



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on June 12, 2013

State Department Accused of Covering Up Prostitution Scandal

An [internal memo](#) from the State Department's inspector general has surfaced that calls into question the State Department's ability to investigate wrongdoing by its staff. The memo outlines eight examples of wrongdoing by agency staff and contractors, including hiring prostitutes and committing sexual assault, and seems to imply that the agency attempted to halt investigation into these matters.



A number of the allegations outlined in the memo are against then-Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's security detail, some of whom have been accused of hiring prostitutes. Likewise, a U.S. ambassador is accused of perusing public parks in search of paid sex, and a security official allegedly committed sexual assaults on foreign nationals in Beirut hired as embassy guards.

The memo notes that members of Hillary Clinton's security detailed "engaged prostitutes while on official trips in foreign countries," and stated that the problem was "endemic."

The memo indicates that four members of Clinton's security detail received one-day suspensions.

According to the memo, which was first obtained by CBS News, the State Department has attempted to stop investigations into these cases. For example, the investigation into the Ambassador's pursuit of paid sex was allegedly interrupted by the agency. Fox News [reports](#):

The memo also seems to indicate that the government agency tried to use its authority to stop the investigation and instead, opting to have the official, whose name has not been released, meet with Undersecretary of State for Management Patrick Kennedy in Washington. The official was then allowed to return to his job overseas.

Responding to media reports on Tuesday, [Kennedy](#) defended himself, asserting, "I have always acted to honor the brave men and women I serve, while also holding accountable anyone guilty of wrongdoing. In my current position, it is my responsibility to make sure the Department and all of our employees — no matter their rank — are held to the highest standard, and I have never once interfered, nor would I condone interfering, in any investigation."

While CBS did not disclose the name of the ambassador, the *New York Post* reported it was U.S. Ambassador to Belgium Howard Gutman.

Gutman responded to the allegations on Tuesday.

"I am angered and saddened by the baseless allegations that have appeared in the press and to watch the four years I have proudly served in Belgium smeared is devastating," he said. "I live on a beautiful park in Brussels that you walk through to get to many locations and at no point have I ever engaged in any improper activity."

The memo also reveals details about an "underground drug ring" near the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad



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and that allegedly supplied State Department security contractors with drugs.

Upon learning of the allegations of misconduct, Representative Ed Royce, who chairs the House Foreign Affairs Committee, called on congressional staff members to launch an investigation.

And a State Department spokeswoman, Jen Psaki, has announced that the department's Bureau of Diplomatic Security has requested a "review by outside, experienced law enforcement officers" to work with the Inspector General's office to make "expert assessments about our current procedures."

Psaki denies that the improper behavior outlined in the report is "endemic."

"I'm not going to speak to specific cases, but it's hardly endemic," Psaki told reporters at a State Department briefing. "Any case we would take seriously and that's certainly what we're doing."

On Tuesday, Psaki said, "The notion that we would not vigorously pursue criminal misconduct is not only preposterous, it's inaccurate."

Reporters attempted to question Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid on the subject during a press conference on Tuesday, but Reid quickly cut them off.

"I don't know what you're talking about," he said. "What are you talking about?... I don't know what you're talking about."

But White House spokesman Jay Carney did respond to the allegations on Tuesday, asserting that President Obama has "zero tolerance for misconduct by any government employee."

He added, however, that the White House "won't prejudge anyone or anything before all the facts are determined."

As noted by Fox News, this is not the first time allegations of sexual misconduct have been raised against the Obama administration. Fox News observes:

In April 2012, members of the president's Secret Service detail were caught in a prostitution scandal involving 12 women they picked up during an official trip to Colombia. The Secret Service was slow to disclose any information and issued only limited public statements in the weeks following the incident in Cartagena.

In the end, a dozen agents, officers, supervisors and 12 other U.S. military personnel were implicated in a night of heavy drinking and misconduct.

The Secret Service forced eight employees from their jobs. The military canceled the security clearances of all 12 enlisted personnel.

However, the bigger issue is the State Department's alleged efforts to cover up the allegations.

The memo indicates that recent investigations into these matters were influenced, manipulated, or called off.

According to Aurelia Fedenish, a former investigator with the Inspector General's office, "We also uncovered several allegations of criminal wrongdoing in cases, some of which never became cases."

Members of the Diplomatic Security Service (DSS), which is the State Department's security force in charge of investigating any cases of misconduct on the part of State Department employees, claim that senior State Department officials had told them to back off in many of these cases.

Fedenish states, "We were very upset. We expect to see influence, but the degree to which that



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influence existed and how high up it went, was very disturbing.”

Mike Pohelitz, a retired Senior Agent at the DSS who had been involved in one of the cases listed in the memo, recalls being told to stop investigating, and assumes that the orders came from the upper ranks of the DSS.

“I got the information through my DS channel,” he told CBS. “But it had to come from somebody higher than DS, I’m sure.”

CBS reports that Fedenish was a part of the team that prepared the Inspector General’s draft report on the DSS’ performance and is now a whistleblower who has taken her concerns to Congress.

Fedenish explains “hostile intelligence services” permit bad behaviors like these to continue. “I would be very surprised if some of those entities were not aware of the activities,” she said. “So yes, it presents a serious risk to the United States government.”

A draft of the Inspector General’s report on the DSS’ performance, obtained by CBS News, articulates similar sentiments.

“Hindering such cases calls into question the integrity of the investigative process, can result in counterintelligence vulnerabilities and can allow criminal behavior to continue,” it reads.



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