoretical perspective, the study confirms that transparency and accountability remain essential pillars of democratic governance; however, their effectiveness depends on robust institutional safeguards that prevent misuse or premature exposure of sensitive investigative materials. The public interest framework further underscores that disclosure must be carefully balanced against the potential harm to justice processes, particularly in active criminal investigations where evidentiary integrity and fair trial rights may be compromised.

Overall, the study concludes that Liberia's FOI regime requires recalibration to better reflect the complexities of the digital age. While the legal foundation for balancing transparency and confidentiality exists, its implementation is constrained by compliance gaps and by the absence of settled law on unauthorized digital disclosures, an area that the Cybercrime Act of 2025 and the courts' contempt jurisdiction address only in part. Without reform, these weaknesses risk undermining both public trust in law enforcement institutions and the integrity of criminal justice processes.

Accordingly, the study emphasizes the need for legislative refinement, institutional strengthening, and the development of comprehensive digital information governance protocols. Such reforms are essential to ensure that Liberia's commitment to openness and accountability does not inadvertently compromise the effectiveness of criminal investigations or the fairness of judicial proceedings.

XI. REFERENCES

1. African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights. (2013). Model law on access to information for Africa. https://achpr.au.int/en/node/873
2. AllAfrica. (2025, September 17). Liberia: IIC observes 15th anniversary of FOI-Act. https://allafrica.com/stories/202509170250.html
3. AllAfrica. (2026a, March 10). Liberia Supreme Court: Vulgar social media attacks not protected by free speech. https://allafrica.com/stories/202603100032.html

4. AllAfrica. (2026b, June 29). Liberia: U.S.$19.2m cocaine bust exposes gaps in airport cargo security system. https://allafrica.com/stories/202606290266.html
5. AllAfrica. (2026c, July 14). Liberia: U.S.$19.2m drug case arguments end today. https://allafrica.com/stories/202607140502.html
6. Borgesius, F. Z., Gray, J., & van Eechoud, M. (2015). Open data, privacy, and fair information principles: Towards a balancing framework. Berkeley Technology Law Journal, 30(3), 2073–2131. https://doi.org/10.15779/Z389S18
7. Bovens, M., Goodin, R. E., & Schillemans, T. (Eds.). (2014). The Oxford handbook of public accountability. Oxford University Press.
8. Carter Center. (n.d.). A citizens' guide to the 2010 Liberia Freedom of Information Act. https://www.cartercenter.org/resources/pdfs/peace/ati/liberia/citizens-guide-to-foi-final.pdf
9. Casey, E. (2011). Digital evidence and computer crime: Forensic science, computers, and the Internet (3rd ed.). Academic Press.
10. Diallo, F., & Calland, R. (Eds.). (2013). Access to information in Africa: Law, culture and practice. Brill.
11. Dodoo, L. (2026, June 29). Heathrow documents show May 22 Liberia shipment was not cocaine. The Liberian Investigator. https://liberianinvestigator.com/heathrow-documents-may-22-liberia-shipment-not-cocaine/
12. Doe, C., & Miridzhanian, A. (2026, July 24). Liberia seizes $317 million of cocaine bound for Europe, police chief says. Reuters. https://www.reuters.com/world/americas/liberia-seizes-317-million-cocaine-bound-europe-police-chief-says-2026-07-24/
13. Pozen, D. E. (2017). Freedom of information beyond the Freedom of Information Act. University of Pennsylvania Law Review, 165, 1097–1158.
14. Fung, A. (2004). Empowered participation: Reinventing urban democracy. Princeton University Press.

15. Federal Republic of Nigeria. (2011). Freedom of Information Act, 2011. Government Printer.
16. United Kingdom. Freedom of Information Act 2000, c. 36.
17. United States. Freedom of Information Act, 5 U.S.C. § 552.
18. Gil-Garcia, J. R., Gasco-Hernandez, M., & Pardo, T. A. (2020). Beyond transparency, participation, and collaboration? A reflection on the dimensions of open government. Public Performance & Management Review, 43(3), 483–502.
19. Gil-Garcia, J. R., Gasco-Hernandez, M., & Pardo, T. A. (2023). Making sense of open government: A conceptual framework and ideas for future research. Perspectives on Public Management and Governance, 6(2–3), 80–93. https://doi.org/10.1093/ppmgov/gvad005
20. Human Rights Committee. (2007). General comment No. 32: Article 14: Right to equality before courts and tribunals and to a fair trial (CCPR/C/GC/32). United Nations.
21. In re Cassell, 28 LLR 107 (Supreme Court of Liberia 1979).
22. In re Contempt Proceedings against Rodney Sieh, [2011] LRSC 10 (Supreme Court of Liberia).
23. International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, December 16, 1966, 999 U.N.T.S. 171.
24. Information Commissioner's Office. (2024). Guide to freedom of information. https://ico.org.uk
25. Kenya. Access to Information Act, No. 31 of 2016.
26. Kwabo, J. P. (2026, September 11). Liberia's free-speech balancing act and what the cybercrime law actually changed. FrontPage Africa. https://frontpageafricaonline.com/liberias-free-speech-balancing-act-and-what-the-cybercrime-law-actually-changed/
27. Liberia Drug Enforcement Agency. (2026). Official statement on cocaine seizure at Roberts International Airport. Monrovia, Liberia.
28. Mendel, T. (2008). Freedom of information: A comparative legal survey (2nd ed.). UNESCO.

29. Neuman, L., & Calland, R. (2007). Making the law work: The challenges of implementation. In A. Florini (Ed.), The right to know: Transparency for an open world (pp. 179–213). Columbia University Press.
30. OCCRP. (2026, August 20). Liberia charges ex-vice president in transnational drug probe. Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project. https://www.occrp.org/en/news/liberia-charges-ex-vice-president-in-transnational-drug-probe
31. OECD. (2023). Open government data: Enhancing transparency and accountability in the digital age. Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. https://www.oecd.org
32. Office of the President of Liberia. (2026a, June 16). Statement to the nation by His Excellency Joseph Nyuma Boakai, Sr., President of the Republic of Liberia, on the recent seizure of approximately 237.6 kilograms of cocaine at Roberts International Airport. Executive Mansion. https://www.emansion.gov.lr/publications/document-type/speeches
33. Office of the President of Liberia. (2026b, July 31). President Boakai orders dismissals, suspensions, and further investigations in ongoing narcotics cases [Press release]. Executive Mansion. https://www.emansion.gov.lr/index.php/media/press-release/president-boakai-orders-dismissals-suspensions-and-further-investigations
34. Roberts, A. (2006). Blacked out: Government secrecy in the information age. Cambridge University Press.
35. Republic of Liberia. (1969). Criminal Procedure Law, Title 2, Liberian Code of Laws Revised.
36. Republic of Liberia. (1986). Constitution of the Republic of Liberia.
37. Republic of Liberia. (2010). Freedom of Information Act of 2010. Government of Liberia.
38. Republic of Ghana. Right to Information Act, 2019 (Act 989).
39. Republic of South Africa. Promotion of Access to Information Act 2 of 2000.
40. Scott, W. R. (2014). Institutions and organizations: Ideas, interests, and identities (4th ed.). SAGE Publications.

41. Sieh, R. D. (2026, October 12). Liberia: Investigators find no link between Liberia's US$19M and US$317M cocaine busts. FrontPage Africa. https://frontpageafricaonline.com/liberia-investigators-find-no-link-between-liberias-us19m-and-us317m-cocaine-busts/
42. Thompson, K. (2026). Government Denies Diplomatic Courier System Linked to US$19M Drug Probe https://www.thenewdawnliberia.com/government-denies-diplomatic-courier-system-linked-to-us19m-drug-probe/
43. The New Dawn. (2026a, June 17). Court orders RIA CCTV drug seizure. https://www.thenewdawnliberia.com/court-orders-ria-cctv-drug-seizure/
44. The New Dawn. (2026b, July 5). Revealed: Cartel tried to bribe security. https://www.thenewdawnliberia.com/revealed-cartel-tried-to-bribe-security/
45. Trautendorfer, J., Hohensinn, L., & Hilgers, D. (2025). From de jure to de facto transparency: Analyzing the compliance gap in light of freedom of information laws. Regulation & Governance, 19(1), 253–283. https://doi.org/10.1111/rego.12615
46. Trautendorfer, J., & Eder, N. (2025). Does transparency reach citizens? National accountability mechanisms and public perceptions in Europe. Governance, 38(3), 763–781. https://doi.org/10.1111/gove.70041
47. United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. (2024). World drug report 2024. UNODC.
48. U.S. Department of Justice. (2024). Freedom of Information Act guide: Exemption 7 and law enforcement records. https://www.justice.gov/oip
49. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. (2019). Access to information: A new promise for sustainable development. UNESCO. https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000371485
50. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. (2023). Guidelines for the governance of digital platforms. UNESCO. Last updated 2025. https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/guidelines-governance-digital-platforms

51. Verity Online News. (2026). Breaking news (Read Episode #3 documentary evidence) [Facebook post]. Facebook. Retrieved [access date to be supplied by the author], from https://www.facebook.com/61558522477978/posts/122257740230284082/?rdid=J7FsEt5hiUHzxUeA
52. Verity News. (2026). BREAKING: Liberian activist Martin K. N. Kollie has released what he describes as Episode 2 of his ongoing investigation into the reported US$19.2 million [Facebook reel]. Facebook. Retrieved [access date to be supplied by the author], from https://www.facebook.com/reel/1185706993685560