

ONE HUNDRED TENTH CONGRESS
Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM
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March 16, 2007

The Honorable Joshua Bolten
Assistant to the President and Chief of Staff
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave. NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. Bolten:

Today, the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform held a hearing to examine the disclosure by senior White House officials of the identity of covert CIA agent Valerie Plame Wilson. The hearing raised many new questions about the how the White House responded to an extraordinarily serious breach of national security. It also raised new concerns about whether the security practices being followed by the White House are sufficient to protect our nation's most sensitive secrets.

James Knodell, Director of the Office of Security at the White House, testified at the hearing about White House procedures for safeguarding classified information. During his testimony, Mr. Knodell made some remarkable statements about how his office handled the disclosure of Ms. Wilson's covert status. Specifically, Mr. Knodell testified:

- The Office of Security for the White House never conducted any investigation of the disclosure of Ms. Wilson's identity;
- Under the applicable executive order and regulations, your senior political advisor, Karl Rove, and other senior White House officials were required to report what they knew about the disclosure of Ms. Wilson's identity, but they did not make any such report to the White House Office of Security; and
- There has been no suspension of security clearances or any other administrative sanction for Mr. Rove and other White House officials involved in the disclosure.

According to Mr. Knodell, the explanation for the lack of action by the White House Security Office was a White House decision not to conduct a security investigation while a criminal investigation was pending. Mr. Knodell could not explain, however, why the White

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House did not initiate an investigation after the security breach. It took months before a criminal investigation was initiated, yet according to Mr. Knodell, there was no White House investigation initiated during this period.

Mr. Knodell also testified that it would be inappropriate to allow an individual who was a security risk to retain his or her security clearance while a criminal investigation is pending. As members of the Committee pointed out, a criminal investigation can last years, and it would jeopardize national security not to investigate the officials implicated in the leak and suspend their security clearances if there were reason to suspect their involvement. Mr. Knodell did not dispute this point.

The testimony of Mr. Knodell appears to describe White House decisions that were inconsistent with the directives of Executive Order 12958, which you signed in March 2003. Under this executive order, the White House is required to "take appropriate and prompt corrective action" whenever there is a release of classified information. Yet Mr. Knodell could describe no such actions after the disclosure of Ms. Wilson's identity.

Taken as a whole, the testimony at today's hearing described breach after breach of national security requirements at the White House. The first breach was the disclosure of Ms. Wilson's identity. Other breaches included the failure of Mr. Rove and other officials to report their disclosures as required by law, the failure of the White House to initiate the prompt investigation required by the executive order, and the failure of the White House to suspend the security clearances of the implicated officials.

To assist the Committee in its investigation into these issues, I request that you provide the Committee with a complete account of the steps that the White House took following the disclosure of Ms. Wilson's identity (1) to investigate how the leak occurred; (2) to review the security clearances of the White House officials implicated in the leak; (3) to impose administrative or disciplinary sanctions on the officials involved in the leak; and (4) to review and revise existing White House security procedures to prevent future breaches of national security.

I look forward to your response and hope you will cooperate with the Committee's inquiry.

Sincerely,



Henry A. Waxman
Chairman

cc: Tom Davis
Ranking Minority Member