



U.S. Department of Justice

Federal Bureau of Investigation

Washington, D.C. 20535

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The Honorable Jason Chaffetz
Chairman
Committee on Oversight and
Government Reform
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

✓ The Honorable Elijah E. Cummings
Ranking Member
Committee on Oversight and
Government Reform
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman and Mr. Ranking Member:

I am writing in response to your separate letters to Director Comey dated July 11, 2016 regarding the FBI's investigation of former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's use of a private email server. As Director Comey said in his statement on July 5, 2016, due to intense public interest in the FBI's investigation into this matter, we believe it is important to address your questions and explain our recommendation as to the appropriate resolution of this investigation. For the same reasons, the FBI will be making a document production responding to your interest in this matter.

The FBI conducted this investigation, as it does all investigations, in a competent, honest, and independent way. We had an investigative team of agents and analysts supported by technical experts, lawyers, and others from several divisions in the FBI. The investigative team worked for close to a year conducting interviews, reviewing emails, and completing technical examinations of recovered equipment. In addition, the FBI's technical team conducted extensive analysis to understand what, if any, indications there might be of a compromise of Secretary Clinton's electronic devices by hostile actors.

After nearly a year of gathering and analyzing evidence from numerous sources, the FBI made a recommendation to the Department of Justice. Although the prosecutors make the ultimate decision about whether or not charges are appropriate based on the evidence, the FBI frequently makes recommendations and engages in conversations with the prosecutors regarding the appropriate resolution of an investigation, given the evidence. The fact that the FBI made a recommendation was not unusual; the fact that it was shared publicly was.

Our investigation looked at whether there was evidence that classified information was improperly stored or transmitted on Secretary Clinton's private email system, in violation of a federal statute (18 U.S.C. § 793) that makes it a felony to mishandle classified information either intentionally or in a grossly negligent way, or another statute (18 U.S.C. § 1924) that makes it a misdemeanor to knowingly remove classified information from appropriate systems or storage facilities. We also considered a statute (18 U.S.C. § 2071) making it illegal to willfully and unlawfully conceal, remove, or destroy a federal record. Ultimately, the FBI did not recommend prosecution based on an assessment of the facts and a review of how these statutes have been charged in the past.

As the Director testified, cases prosecuted by the Department of Justice under the relevant statutes involved some combination of: (1) clearly intentional and willful mishandling of classified information; (2) significant quantities of material exposed in such a way as to support an inference of intentional misconduct; (3) indications of disloyalty to the United States; or (4) efforts to obstruct justice. One or more of these factors was present in the cases against David Petraeus, Sandy Berger, and Bryan Nishimura. For instance, Petraeus provided vast quantities of highly sensitive, compartmented information that he knew to be classified to a person without an appropriate clearance or a need to know the information and, when confronted, he lied to the FBI. Berger removed clearly marked, highly classified information from the National Archives by secreting the documents in his clothing. These cases included clear evidence of knowledge and intent which illustrates an important distinction from what the FBI found in this investigation. Nishimura, a Naval Reservist stationed in Afghanistan, removed hundreds of marked classified documents, without authorization, from classified U.S. military information systems, which he then placed onto several personally-owned, unauthorized devices. Nishimura later lied to investigators about onto which devices he had placed classified information, and destroyed a large quantity of classified material he had maintained in his home. Despite this destruction, a subsequent search of his house recovered 256 marked classified documents which he was not authorized to store.

The fact that Secretary Clinton received emails containing "(C)" portion markings is not clear evidence of knowledge or intent. As the Director has testified, the FBI's investigation uncovered three instances of emails portioned marked with "(C)," a marking ostensibly indicating the presence of information classified at the Confidential level. In each of these instances, the Secretary did not originate the information; instead, the emails were forwarded to her by staff members, with the portion-marked information located within the email chains and without header and footer markings indicating the presence of classified information. Moreover, only one of those emails was determined by the State Department to contain classified information. There has been no determination by the State Department as to whether these three emails were classified at the time they were sent.

Title 18, United States Code, Section 793 on its face makes it a felony to cause national defense information to be removed, lost, stolen, or destroyed through gross negligence. Even at the time the statute was passed, there were concerns in Congress about the inclusion of this provision. Additionally, with respect to this statute, there are concerns about the constitutional implications of criminalizing such conduct without requiring the government to prove that the

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person knew he or she was doing something wrong, which is reflected in the Justice Department's history in charging this specific subsection of the statute (18 U.S.C. § 793(f)). Our understanding is the Department has only charged one person with mishandling national defense information through gross negligence in the 99-year history of the statute, and in that case, the charge was dismissed when the defendant pled guilty to making false statements in violation of 18 U.S.C. § 1001. Moreover, in that case, there were indications of espionage and disloyalty to the United States. As the Director testified, he believed that to prosecute Secretary Clinton or others within the scope of the investigation for gross negligence would be inconsistent with how the Department has interpreted and applied the statute since Congress enacted it.

As the Director stated, the FBI did find evidence that Secretary Clinton and her colleagues were extremely careless in their handling of certain, very sensitive, highly classified information. The term "extremely careless" was intended to be a common sense way of describing the actions of Secretary Clinton and her colleagues. The Director did not equate "extreme carelessness" with the legal standard of "gross negligence" that is required by the statute. In this case, the FBI assessed that the facts did not support a recommendation to prosecute her or others within the scope of the investigation for gross negligence.

However, as the Director has explained, this is not to say that someone else who engaged in this type of conduct would face no consequences for handling classified information in a similar manner if they were still a government employee. For example, there are potentially severe administrative consequences within the FBI for security violations involving the mishandling of classified information, up to and including security clearance revocation and dismissal. The FBI is in the process of providing relevant information to other U.S. Government agencies to conduct further security and administrative reviews they deem appropriate for their respective employees. If someone who engaged in this type of conduct applied for a job at the FBI, the facts and circumstances surrounding this activity would be a significant factor in a suitability review for a security clearance and employment at the Bureau.

Thank you for your continued interest in this important matter, and, as always, we appreciate your continued support for the men and women of the FBI. The production of documents related to this matter will be provided under separate cover letter consistent with required protocols for the transmission of classified documents.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jason V. Herring".

Jason V. Herring
Acting Assistant Director
Office of Congressional Affairs