

MAY 29 1992

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

May 28, 1992

Dear Mr. Chairman:

This responds to your letters of May 26, 1992 to C. Boyden Gray, Counsel to the President, and Nicholas Rostow, Special Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs and Legal Adviser to the National Security Council.


As I stated in my letter of that date, it is the longstanding practice of the Executive Branch to decline requests for testimony by members of the President's personal staff. That policy is not a Bush Administration innovation, but rather has been the view taken by Democratic and Republican Administrations alike. To list but a few examples: Truman Presidential Assistant John Steelman declined to appear before a subcommittee of the House Committee on Education and Labor investigating the administration of Taft-Hartley. W. DeVier Pierson, Associate Special Counsel to President Johnson, declined to testify before the Senate Judiciary Committee in connection with Justice Fortas' confirmation. Alan Tracy, Special Assistant to President Reagan for Agricultural Trade and Food Assistance, declined an invitation to testify before a Subcommittee on Agricultural Research, Conservation, Forestry and General Legislation.

As I also stated in my letter of May 26, 1992, the Administration is prepared in view of the unusual circumstances presented here to work with you to develop an alternative, mutually acceptable mechanism for making available to Members of the Committee the White House officials whose testimony you have sought. Indeed, I believe your staff and mine were planning to meet yesterday to discuss this and other matters, but that your staff was unable to meet, apparently for scheduling reasons.

Finally, I would point out that in addition to the offer we have made concerning these particular officials, Administration members from numerous different agencies have provided voluminous responses to your Committee's numerous requests for information; that ten Administration members, including the Deputy Secretaries of State, Treasury and Agriculture, spent a total of seven hours at a hearing of your Committee on these issues last week; and that pursuant to your request, the Administration will be making available witnesses from five Cabinet Departments and the Central Intelligence Agency for your hearing tomorrow so as to allow you to obtain information about the matters regarding which you have written to Messrs. Gray and Rostow.

In short, given all the efforts we have made to provide you with information on these issues, the notion that the Administration is engaged in some kind of "attempt[] to block [y]our inquiry" cannot be seriously entertained. As I have previously indicated, the Administration believes it acted reasonably and properly during the period prior to the Persian Gulf conflict, and we are anxious to cooperate with the Committee to assure that it has an accurate picture of our policy and actions. That cooperation is not facilitated by unfounded suggestions, such as those made in your letter, that application of a longstanding policy regarding testimony by White House staff somehow flows from "an effort to conceal" matters with respect to which we have been, and remain desirous of being, entirely forthcoming.

Sincerely,



Nicholas E. Calio
Assistant to the President
for Legislative Affairs

The Honorable Henry B. Gonzales
Chairman
U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Banking, Finance and Urban Affairs
Washington, D.C. 20515

cc: The Honorable Chalmers F. Wylie