



WHITE HOUSE DOCUMENTS AND COMMUNICATIONS

May 2019

White House Documents and Communications

Congressional oversight committees have sought and obtained White House documents and testimony on a wide variety of sensitive subjects during Republican and Democratic administrations. Types of White House information provided to congressional investigators include:

- Internal communications involving the president;
- Foreign dignitary communications with the president;
- Internal communications involving senior White House aides, including the chief of staff, deputy chief of staff, and national security advisors;
- Communications between the White House and top cabinet officials;
- Confidential communications from the White House Counsel's Office;
- Communications involving the Vice President's office; and
- White House records regarding private individuals' attendance at White House events and at the President's Kennedy Center box.

The volume of White House communications provided to Congress has been large. For example, the House Government Reform and Oversight Committee received over 2 million pages of documents during its investigations of the Clinton Administration and the Democratic Party, including over 150,000 pages of White House documents. In that Committee's campaign finance investigation alone, 49 White House officials testified before the Committee in depositions or hearings, including the White House Chief of Staff and White House Counsel. The Senate Select Committee on Secret Military Assistance to Iran and the Nicaraguan Opposition, and the House Select Committee to Investigate Covert Arms Transactions with Iran, known as the "Iran-Contra Committees," received 70,000 pages of documents from the Reagan White House including internal memoranda among top national security aides.

EXAMPLES

Internal Communications Involving the President

WATERGATE

Hearing testimony by former White House Counsel John Dean regarding his conversations with President Nixon and other top advisors to the President, including White House Chief of Staff H.R. Haldeman and Chief Domestic Advisor John Ehrlichman, regarding Watergate and strategies for dealing with investigations of Watergate (obtained by the Senate Select Committee on Presidential Campaign Activities).

1973

[HEARING TESTIMONY¹](#)

BILLY CARTER'S BUSINESS DEALINGS

A written statement by President Jimmy Carter describing his knowledge of and conversations with White House aides and others about his brother Billy Carter's activities in Libya (provided to the Senate

¹ U.S. Senate, *The Final Report of the Select Committee on Presidential Campaign Activities*, page 1186 (June 1974) (Report No. 93-981). <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015011697870&view=1up&seq=1224>

Committee on the Judiciary, Subcommittee to Investigate Individuals Representing the Interests of Foreign Governments).

1980

WRITTEN STATEMENT²

BILLY CARTER'S BUSINESS DEALINGS

Hearing and deposition testimony by National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski regarding his conversations with President Carter in which the President discussed potential outreach to the President's brother about the ongoing hostage situation in Iran and in which Brzezinski shared an intelligence report with the President regarding Billy Carter's interaction with Libyans (provided to the Senate Committee on the Judiciary, Subcommittee to Investigate Individuals Representing the Interests of Foreign Governments).

1980

HEARING & DEPOSITION TESTIMONY³

IRAN CONTRA AFFAIR

Notes of White House Chief of Staff Don Regan and Deputy National Security Advisor Alton Keel, a memorandum of Secretary of Defense Casper Weinberger, and dictated notes of Secretary of State George Shultz, all describing a meeting with President Reagan in November 1986 to brief him regarding reports of arms transactions with Iran; and notes from a subsequent daily national security meeting involving the President and National Security Advisor John Poindexter that focused on preparing the President for making a public statement on the matter (obtained by the House Select Committee to Investigate Covert Arms Transactions with Iran and the Senate Select Committee on Secret Military Assistance to Iran and the Nicaraguan Opposition).

1987

NOTES⁴

CAMPAIGN FINANCE

Hearing testimony by White House Counsel Charles F.C. Ruff regarding his conversation with President Clinton about releasing to Congress and to the press videotapes of White House events (provided to the House Committee on Government Reform and Oversight).

1997

HEARING TESTIMONY⁵

² Senate Committee on the Judiciary, *Inquiry into the Matter of Billy Carter and Libya* (October 2, 1980) (Report No. 96-1015).

<https://web.archive.org/web/20220824023111/https://www.intelligence.senate.gov/sites/default/files/961015.pdf>

³ Senate Committee on the Judiciary, *Inquiry into the Matter of Billy Carter and Libya* (October 2, 1980) (Report No. 96-1015).

<https://web.archive.org/web/20220824023111/https://www.intelligence.senate.gov/sites/default/files/961015.pdf>

⁴ U.S. Senate, *Report of the Congressional committees investigating the Iran-Contra Affair*, page 294 (November 1987) (No. 13739). <https://archive.org/details/reportofcongress87unit/page/294/mode/2up>

⁵ House Committee on Government Reform and Oversight, *Hearing on White House Compliance with Committee Subpoenas*, page 156 (November 6 and 7, 1997) (No. 105-61).

<https://web.archive.org/web/20211108202905/https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CHRG-105hhr45405/pdf/CHRG-105hhr45405.pdf>

EXERCISE OF PRESIDENTIAL PARDON AUTHORITY

Over six hours of hearing testimony by former White House Chief of Staff John Podesta, former White House Counsel Beth Nolan, and former Deputy White House Counsel Bruce Lindsey regarding their conversations with President Clinton, their deliberative process, their recommendations to the President, and their confidential internal communications related to the President's pardon decisions (provided to the House Committee on Government Reform).

2001

[HEARING TESTIMONY⁶](#)

INQUIRY INTO THE SEPTEMBER 11, 2001, ATTACKS ON THE UNITED STATES

Written intelligence documents briefed daily to Presidents Clinton and Bush, known as the President's Daily Brief (PDB), including a PDB from August 6, 2001, relating to an article on Osama Bin Laden's intent to strike in the United States (accessed by the investigative body known as the "9/11 Commission" established by congressional statute (Congressional intelligence committees have obtained access to PDBs on other occasions as well)).

2001

[WRITTEN INTELLIGENCE DOCUMENTS⁷](#)

[CRS REPORT REFERENCING PDBS⁸](#)

DEATH OF ARMY COLONEL PATRICK TILLMAN

Interview testimony by former White House Communications Director Dan Bartlett (Bush) that he "had conversations with the President" about the news of the death of Army Corporal Pat Tillman and "likely" discussed "the appropriate response" for the White House (obtained by the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform).

2004

[INTERVIEW TESTIMONY⁹](#)

Foreign Dignitary Communications with the President

INQUIRY INTO EXERCISE OF PRESIDENTIAL PARDON AUTHORITY

Verbatim notes of phone conversations between President Bill Clinton and the Prime Minister of Israel, Ehud Barak on December 11, 2000, January 8, 2001, and January 19, 2001, taken by National Security Council staff (access to which was obtained by the House Committee on Government Reform).

2001

⁶ House Committee on Government Reform, *Justice Undone: Clemency Decisions in the Clinton White House*, page 1219 (March 14, 2002) (Report No. 107-454).

<https://web.archive.org/web/20220906153224/https://www.congress.gov/107/crpt/hrpt454/CRPT-107hrpt454-vol3.pdf>

⁷ National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States, *The 9/11 Commission Report*, page 533 (July 22, 2004). <https://web.archive.org/web/20230302234439/https://9-11commission.gov/report/911Report.pdf>

⁸ Congressional Research Service, *Memorandum on Congress as a Consumer of Intelligence Information* (December 14, 2005). <https://web.archive.org/web/20221022123827/http://sgp.fas.org/crs/intel/congress.pdf>

⁹ House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, *Misleading Information from the Battlefield: The Tillman and Lynch Episodes*, page 21 (September 16, 2008) (Report No. 110-858).

<https://web.archive.org/web/20221223031312/http://www.congress.gov/110/crpt/hrpt858/CRPT-110hrpt858.pdf>

Internal Communications Among Senior White House Aides

WATERGATE

Testimony and multiple internal White House memos on proposals discussed among Nixon White House aides, including pursuing a Federal Communications Commission ruling to potentially intimidate the media, conducting surveillance on a political opponent, and subverting investigations into Watergate (obtained by the Senate Select Committee on Presidential Campaign Activities).

1973

TESTIMONY & WHITE HOUSE MEMOS¹¹

BILLY CARTER'S BUSINESS ACTIVITIES

Memorandum from Robert Gates, National Security Council aide, to Zbigniew Brzezinski, National Security Advisor to President Carter, regarding a planned trip to Libya by President Carter's brother, Billy Carter, (dated July 17, 1979), which noted concerns by the President's secretary, Susan Clough, and press secretary, Jody Powell (obtained by the Senate Judiciary Committee, Subcommittee to Investigation Individuals Representing Foreign Governments).

1980

MEMORANDUM¹²

IRAN CONTRA AFFAIR

Memoranda from Oliver North, Deputy Director for Political-Military Affairs, National Security Council, to Robert McFarlane, National Security Advisor to President Reagan, regarding "Assistance for the Nicaraguan Resistance" (dated December 4, 1984), "Nicaragua Options" (dated January 15, 1985), "Nicaraguan Arms Shipments" (dated February 6, 1985), and "Aid to the Nicaraguan Resistance" (dated March 5, 1985); and from North to John Poindexter, Deputy National Security Advisor referring to the "Future of the Nicaraguan Resistance" (dated January 28, 1985) (obtained by the Senate Select Committee on Secret Military Assistance to Iran and the Nicaraguan Opposition and the House Select Committee to Investigate Covert Arms Transactions with Iran).

1987

MEMORANDA¹³

¹⁰ House Committee on Government Reform, *Justice Undone: Clemency Decisions in the Clinton White House*, page 215 (March 14, 2002) (Report No. 107-454).

<https://web.archive.org/web/20220906153224/https://www.congress.gov/107/crpt/hrpt454/CRPT-107hrpt454-vol3.pdf>

¹¹ U.S. Senate, *The Final Report of the Select Committee on Presidential Campaign Activities*, page 1169 (June 1974) (Report No. 93-981). <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015011697870&view=1up&seq=1224>

¹² Senate Committee on the Judiciary, *Inquiry into the Matter of Billy Carter and Libya* (October 2, 1980) (Report No. 96-1015).

<https://web.archive.org/web/20220824023111/https://www.intelligence.senate.gov/sites/default/files/961015.pdf>

¹³ U.S. Senate, *Report of the Congressional committees investigating the Iran-Contra Affair*, page 56 (November 1987) (No. 13739). <https://archive.org/details/reportofcongress87unit/page/294/mode/2up>

DEATH OF ARMY COLONEL PATRICK TILLMAN

Emails regarding the news of the death of Army Colonel Patrick Tillman in Afghanistan and how President George W. Bush should respond in remarks on the incident, among multiple aides to the President, including speechwriters Matthew Scully, John McConnell, and Michael Gerson, Deputy White House Press Secretary Claire Buchan, National Security Council Press Secretary Sean McCormack, White House Press Secretary Scott McClellan, Deputy Assistant to the President for Communications Suzy DeFrancis, Special Assistant to the President for Economic Speech Writing Noam Neusner, and Assistant White House Press Secretary Erin Healy (obtained by the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform).

2004

[EMAILS](#)¹⁴

CIA EMPLOYEE IDENTITY DISCLOSURE

Summaries of FBI interviews (known as “FBI 302s”) of senior White House officials including the chief of staff to President George W. Bush, chief of staff to the Vice President, and the National Security Advisor, regarding the leak of a CIA employee’s identity during the Bush Administration (obtained by the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform).

2008

[SUMMARIES OF FBI INTERVIEWS](#)¹⁵

SOLYNDRA LOAN GUARANTEE

Emails between White House Office of Management and Budget Director Jack Lew and OMB Deputy Director Jeff Zients, and between White House Director of Communication Dan Pfeiffer, Senior Advisor to President Obama David Plouffe, and Deputy Senior Advisor to the President Stephanie Cutter, regarding a Department of Energy loan guarantee to the company Solyndra (August 2011) (obtained by the House Committee on Energy and Commerce).

2011

[EMAILS](#)¹⁶

BENGHAZI ATTACK

Testimony of National Security Advisor to President Obama and former U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Susan Rice regarding her knowledge about the 2012 attacks on the U.S. facilities in Benghazi, Libya (provided to the House Select Committee on the Events Surrounding the 2012 Terrorist Attack in Benghazi).

2016

¹⁴ House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, *Misleading Information from the Battlefield: The Tillman and Lynch Episodes*, page 24 (September 16, 2008) (Report No. 110-858). <https://web.archive.org/web/20221223031312/http://www.congress.gov/110/crpt/hrpt858/CRPT-110hrpt858.pdf>

¹⁵ House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, *Committee Report Criticizes President’s Assertion of Executive Privilege* (December 5, 2008). <https://wayback.archive-it.org/4949/20141031181053/http://oversight-archive.waxman.house.gov/story.asp?id=2282>

¹⁶ Majority Staff, House Committee on Energy and Commerce, *The Solyndra Failure* (August 2, 2012). https://web.archive.org/web/20220713041212/https://legacy-assets.eenews.net/open_files/assets/2012/08/02/document_gw_01.pdf

TESTIMONY¹⁷

White House Communications with Top Cabinet Officials

IRAN CONTRA AFFAIR

Memorandum from Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger to National Security Advisor to President Reagan Robert McFarlane regarding “U.S. Policy Toward Nicaragua” and calling for an updated legislative strategy and funding alternatives (dated January 3, 1985) (obtained by the Senate Select Committee on Secret Military Assistance to Iran and the Nicaraguan Opposition and the House Select Committee to Investigate Covert Arms Transactions with Iran).

1987

MEMORANDUM¹⁸

INQUIRY INTO WACO EVIDENCE

Testimony (transcribed interview) by Attorney General Janet Reno regarding her discussions with the President Clinton during the confrontation between federal and state law enforcement and Branch Davidian organization members at Waco, Texas in 1993 (obtained by the House Committee on Government Reform).

2000

TESTIMONY¹⁹

BENGHAZI ATTACK

Testimony from the former Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta about a conversation involving himself, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the National Security Advisor, and President Obama in which the President was briefed on the attack on the U.S. facility in Benghazi Libya and provided guidance to the group (obtained by the Select Committee on the Events Surrounding the 2012 Terrorist Attack in Benghazi, Libya).

2016

TESTIMONY²⁰

Communications Involving the Vice President’s Office

¹⁷ U.S. House of Representatives, *Final Report of the Select Committee on the Events Surrounding the 2012 Terrorist Attack in Benghazi* (December 7, 2016) (Report No. 114-848).

<https://web.archive.org/web/20221230110310/https://www.congress.gov/114/crpt/hrpt848/CRPT-114hrpt848.pdf>

¹⁸ U.S. Senate, *Report of the Congressional committees investigating the Iran-Contra Affair*, page 44 (November 1987) (No. 13739). <https://archive.org/details/reportofcongress87unit/page/294/mode/2up>

¹⁹ Minority Staff, House Committee on Government Reform, *Congressional Oversight of the Clinton Administration* (January 17, 2006). <https://wayback.archive-it.org/4949/20141031200116/http://oversight-archive.waxman.house.gov/documents/20060117103516-91336.pdf>

²⁰ U.S. House of Representatives, *Final Report of the Select Committee on the Events Surrounding the 2012 Terrorist Attack in Benghazi* (December 7, 2016) (Report No. 114-848).

<https://web.archive.org/web/20221230110310/https://www.congress.gov/114/crpt/hrpt848/CRPT-114hrpt848.pdf>

IRAN CONTRA AFFAIR

A memorandum by Craig Fuller, Chief of Staff to Vice President George H.W. Bush, describing a briefing the Vice President received while in Israel from Amiram Nir, an advisor to the Israeli Prime Minister, on efforts to achieve release of United States hostages (dated August 1986) (obtained by the Senate Select Committee on Secret Military Assistance to Iran and the Nicaraguan Opposition and the House Select Committee to Investigate Covert Arms Transactions with Iran).

1987

MEMORANDUM²¹

IRAN CONTRA AFFAIR

Testimony by National Security Advisor Robert McFarlane regarding a briefing in which he informed Vice President George H.W. Bush about a foreign country that had volunteered to provide additional funding to Nicaraguan contras after U.S. congressional funding had been exhausted (obtained by the Senate Select Committee on Secret Military Assistance to Iran and the Nicaraguan Opposition and the House Select Committee to Investigate Covert Arms Transactions with Iran).

1987

TESTIMONY²²

WHITE HOUSE EMAIL SYSTEM

A legal memorandum from Todd Campbell, counsel to the Vice President, to Vice President Albert Gore, regarding the Vice President's email system (dated November 1993) (provided to House Committee on Government Reform and Oversight).

2000

MEMORANDUM²³

Confidential Communications from the White House Counsel's Office

BILLY CARTER'S BUSINESS ACTIVITIES

Testimony by Carter White House Counsel Lloyd Cutler regarding his conversations with the President's press secretary and personal secretary about Department of Justice investigations of President Carter's brother Billy Carter (obtained by the Senate Judiciary Committee, Subcommittee to Investigation Individuals Representing Foreign Governments).

1980

TESTIMONY²⁴

²¹ U.S. Senate, *Report of the Congressional committees investigating the Iran-Contra Affair*, page 246 (November 1987) (No. 13739). <https://archive.org/details/reportofcongress87unit/page/294/mode/2up>

²² U.S. Senate, *Report of the Congressional committees investigating the Iran-Contra Affair*, page 38 (November 1987) (No. 13739). <https://archive.org/details/reportofcongress87unit/page/294/mode/2up>

²³ Minority Staff, House Committee on Government Reform, *Congressional Oversight of the Clinton Administration* (January 17, 2006). <https://wayback.archive-it.org/4949/20141031200116/http://oversight-archive.waxman.house.gov/documents/20060117103516-91336.pdf>

²⁴ Senate Committee on the Judiciary, *Inquiry into the Matter of Billy Carter and Libya* (October 2, 1980) (Report No. 96-1015). <https://web.archive.org/web/20220824023111/https://www.intelligence.senate.gov/sites/default/files/961015.pdf>

CAMPAIGN FINANCE AND WHITE HOUSE HOLIDAY CARD LIST

Testimony by Clinton White House Counsel Charles F.C. Ruff and Deputy White House Counsel Cheryl Mills regarding internal White House counsel deliberations on which documents were responsive to congressional investigative requests (obtained by the House Government Reform and Oversight Committee).

1997

TESTIMONY²⁵

INQUIRY INTO EXERCISE OF PRESIDENTIAL PARDON AUTHORITY

Testimony by former Clinton White House Counsel Beth Nolan regarding her communications with the Deputy Attorney General and Pardon Attorney at the Department of Justice about the President's requests (provided to the House Committee on Government Reform).

2001

TESTIMONY²⁶

White House Records of Private Party Attendance at White House Events

CAMPAIGN FINANCE

Records of individuals who attended White House movies, ate lunch at the private mess or attended private dinners at the White House, or who sat in the President's box at the Kennedy Center during the Clinton Administration (obtained by the House Committee on Government Reform and Oversight).

1998

RECORDS²⁷

²⁵ House Committee on Government Reform and Oversight, *Hearing on White House Compliance with Committee Subpoenas*, page 107 (November 6 and 7, 1997) (No. 105-61).

<https://web.archive.org/web/20211108202905/https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CHRG-105hhrg45405/pdf/CHRG-105hhrg45405.pdf>

²⁶ House Committee on Government Reform, *Hearings on the Controversial Pardon of International Fugitive Marc Rich* (February 8 and March 1, 2001).

<https://web.archive.org/web/20230308140206/https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CHRG-107hhrg75593/html/CHRG-107hhrg75593.htm>

²⁷ Minority Staff, House Committee on Government Reform, *Congressional Oversight of the Clinton Administration* (January 17, 2006). <https://wayback.archive-it.org/4949/20141031200116/http://oversight-archive.waxman.house.gov/documents/20060117103516-91336.pdf>