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April 25, 2012

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LAWRENCE J. BRADY
STAFF DIRECTOR

The Honorable Leon E. Panetta
Secretary
U.S. Department of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301

Dear Secretary Panetta:

Our nation's capacity to protect the President, the Vice President, and other high-ranking officials when they travel abroad, depends on the strong character and sound judgment of uniformed military personnel who, along with the U.S. Secret Service plan and implement those trips. The recent actions of a group of uniformed military personnel on assignment in Cartagena, Colombia, showed an alarming lack of both. The Pentagon has announced an investigation of 12 military personnel implicated in the alleged prostitution scandal – six from the Army, two from the Marines, two from the Navy, one from the Air Force, and one from the White House Communications Agency. We request a briefing about the scope and status of that investigation.

On April 17, 2012, you stated that U.S. troops are expected to abide by “the highest standards” of conduct — both at home and abroad.¹ The incident in Cartagena is disconcerting because uniformed military personnel assigned to support the U.S. Secret Service in advance of the President's trip to Colombia failed to meet those high standards.

You assured the American people that if the Pentagon's internal investigation confirms that misconduct occurred, “these individuals will be held accountable.”² It is also important for the American people to understand whether the culture of the military departments within the Defense Department may have led to the incident in Cartagena. So that we are aware of the facts as they are known to the Department, and so that we may better understand whether there is a cultural problem in the armed services, please provide the following information:

1. A detailed description of the Defense Department's current understanding of the possible misconduct of Department personnel that occurred in Cartagena on the evening of Wednesday, April 11, and the morning of Thursday, April 12. Please include a description of events that preceded and led to the public revelation of misconduct.

¹ Transcript, “DoD News Briefing with Secretary Panetta and Gen. Dempsey from the Pentagon,” U.S. Department of Defense Office of the Asst. Sec. of Defense (Public Affairs), Apr. 16, 2012.

² *Id.*

2. A description of violations of any laws, rules, regulations, operating procedures, or security protocols that may have occurred in connection with these events.
3. A factual timeline of events, beginning on Thursday, April 12, through Friday, April 20, related to the Defense Department's response to allegations of employee misconduct in Cartagena, Colombia.
4. A description of information the Defense Department is using to determine what occurred on April 12-13, including the extent of cooperation the Defense Department is receiving from Colombian authorities.
5. Summaries of any past disciplinary actions taken against the Defense Department employees involved in this incident since 2002.
6. A description of the efforts of the Defense Department and other law enforcement agencies to determine if Department personnel have engaged in similar conduct and rules violations in past similar overseas official trips.
7. Has the Defense Department been able to determine that all women involved in this incident were at least 18 years of age? The involvement of individuals under 18 could implicate 18 U.S.C. § 2423(c), which makes it illegal for any U.S. citizen who travels to a foreign place to engage in illicit sexual conduct.
8. What internal failures or lapses has the Defense Department identified that contributed to this incident?
9. Moving forward, what steps does the Defense Department intend to take to prevent a recurrence of such a serious security failure and diplomatic embarrassment?

Please provide this information to the Committee as soon as possible, but by no later than noon on May 8, 2012. Additionally, please make arrangements by April 30, 2012, to brief Committee staff. We look forward to continuing to work with the Department to identify ways to improve the training and supervision of military personnel whose duties require them to travel abroad. Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



Darrell Issa
Chairman



Elijah E. Cummings
Ranking Minority Member