

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM

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April 19, 2016

The Honorable Joseph P. Clancy
Director
U.S. Secret Service
950 H Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20223

Dear Director Clancy:

The Committee's December 9, 2015, report on the United States Secret Service (USSS)—which was unanimously approved by Committee membership—found “USSS is experiencing a staffing crisis that poses perhaps the greatest threat to the agency.”¹ From its peak in 2011 of 7,024 full-time employees, USSS lost nearly 700 positions by the beginning of 2016.² This was not the first time an internal or external entity sounded alarms regarding staffing problems at the agency. The Committee report highlighted reports dating back to 2002 that raised similar concerns.³ In December 2014, Secretary Johnson's Protective Mission Panel (PMP) found the Secret Service had “immediate staffing needs.”⁴ More than sixteen months have passed since the PMP issued its report, and the Secret Service now has 47 fewer full-time employees than it did when the report was issued.⁵

USSS simply cannot hire enough personnel to keep pace with historic attrition rates, which are as high as seven percent for special agents and officers and nine percent for other positions.⁶ The PMP specifically called for a 200 officer increase to the Uniformed Division (UD), the officers primarily responsible for protecting the White House.⁷ Since the PMP report, the UD has increased by only 20 officers.⁸ Similarly, the PMP called for the addition of 85 special agents to the Presidential Protection Division.⁹ While USSS has added 85 special agents

¹ *H. Comm. on Oversight and Gov't Reform: United States Secret Service: An Agency in Crisis*, 114th Cong. (Dec. 9, 2015) at 2 [hereinafter OGR Report].

² U.S. Secret Service, Fiscal Year 2016 Staffing Data (Mar. 18, 2016) [hereinafter FY16 Q1 Data].

³ Mgmt. and Org. Div., Office of Admin., U.S. Secret Service, *MNO Review of Uniformed Division: Staffing and Morale* (May 5, 2003) at 1; Chitra Ragavan and Christopher H. Schmitt, *Special Investigative Report: Secrets of the Service*, U.S. NEWS & WORLD REPORT (June 17, 2002).

⁴ Joseph Hagin, Thomas Perrelli, Danielle Gray, & Mark Filip, *Executive Summary to Report from the United States Secret Service Protective Mission Panel to the Secretary of Homeland Security* (Dec. 15, 2014) at i [hereinafter PMP Report].

⁵ FY16 Q1 Data.

⁶ Briefing from Office of Strategic Planning and Policy, U.S. Secret Service to H. Comm. on Oversight & Gov't Reform (Mar. 22, 2016) [hereinafter Mar. 22, 2016 Briefing].

⁷ PMP Report at 5.

⁸ FY16 Q1 Data.

⁹ PMP Report at 5.

to that specific division, they were not all new hires, and the total number of special agents has actually declined by 29 since the PMP report was issued.¹⁰ Similarly, the total of Administrative, Professional, and Technical (APT) employees has decreased by 38 (from 1,745 to 1,707) since the PMP report was issued.¹¹ While USSS has hired dozens of contractors to assist with the APT workload, the agency must hire more permanent employees to improve staffing in the long-term.

Today, the Department of Homeland Security Office of Inspector General (OIG) released a report finding that “the UD is severely understaffed, which has led to inadequate training, fatigue, low morale, and attrition.”¹² More than a year after the PMP report, UD officers were working more hours of overtime and having more of their days off canceled.¹³ Nearly every USSS employee who spoke with the OIG said they had serious concerns regarding UD staffing shortages. Some employees characterized the agency as “hemorrhaging” employees.¹⁴

The ability of USSS to satisfy its zero-fail mission of protecting the President and other protectees depends on its staffing health. This year will be especially challenging with the forthcoming conventions and the need to establish a post-presidential detail for President Obama. As the demands on the agency increase, its dedicated employees bear a larger burden. Overtime work and unpredictable hours contribute to already low morale. Low morale manifests in further attrition, and the problems grow worse. The Committee shares the goal of retaining current dedicated employees of USSS. The President’s protection requires it.

On March 3, 2016, Committee staff met with USSS officials regarding the strategy for addressing these staffing problems through recruitment, relocation, and retention initiatives.¹⁵ These initiatives ranged from tuition assistance to childcare assistance, and from compensation restructuring to bonuses for targeted hires.¹⁶

The Committee wants to assist USSS as it attempts to address the historic attrition problem. As a result, it has requested updates from USSS as these policies move forward. The Committee encourages USSS to explore innovative ways to fill this staffing gap—such as detailing qualified law enforcement officials or APT employees from other agencies—in the short-term while continuing its long-term efforts to develop a zero-based budget and increase hiring and retention.

On March 22, 2016, Committee staff met with USSS officials, who informed staff of the ways in which USSS planned to implement recommendations and requested clarification and input on their strategy.¹⁷ The Committee appreciates the seriousness with which USSS received the Committee’s report and the efforts underway to implement recommendations. We look

¹⁰ FY16 Q1 Data; Mar. 22, 2016 Briefing.

¹¹ *Id.* USSS did inform the Committee that they are relying on contractors to fulfill some of those duties, and those numbers are not reflected in the total employee counts.

¹² Office of Inspector Gen., Dep’t of Homeland Sec., *2014 White House Fence Jumping Incident*, OIG 16-64 (Apr. 19, 2016) at 10.

¹³ *Id.* at 21.

¹⁴ *Id.* at 19, 21.

¹⁵ Briefing from Talent and Employee Acquisition Division, U.S. Secret Service to H. Comm. on Oversight & Gov’t Reform (Mar. 3, 2016)

¹⁶ *Id.*

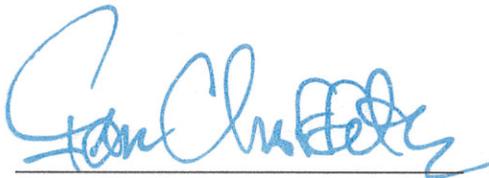
¹⁷ Mar. 22, 2016 Briefing.

forward to continuing to work with USSS to ensure the Committee's recommendations are fully implemented.

The final recommendation in the Committee's report was based on the finding that "USSS's mission has dramatically expanded" and recommended "the Executive Branch should conduct an interagency review on USSS's collateral or non-essential missions that can be shed, and submit a report to Congress on its findings within a year."¹⁸ At the March 22, 2016, briefing, USSS officials requested further clarification on how this recommendation should be implemented.¹⁹ Unlike the twenty-six recommendations directed to USSS, this recommendation was made with the expectation that the White House would convene the interagency review or direct the Department of Homeland Security to lead such a review.²⁰ For this reason, a copy of this letter is being sent to the White House.

The Committee looks forward to further updates from USSS on the status of the implementation of the Committee's recommendations. The recommendations are intended to be a constructive tool for reform and, if fully implemented, will serve to move USSS forward. Please contact Mike Howell of Chairman Chaffetz' staff at 202-225-5074 or Valerie Shen of Ranking Member Cummings' staff at (202) 225-5051 with any questions.

Sincerely,



Jason Chaffetz
Chairman



Elijah E. Cummings
Ranking Member

cc: The Honorable Denis McDonough, Chief of Staff
The White House

The Honorable Jeh Johnson, Secretary
U.S. Department of Homeland Security

The Honorable Harold Rogers, Chairman
Committee on Appropriations

The Honorable Nita M. Lowey, Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations

¹⁸ OGR Report at 178, 194.

¹⁹ Mar. 22, 2016 Briefing.

²⁰ Letter from Hon. Jason Chaffetz, Chairman, H. Comm. on Oversight & Gov't Reform and Hon. Elijah E. Cummings, Ranking Member, H. Comm. on Oversight & Gov't Reform to Denis McDonough, Chief of Staff, White House (Dec. 9, 2015).