

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM

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March 27, 2015

The Honorable Michele M. Leonhart
Administrator
Drug Enforcement Administration
700 Army Navy Drive
Arlington, VA 22202

Dear Ms. Leonhart:

Yesterday, the Department of Justice Office of Inspector General (OIG) released a report that found Drug Enforcement Administration agents had “sex parties” with prostitutes hired by drug cartels in Colombia.¹ Colombian police officers reportedly provided protection for the DEA agents’ weapons and property during the parties.²

At least ten DEA agents—including an Assistant Regional Director, an Assistant Special Agent in Charge, six Supervisory Special Agents, and two line Special agents—allegedly attended the parties over a period of several years from 2005 to 2008. The parties were arranged by a foreign officer and funded by local drug cartels.³ The location of the parties—at space leased by the United States government—is extremely concerning.⁴ The presence of agents’ laptops, BlackBerry devices, and other government-issued equipment created security risks for the DEA and the individual agents involved. More troubling is the allegation that Colombian police officers were charged with “protecting” the equipment.

While some agents denied knowing that cartels funded the parties, information uncovered during the Office of Professional Responsibility’s (OPR) investigation in 2010 suggested they should have known the prostitutes were paid with cartel funds.⁵ Foreign officers further alleged that drug cartel members provided money, expensive gifts, and weapons to three DEA Supervisory Special Agents.⁶ Seven of the ten DEA agents admitted to attending the parties. The DEA imposed penalties that ranged from a 2-day suspension to a 10-day suspension.⁷ No one appears to have been fired or otherwise disciplined for this shocking, and potentially illegal, behavior.

¹ U.S. Dep’t of Justice, Office of the Inspector General, *The Handling of Sexual Harassment and Misconduct Allegations by the Department’s Law Enforcement Components* (Mar. 2015) (15-04).

² *Id.* at 27.

³ *Id.*

⁴ *Id.* at 28.

⁵ *Id.*

⁶ *Id.*

⁷ *Id.*

In fact, DEA OPR did not even refer the allegations to the Office of Security Programs because OPR management did not believe that the conduct “rose to the level of a security risk requiring a referral.”⁸ It is hard to understand how or why OPR believed this conduct did not raise security risks. The prostitutes—allegedly paid for by the cartels—could easily have obtained information from the agents themselves or from their government-issued equipment. The agents who participated in the parties also exposed themselves to blackmail and other forms of leverage by the cartels.

Further, DEA officials did not fully comply with OIG’s requests for information during the probe. DEA initially refused to provide the OIG with unredacted information, citing inapplicable statutes and concerns.⁹ DEA failed to provide all relevant and requested information about sexual misconduct and harassment cases within the scope of the investigation. More than one year into the investigation, and only after OIG provided a draft report to the agency, did OIG learn that DEA did not even run all of the search terms provided by OIG.¹⁰ DEA employees also told OIG that they were under the impression that they were not to discuss certain information with OIG investigators.¹¹ This raises questions about whether DEA may have intentionally concealed information about the highly improper, if not illegal, actions of certain DEA agents from the Inspector General.

The behavior of the DEA agents in question, as well as the response of the agency to OIG’s investigation, calls into question the culture of the DEA and the extent to which the agency has adequately performed its mission to enforce the controlled substances laws and regulations of the United States.

The Committee intends to hold a hearing on this topic on April 14, 2015. An invitation to testify is forthcoming. The Committee also requests that DEA provide a briefing regarding the DEA cases and subjects at issue in the OIG report, including the failure to cooperate with the OIG’s investigation, as soon as possible, but no later than April 3, 2015.

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.

If you have any questions about this request, please contact Committee staff at (202) 225-5074. Thank you for your attention to this matter.



Jason Chaffetz
Chairman

Sincerely,



Elijah E. Cummings
Ranking Minority Member

⁸ *Id.*

⁹ *Id.* at i.

¹⁰ *Id.* at 7.

¹¹ *Id.* at 8.