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NEWS
FROM:

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
MAY 25, 1993

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"TRAVELGATE" HEARINGS

DOLE CALLS FOR SENATE HEARINGS INTO GROWING "TRAVELGATE" AFFAIR:
REPORTED POLITICAL EXPLOITATION OF FBI SUGGESTS OUTRIGHT SCANDAL,
NOT PERCEPTION PROBLEM

Every American should be deeply concerned when powerful figures in the Executive Branch try to strong-arm the FBI to further their own political agenda.

But that seems to be the case, as the news media continue to dig up more disturbing evidence that the White House has added "abuse of power" to the laundry list of alarming revelations in the unfolding "Travelgate" affair.

Highly Unusual FBI Statement

News reports suggest that the FBI's chief spokesman was summoned to the White House last Friday to meet with the White House communications staff, the White House legal counsel, and with David Watkins, head of the White House office of management and one of the key figures in the eye of the "Travelgate" storm.

After the meeting, the FBI spokesman reportedly returned to his office to draft a highly unusual statement indicating there was "sufficient information for the FBI to determine that additional criminal investigation is warranted" into the practices of the White House Travel Office.

The White House communications staff subsequently released the statement, without the FBI's approval and without even the FBI's knowledge. The statement appeared on Justice Department stationery.

"Travelgate" Could Be Outright Scandal

If this is true, "Travelgate" is no longer a perception problem, it's an outright scandal.

I have enormous respect for the FBI and its employees. In fact, several years ago, I authored legislation increasing the rate of overtime pay for FBI agents out in the field.

So, it concerns me when a few loose cannons in the White House try to exploit the FBI to further their own unseemly political agenda.

I agree with Attorney General Reno when she reportedly raised concerns that the White House had ignored existing policies designed to prevent politics from interfering with the FBI's work.

And I agree with a high-ranking FBI official who is quoted in The Washington Times today as saying, and I quote: "the FBI cannot be identified as a friend or a foe of any administration. It has to be perceived as neutral in all cases. On its surface, this unusual announcement served no purpose other than to legitimize a political decision."

Call for Senate Hearings -- American People Want Answers

Later today, I intend to send a letter to the Chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, my distinguished colleague Senator Biden, and to the Committee's ranking member, Senator Hatch, asking them to conduct a full committee hearing to get to the bottom of this latest flap in the "Travelgate" affair.

The American people want some answers to the charges of political cronyism. And they deserve some explanation for this highly unusual, and very disturbing, abuse of power.

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