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## Congress of the United States

### House of Representatives

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## Opening Statement

### Rep. Elijah E. Cummings, Ranking Member

### Hearing on “Secret Agent Man? Oversight of EPA’s IG Investigation of John Beale”

October 1, 2013

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Before I discuss today’s hearing, I want to address our current budget situation.

Today is the first time the federal government has shut down in 17 years. This has happened because a small group of Tea Party Republicans has taken our country hostage as part of their ideological crusade to overturn the law of the land and put insurance companies back in charge of healthcare decisions for millions of Americans.

The Republican House leadership could have averted this shut-down immediately by simply allowing the House of Representatives to vote on a clean continuing resolution. Let me say that again. If they put a clean resolution on the floor, it would pass, and there would be no government shut down.

But they refused because they are placing internal Republican politics ahead of the best interests of our nation and our economy. So this morning, 800,000 middle-class federal workers who would have been at their duty stations providing vital services to the American people are furloughed. And things will only deteriorate from here.

I agree that our Committee has a Constitutional duty to provide oversight, and hearings like this one are a key part of that oversight. But it seems odd for our Committee to be here today, acting like nothing is different, and pretending that we are just going about our business.

I want to make clear that a government shut-down is not “business as usual,” and we should not treat it that way. I urge my colleagues on the other side of the aisle to ask your leadership to put a clean CR on the floor and end this shut-down ... today.

With that said, let me turn to today's hearing.

I want to begin by thanking Inspector General Elkins and his deputy, Patrick Sullivan, for investigating this gross abuse of taxpayer funds. I also want to acknowledge the Department of Justice for successfully prosecuting Mr. Beale, who pleaded guilty last Friday and will be forced to pay back the almost \$900,000 in funds he stole.

In addition, I want to acknowledge the role of Administrator McCarthy in finally revealing this fraud, which lasted decades. I know we will discuss the Inspector General's concerns about how quickly his office received a referral, but I believe the IG will agree that had it not been for Administrator McCarthy, this fraud may never have been uncovered.

Mr. Beale's betrayal of the public trust for his own personal enrichment is truly shocking in its scope, duration, and sheer audacity. Mr. Beale defrauded the Environmental Protection Agency for decades—under both Republican and Democratic administrations—by claiming he was a covert operative for the CIA.

One senior EPA official during the Bush Administration actually approved Mr. Beale's request to work offsite one day a week so he could participate in an "inter-agency, special advisory group working on a project with the Directorate of Operations at the CIA."

This was no ordinary ruse. In addition to lying to senior EPA officials across multiple administrations, Mr. Beale also duped his own family members, his friends, and even his own lawyer. Mr. Beale did not come clean to his own criminal defense attorney until investigators arranged for a meeting at CIA headquarters in Langley, Virginia, in order to finally confront him about his lies.

But that's not all Mr. Beale lied about. According to the Inspector General, Mr. Beale also lied about contracting malaria and serving in Vietnam—all to obtain a handicapped parking spot. Mr. Beale also lied on travel vouchers about where he was going and why he needed to go there so he could visit his family in California.

Simply put, Mr. Beale was a con artist, and the American taxpayers were his mark.

As public servants, we must always remember that we serve the people. Mr. Beale flouted one of the most basic tenets of government service—it's not your money, it's the taxpayers' money.

Mr. Beale's actions are an insult to the thousands of hardworking and dedicated public servants across the country and an insult to our CIA agents around the world. While Mr. Beale was claiming to work at Langley and pretending to go on secret missions overseas, real intelligence agents were hunting down Osama bin Laden and battling al Qaeda in the most dangerous places in the world.

Mr. Beale's impersonation of a CIA agent forced our nation's law enforcement and intelligence officials to spend their scarce time and resources uncovering his fraud instead of combating real threats around the globe. This is truly reprehensible.

I am gratified that justice has been served and that Mr. Beale will pay for his fraud. However, our inquiry cannot end there. We need to understand how EPA's systems failed to catch him earlier and examine additional reforms.

Although the Inspector General's audit work is still ongoing, I look forward to hearing about his initial recommendations, and to hearing from the Deputy Administrator of the EPA about steps the agency has already taken and plans to take to safeguard taxpayer dollars from this type of fraud in the future.

Let me close by urging my colleagues to refrain from using Mr. Beale to make generalizations about government workers. Mr. Beale is an aberration, not the rule. The vast majority of federal employees dedicate their lives to serving the public, they are honest and hardworking, and they would never even contemplate breaching the public trust in this manner.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.