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# Congress of the United States

## House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM

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STAFF DIRECTOR

November 2, 2012

Ms. Kathryn Ruemmler  
Counsel to the President  
The White House  
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Ms. Ruemmler:

On October 11, 2012, I wrote you to request information about the White House review of the conduct of a member of the White House staff implicated in the prostitution scandal in Cartagena, Colombia in April 2012. The White House has stated it found that no staff “engaged in inappropriate conduct during the President’s trip to Colombia.”<sup>1</sup> The information I requested on October 11, which you have not provided, would clarify how the White House reached that conclusion. New documents brought to the attention of the Committee raise questions about the adequacy of the White House review.

These new documents show that a member of the White House advance team arrived in Cartagena on April 3, 2012. The member of the White House staff in question stayed at the Hilton Cartagena Hotel, where the White House reserved in excess of 200 rooms for the trip. The person in question had done advance work for the President on eight prior official overseas trips, including Tokyo, Brazil, and Baghdad. At the request of the White House, he was issued an official U.S. passport in March 2009. Correspondence attached to the passport request stated, “[REDACTED] is White House staff with the Executive Office of the President.”

Unlike the Secret Service agents who were implicated in the scandal and sent home before the President arrived in Cartagena, the person in question remained in Cartagena until April 16, 2012. U.S. Secret Service Director Mark Sullivan made White House Deputy Chief of Staff Alyssa Mastromonaco aware of allegations that the member of the White House staff may have engaged a prostitute during his two-week stay in Cartagena. According to Press Secretary Jay Carney, the White House spent several days reviewing the allegation. On April 23, 2012, Carney stated:

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<sup>1</sup> Carol Cratty, *Investigation: Secret Service scandal did not compromise security*, CNN.COM, Sep. 21, 2012.

There have been no specific, credible allegations of misconduct by anyone on the White House advance team or the White House staff. Nevertheless, out of due diligence, the White House Counsel's office has conducted a review of the advance team, and in concluding that 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 several days that review was concluded, and it produced no indication of any misconduct.<sup>2</sup>

Documents reviewed by Committee staff show that the review Carney referred to was woefully inadequate. Whereas Director Sullivan aggressively investigated the conduct of agents in Cartagena through interviews, hotel records, polygraphs and drug tests, the initial White House review appears to have consisted of talking to one person. According to the documents, as of April 23, 2012, the White House review consisted of asking the staff in question whether he had engaged a prostitute. Like several Secret Service agents who subsequently failed polygraph tests, the White House staff denied that he had.

Director Sullivan later provided you with records from the Hotel Hilton Cartagena that suggested the person in question signed a 28-year-old female guest into his room. Records show that the guest entered the hotel at 12:02 a.m. and departed at 9:46 a.m. Documents further showed the Hilton waived the overnight guest fee in this case. It is my understanding that you called Director Sullivan on May 22, 2012, and advised him that the White House had re-interviewed the staff member in question based on information contained in the hotel records. The White House also interviewed several of the staff member's colleagues, who vouched for his character.

The U.S. Secret Service and the Department of Homeland Security, Office of the Inspector General (DHS OIG) both investigated the actions of U.S. Secret Service personnel in Cartagena. The DHS OIG interviewed 251 Secret Service personnel. Secret Service investigators interviewed dozens of hotel staff and female foreign nationals (FFNs). The Defense Department court-martialed an employee serving at the White House Communications Agency. Because there were allegations that some Secret Service personnel used cocaine while in Cartagena, some agents were subjected to drug tests.

By contrast, the White House review appears inadequate. There is no indication that you or your staff interviewed hotel staff or the woman whose name appeared on the visitor log. Still, the White House has maintained that the hotel records are inaccurate.<sup>3</sup> The implication of that conclusion is that a FFN was incorrectly logged as an overnight guest in the room of the White House staff member in question. It remains unclear if

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<sup>2</sup> Press Briefing by Press Secretary Jay Carney, Apr. 23, 2012.

<sup>3</sup> Cratty, *supra* note 1.

your review explored the possibility that the FFN actually visited another of the more than 200 rooms reserved for White House staff.

The White House's failure to respond to congressional inquiries related to this matter is inconsistent with the President's pledge to preside over the "most transparent administration in history." Government employees who engage prostitutes expose themselves to blackmail and other forms of leverage that could compromise national security. The American people have a right to know that you and your staff in the Counsel's Office have sufficiently reviewed the conduct of White House staff in Cartagena. In light of Mr. Carney's misleading public statements regarding this matter, there is the appearance that the White House is protecting its staff at the expense of transparency. So that the Committee may better understand the scope and methodology of your review, please answer the following questions and provide the following information:

1. Any report or memorandum that describes or summarizes the methodology and findings of the White House review of allegations of misconduct by a member of the White House advance team.
2. A list of witnesses interviewed by the White House as part of its review.
3. A list of any individuals who received polygraph tests as part of the White House review.
4. Did the Counsel's Office review the visitor log information for all White House staff in Cartagena?
5. In the course of your review, were you or your staff able to account for the fact that the Hilton waived the overnight visitor fee for the staffer in question? Did your review cover bills issued by the Hilton to White House staff?
6. When did the White House first learn of any staff with possible direct ties to the scandal?

Please provide the requested information as soon as possible, but no later than 5:00 p.m. on November 9, 2012. When producing documents to the Committee, please deliver production sets to the Majority Staff in Room 2157 of the Rayburn House Office Building and the Minority Staff in Room 2471 of the Rayburn House Office Building. The Committee prefers, if possible, to receive all documents in electronic format.

The Committee on Oversight and Government Reform is the principal oversight committee of the House of Representatives and may at "any time" investigate "any matter" as set forth in House Rule X.

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If you have any questions about this request, please contact Jonathan Skladany or Carlton Davis of the Committee Staff at (202) 225-5074. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Darrell Issa", with a large, sweeping flourish above the name.

Darrell Issa  
Chairman

cc: The Honorable Elijah E. Cummings, Ranking Minority Member