



One Hundred Twelfth Congress  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Committee on Homeland Security  
Washington, DC 20515

May 23, 2012

The Honorable Michael G. Vickers  
Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence  
1400 Defense Pentagon  
Washington, DC 20301-1400

Dear Under Secretary Vickers:

I am writing regarding the Committee on Homeland Security's ongoing investigation into the possible release of classified information to Hollywood filmmakers regarding the raid that killed al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden. As you may know, this matter is currently under investigation by the Department of Defense's Office of the Inspector General.<sup>1</sup>

On May 22, Judicial Watch posted on-line electronic communications that were ordered released by a Federal judge in response to its Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request regarding the Department of Defense's cooperation on the bin Laden movie. Included in these documents were emails you sent and the transcript of a conversation you had with producer Mr. Mark Boal and director Ms. Kathryn Bigelow. In my view, these emails raise serious questions regarding your central role in providing classified and sensitive information to individuals without appropriate security clearances.

According to the released documents, in a July 13, 2011 email from Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs Doug Wilson to Mr. Boal and Ms. Bigelow, he states "Jeremy Bash and I talked yesterday, and he and I will work to unclog the SOCOM pathway for you. Assume you are getting what you need from Mike Vickers, but in any case we'll review where you are next week and move the ball forward."<sup>2</sup>

In a transcript of your subsequent July 15, 2011 meeting with the filmmakers, you stated that you would provide them access to a special operator who would:

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<sup>1</sup> See December 16 and 23, 2011 correspondence from the Deputy Inspector General for Intelligence and Special Program Assessments, regarding Project No. D2012-DINT01-0079.000, addressing actions taken by Department of Defense personnel related to the release of information to filmmakers Mark Boal and Kathryn Bigelow.

<sup>2</sup> Mr. Bash serves as Chief of Staff to the Secretary of Defense, and previously served as Chief of Staff to the Director of the Central Intelligence Agency.

“[S]peak for operators and he’ll speak for senior military commanders, because they’re all the same tribe and everything, and so you should get most of what you need from him. Now, again the reason [Admiral] Olson and [Admiral] McRaven didn’t want to talk is this command conflict of interest. And then with [redacted] the only thing we ask is that you not reveal his name in any way as a consultant, because again, it’s the same thing, he shouldn’t be talking out of school, this at least, this gives him one step removed and he knows what he can and can’t say, but this way at least he can be as open as he can with you and it ought to meet your needs and give you lots of color.”<sup>3</sup>

Also in this same meeting, according to the transcript, you stated that:

“I’ve been told to do for you what [Acting Director of the Central Intelligence Agency] Michael [Morell] and others, so that’s what I’m going to try to do for you tonight and others. Now on the operators side; [Admiral] McRaven and [Admiral] Olson do not want to talk directly, because it’s just a bad, their [*sic*] just concerned as commanders of the force and they’re telling them all the time -- don’t you dare talk to anybody, that it’s just a bad example if it gets out -- even with all sorts of restrictions and everything .... Well the basic idea is they’ll make a guy available who was involved from the beginning as a planner; a [Special Mission Unit] Operator and Commander ... A guy name[d] [redacted]. And so, he basically can probably give you everything you would want or would get from [Admiral] Olson or [Admiral] McRaven.”<sup>4</sup>

Pursuant to Rule X, Clauses 2(a) and 3(g)(1), and Rule XI, Clause 1(b)(1) of the House of Representatives, I request answers to the following questions.

1. How many current or former Special Mission Unit operators were exposed to the filmmakers, and under what circumstances? Who specifically authorized current Special Mission Unit operators to speak about this mission to uncleared personnel outside of their chain of command?
2. What was the scope and duration of the technical support to the filmmakers provided by the Special Mission Unit operators?
3. What was the “clogged SOCOM pathway” that Assistant Secretary Wilson promises the filmmakers will be cleared?
4. Who told you “to do for” the filmmakers “what Michael Morrell and others” had done for them?

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<sup>3</sup> Ms. Bigelow and Mr. Boal responded, “Fabulous,” “That’s dynamite,” “Thank you very much,” “That’s incredible,” and “You delivered.”

<sup>4</sup> The filmmakers responded, “I’ll take [redacted] or someone like that,” “That’s dynamite,” “That’s incredible,” and “This is me happy.”

5. What specifically was your guidance in terms of support to the filmmaking endeavor that you received from your chain of command and the White House?

Following the operation that killed Osama bin Laden, multiple senior U.S. government officials expressed the importance of keeping information secret. According to public statements by former United States Special Operations Command Commander Admiral Eric Olson,<sup>5</sup> former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Admiral Michael Mullen,<sup>6</sup> and former Secretary of Defense Robert Gates,<sup>7</sup> leaks pertaining to the raid jeopardize the capabilities of Special Operations Forces to kill terrorist leaders who threaten the U.S. Homeland and risk the safety of special operators and their families. It is unfortunate that the Administration's desire to provide Hollywood filmmakers access to such information is in direct opposition to the stated views of our senior military leadership.

I would appreciate receiving your written response to this letter by no later than May 29, 2011. Thank you for your prompt and personal attention to this serious matter of national security.

Sincerely,

  
PETER T. KING  
Chairman

cc: Lynne M. Halbrooks, Esq.  
Acting Inspector General  
Department of Defense

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<sup>5</sup> Admiral Olson stated that the raid “was successful because nobody talked about it before, and if we want to preserve this capability nobody better talk about it after.”

<sup>6</sup> Chairman Mullen stated that “We have gotten to a point where we are close to jeopardizing the precision capability that we have, and we can’t afford to do that.”

<sup>7</sup> Secretary Gates stated that “Too many people in too many places are talking too much about this operation.” He also related that when he met with the team that killed bin Laden, they expressed concern “particularly with respect to their families.” The Secretary further observed that “we all agreed that we would not release any operational details from the effort take out bin Laden. That all fell apart on Monday, the next day.”