

Statement of Rep. Henry A. Waxman  
May 4, 2000

As we near the end of our fourth day of hearings, I want to summarize some of the most important facts that we have learned.

We have learned that no one in the White House had any role in developing the message retrieval system, that no one in the White House asked that any e-mail messages be excluded from the system, and that before June 1998 no senior officials in the White House even knew that some e-mail messages were, for technical reasons, not being archived in the retrieval system.

We have learned that the Northrop-Grumman employees involved in this issue have conflicting recollections on whether any threats were made to them. One employee, Robert Haas, believed he had been threatened with jail by Laura Callahan, an employee of the Office of Administration. Mr. Haas told us that in a meeting with Mrs. Callahan and his four co-workers, he flippantly asked what would happen if he discussed the computer glitch with others. He remembers Mrs. Callahan warning him that "there would be a jail cell with his name on it."

Sandra Golas initially testified that while she remembered the word "jail" being used in the meeting, she couldn't remember who said it. But she later said she did feel threatened and thought jail was a real possibility.

Yiman Salim and John Spriggs, both of whom were in the meeting and both of whom seemed credible, have no memory of jail ever being discussed. Ms. Salim testified that she "never felt threatened" and both said they believed Mrs. Callahan acted reasonably given the circumstances.

Betty Lambuth did agree with Mr. Haas's recollection, and added that in a second meeting she had with Mr. Lindsey and Paulette Cichon, another threat by Mr. Lindsay was made.

But we now know that Ms. Cichon has signed a statement saying that threat never happened. In fact, Ms. Cichon's statement says: "At no time during this meeting did I perceive Mark threatening Betty or myself. At no time was a threat of jail mentioned or any other threat. If any threat were made I would have certainly remembered it and would have taken the appropriate action in response."

I want to point out that Ms. Cichon was not a political appointee and has spent almost all of her career in the private sector and no longer works at the White House.

We also learned that none of the Northrop-Grumman employees and no one in the White House has any knowledge of the content of any e-mails that have not been turned over to investigators.

Yesterday we learned from Mr. Heissner and Mr. Lyle that they knew of no effort to conceal this information from Congress or the Independent Counsel. And we learned that despite

yesterday's press reports, there was no inappropriate action regarding Sidney Blumenthal's e-mail account.

Now let's put all of this in context.

A lot of individuals at the White House have been involved in this e-mail issue. One is Mr. Meissner, who is a career civil servant and has served in the administrations of President Ford, President Carter, President Reagan, President Bush, and President Clinton.

A second person is Mr. Lyle, the Director of the Office of Administration. He testified yesterday and told us he became involved in this issue in April 1999, almost 10 months after the White House Counsel's office focused on this issue.

Laura Callahan, who is accused of making the initial threat is also involved. She is a registered Republican and a career civil servant.

Paulette Cichon is another participant. As I noted before, she also was not a political appointee and has spent most of her working life in the private sector.

And today we have Mr. Lindsay, Mr. Ruff, and Ms. Mills, all of whom have impressive backgrounds and records of public service.

If there's a scandal and a deliberate attempt to conceal information, obstruct justice, and thwart investigations, these are the people who would be involved. They would be the participants in the cover-up.

Not only have they all credibly denied being involved in any wrongdoing, none of them have any knowledge of others making an attempt to conceal the e-mails.

And they do not even have any knowledge of the content of the missing incoming e-mails.

So, if the theory of wrongdoing is correct, these individuals would have to participate in a cover-up without even knowing what they were trying to cover-up. And Mr. Ruff would have to be doing this with the help of Mr. Meissner and others whom he has never met. And now, to cover-up the cover-up, all the witnesses who have testified in the four days of hearings would have to be lying under oath.

I think a more plausible explanation is that Mr. Ruff and others in the White House Counsel's office simply did a bad job in responding to the system defect that resulted in missing e-mails. It's embarrassing to have to face that, but mistakes happen.

The one area where I agree with Mr. Barr is that responding to subpoenas is a serious obligation. Every effort should be made to produce documents. In this case, for whatever the reason, I don't think enough attention was given to understanding the problem and making sure subpoenas were fully complied with. I regret that and I'm sure Mr. Ruff, Ms. Mills, and others who worked in the Counsels' office regret that.

But again, that is an unfortunate mistake. It's not criminal conduct, and it doesn't amount to a scandal.