

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-4403

October 3, 2014

Mr. Denis McDonough
Chief of Staff to the President
The White House
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. McDonough:

Credible sources have contacted my office with information related to the April 2012 incidents involving the United States Secret Service (USSS). As you recall, USSS personnel hired prostitutes and engaged in other sexual misconduct in Cartagena, Colombia. This type of behavior by U.S. officials was highly publicized and was an embarrassment for the agency and placed the President of the United States, other high ranking government officials and our national security at risk. The latest information shared with my office raises more questions and must be addressed by the White House as soon as possible.

Recently, I have received information from credible sources that records also identified a White House staff person as checking in a female foreign national (FFN) as an overnight guest during the same trip and that steps were taken by the Administration to cover-up or deflect their involvement in the initial incident.

As you recall, it was publicly reported that a White House staffer may have also engaged in sexual misconduct while in Cartagena. At the time, former White House Press Secretary Jay Carney dismissed the notion. When asked about the possibility on April 23, 2012, he responded, "There has been no specific, credible allegations of misconduct by anyone on the White House advance team or the White House staff."¹

Mr. Carney went on to say:

"The White House Counsel's office has conducted a review of the White House Advance team, and in concluding the review, came to the conclusion that there's no indication that any member of the White House advance team engaged in any improper conduct or behavior. So simply out of due diligence, over the last

¹ The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, *Press Briefing by Press Secretary Jay Carney, 4/23/12*, April 23, 2012. Available at <<http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2012/04/23/press-briefing-press-secretary-jay-carney-42312>>

several days that review was conducted, and it produced no indication of any misconduct.”²

However, the public version of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Office of Inspector General (OIG) report of investigation (ROI) of Cartagena states:

“During our investigation, USSS personnel alleged that a White House Communications Agency employee (an officer with the Department of Defense) and one reported member of the White House staff and/or advance team had personal encounters with female Colombian nationals. We reviewed the registry from the Hilton Cartagena Hotel for this time period, which showed names of two people who we identified as the non-DHS employees associated with the White House, registered in two separate rooms. The names of three females were listed as visitors to these two rooms during the advance activities for the President’s visit. We did not interview the two non-DHS employees.”³

A senior administration official later seemed to dismiss the hotel records:

“Based on inaccurate hotel records, at least two people were wrongly implicated in Colombia – one of which was Secret Service personnel, as Director Sullivan made clear, and the other was a White House volunteer for the advance team...In the White House review, we found no other corroborating materials, and concluded that the hotel record was erroneous and that the volunteer did not engage in any inappropriate behavior.”⁴

The White House has not released the review referenced by former Press Secretary Jay Carney clearing the White House staff member, so it is unclear how the White House came to its conclusion. Did the White House conduct a thorough and exhaustive review? Which part of the White House review cleared the White House staffer referenced in the OIG report? It is unclear if the White House based its conclusion simply on finding “no other corroborating materials”⁵ beyond the hotel records, or if they interviewed the USSS personnel who reported to the DHS OIG that a “...member of the White House staff and/or advance team had personal encounters with female Colombian nationals.”⁶

In addition to the questions surrounding the internal White House review, there are also questions regarding the credibility of the OIG report. As you know, it has come to light that the

² *Id.*

³ Office of Inspector General, Dept. of Homeland Security, *Report of Investigation I12-USSS-OSI-00800 USSS Cartagena Review*, Sept. 26, 2012. Available at <<http://www.oig.dhs.gov/assets/PDFs/OIG-ROI-I12-USSS-OSI-00800b.pdf>>

⁴ Jake Tapper, *White House Denies Inspector General’s Suggestion Advance Team Volunteer Was Possibly Involved in Colombia Scandal*, ABC News, Sept. 21, 2012. Available at <<http://abcnews.go.com/blogs/politics/2012/09/white-house-denies-inspector-generals-suggestion-advance-team-volunteer-was-possibly-involved-in-colombia-scandal/>>

⁵ *Id.*

⁶ Office of Inspector General, Dept. of Homeland Security, *Report of Investigation I12-USSS-OSI-00800 USSS Cartagena Review*, Sept. 26, 2012. Available at <<http://www.oig.dhs.gov/assets/PDFs/OIG-ROI-I12-USSS-OSI-00800b.pdf>>

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Acting Inspector General at the time of the Cartagena incident – Charles Edwards – was susceptible to political pressure and altered and delayed reports at the direction of senior Administration officials.⁷ It was further revealed that the USSS’ own Office of Professional Responsibility had “potentially ‘tainted’” its internal investigation by failing to appropriately advise USSS personnel of their rights during interviews.⁸

As a result and after consulting with the Department of Justice, the OIG determined it needed to conduct “an entirely new investigation to ensure that the information OIG obtained during our interviews was obtained voluntarily and therefore useable in any potential criminal or administrative proceeding.”⁹

While I do not condone these acts by USSS personnel, I am concerned that these agents have been used as scapegoats to cover up what is potentially a broader problem. I have the sincerest of hopes that the White House would discipline their own staff in the same manner the Administration dealt with the USSS agents implicated in Cartagena. As an external review of the USSS’ culture is initiated, we must make sure that leadership at all levels of government does not accept behavior that may endanger the security of the President of the United States.

I am sure you share in my desire to root out this type of disappointing and dangerous behavior across the government. To assist my office in our continuing oversight of the USSS and the events of April 2012, please provide all documents related to the White House Counsel review of this matter to my office by October 24, 2014.

If you have any questions regarding this request, please contact my office at (202) 225-7751. Thank you for your prompt attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



Jason Chaffetz
Member of Congress

⁷ Alicia A. Caldwell, *DHS sec’y puts ex-watchdog on leave after report*, Associated Press, April 24, 2014. Available at <<http://bigstory.ap.org/article/senate-report-criticizes-former-dhs-watchdog>>

⁸ Office of Inspector General, Dept. of Homeland Security, *Report of Investigation I12–USSS –OSI–00800 USSS Cartagena Review*, Sept. 26, 2012. Available at <<http://www.oig.dhs.gov/assets/PDFs/OIG-ROI-I12-USSS-OSI-00800b.pdf>>

⁹ *Id.*