

Feb 23, 2005 - Rep. Slaughter Calls on Special Prosecutor & General Accounting Office to Expand ...

Rep. Slaughter Calls on Special Prosecutor & General Accounting Office to Expand Investigations to Include Gannon

Washington, DC - Rep. Louise M. Slaughter (NY-28), Ranking Member of the House Committee on Rules, and Rep. John Conyers (MI-14), Ranking Member of the House Judiciary Committee, called on Special Counsel Patrick Fitzgerald to look into the revelation that discredited reporter Jeff Gannon/James Guckert kept a diary detailing his days in the White House.

"I hope the Special Prosecutor will take seriously the revelation that Mr. Gannon kept a detailed diary of his time inside the White House," said Slaughter. She added, "He may find many answers to the questions we have sought surrounding Mr. Gannon's White House access on those pages."

Reps. Slaughter and Conyers also wrote the General Accounting Office encouraging them to broaden their current investigation into the White House's use of propaganda to include Mr. Gannon and his possible ties to Administration officials who may have leaked him stories which he in turn fed to favorable reporters.

"Several members of the media have come forward claiming Mr. Gannon had knowledge of major news events before they were available to the public at large or other members of the media. The public deserves to know whether the White House was using Mr. Gannon as part of their larger propaganda machine to influence the opinions of the American people," continued Slaughter.

Rep. Slaughter, a long-time advocate for media reform and accountability, brought the story of Jeff Gannon/James Guckert into the national spotlight two weeks ago when she wrote President Bush seeking answers in the White House briefing room scandal.

The letters follow:

The Honorable Patrick Fitzgerald

United States Attorney

United States Attorney's Office for the Northern District of Illinois

219 S. Dearborn Street

Chicago, IL 60604

Dear Mr. Fitzgerald:

We are writing to inform you of the existence of information potentially vital to your investigation of the leak of a CIA operative name. A person in the White House briefing room who had access to a memo revealing the operative's name also kept a journal of his days covering the White House. We bring this to your attention because we believe your office may need to subpoena the journal to further the work of the grand jury.

As many people are aware, James Guckert (a.k.a. "Jeff Gannon") posed as a journalist and gained entry to the White House briefing room. He also may have had access to documents that leaked the name of the CIA operative. In an October 2003 interview with Joseph C. Wilson IV, the husband of the operative, Mr. Guckert referenced a memo written by U.S. intelligence officials indicating the operative suggested Mr. Wilson could investigate reports that Iraq had sought uranium. In and of itself, this indicates that Mr. Guckert had access to classified information.

It appears now that Mr. Guckert memorialized his experiences at the White House. In the February 22, 2005 edition of Editor & Publisher, a publication for the newspaper industry, Mr. Guckert states that he "probably has one page for each day at the White House, about 200 pages of stuff... Is it all interesting? Probably not. But it could be [a book]." It would be unfortunate if Mr. Guckert published information that would be useful to your investigation, such as the identity of the person who gave him the memo, without your office having the benefit of its contents.

If we can provide further information, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,

Louise Slaughter

John Conyers, Jr.

Ranking Member,

Ranking Member,

Committee on Rules

Committee on Judiciary

Comptroller General

U.S. Government Accountability Office

441 G Street, NW

Washington, DC 20548

Dear Mr. Walker,

We write today to expand on a recent request you received on January 11, 2005 from Representative Louise Slaughter and other members of the Democratic Leadership. While that letter asked you to investigate the illegal use of appropriated money to covertly advocate for seven different programs, we ask that you also investigate whether the Administration violated the ban on prepackaged news stories by siphoning print stories to James D. Guckert, also known as "Jeff Gannon."

As you stated in your February 17, 2005 letter to agency and department heads, it is illegal for the Administration to use appropriated money to broadcast or publish propaganda without taking credit for it. According to recent press, the White House itself directly violated this ban when it gave prepackaged print stories to Mr. Guckert, which he reprinted wholesale without disclosing that the Administration authored it. As mentioned in your letter, you have already ruled that agencies authoring newspaper articles and op-ed pieces to be published as a reporter's original work clearly violates this ban. This is precisely what transpired between the White House and Mr. Guckert.

I look forward to hearing whether you will be incorporating Mr. Guckert's and the White House's propaganda efforts into any investigations you will be conducting. Please contact us with any questions.

Sincerely,

Louise Slaughter

John Conyers, Jr.

Ranking Member,

Ranking Member,

Committee on Rules

Committee on Judiciary