

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM

2157 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING

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<http://oversight.house.gov>

October 16, 2015

The Honorable John F. Kerry
Secretary
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Mr. Secretary:

During the Committee's recent hearing, titled "Violence on the Border: Keeping U.S. Personnel Safe," a bipartisan group of Members raised questions about the Department's new interpretation of the longstanding Danger Pay statute.¹

With respect to danger pay for State Department personnel in Mexico, the Department's Deputy Assistant Secretary for Western Hemisphere Affairs testified that "the changes will be some posts will go up and some posts will go down."² In fact, that has occurred, with pay for Department personnel in Nuevo Laredo and Tijuana "going down by five percent" despite persistently violent conditions in those cities.³ For example, Danger Pay in Nuevo Laredo is being eliminated despite the fact that the local police force in the city is suspended, a restricted travel zone for U.S. Consulate employees is in effect, and a Customs and Border Protection helicopter was forced to land near the city after it came under fire.

The situation in Saudi Arabia is also concerning, and the Department appears to have eliminated Danger Pay for most U.S. personnel there as well.⁴ Recently, attacks by Islamic State prompted the Saudi government to add 100,000 troops to protect pilgrims during the annual pilgrimage to Mecca.⁵ Chairman Chaffetz visited the country earlier this year and learned firsthand about the situation there. Saudi security forces recently repelled an attack against one of the world's largest oil processing facilities in Abqaiq, near where Chairman Chaffetz visited Saudi Aramco.⁶

¹ 5 U.S.C. § 5928.

² *Violence on the Border: Keeping U.S. Personnel Safe, Hearing before the H. Comm. on Oversight and Gov't Reform* at 46, 114th Cong. (Sep. 9, 2015).

³ *Id.*

⁴ The Department's current Danger Pay chart lists a 15% entry for "Other" in Saudi Arabia, but it generally eliminated the 15% Danger Pay in Jeddah, Dhahran, and Riyadh, while simultaneously increasing additional pay for hardship by 10%. Compare U.S. Dep't of State, "Allowances by Location: Saudi Arabia" available at https://aoprals.state.gov/Web920/location_action.asp?MenuHide=1&CountryCode=1169&PostCode=&EffectiveDate=20150920 (State's Danger Pay and Hardship Differential chart as of Sep. 20, 2015), with https://aoprals.state.gov/Web920/location_action.asp?MenuHide=1&CountryCode=1169&PostCode=&EffectiveDate=20150823 (State's Danger Pay and Hardship Differential chart as of Aug. 23, 2015).

⁵ *Saudi Arabia: 100,000 troops to secure the Hajj*, AL ARABIYA NEWS, Sep. 19, 2015, available at <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/2015/09/19/Saudi-Arabia-says-100-000-troops-to-secure-this-year-s-Hajj.html>.

⁶ Alessandria Massi, *Saudi Arabia Thwarts 'Terrorist' Attack In Abqaiq, World's Largest Oil Processing Facility*, INT'L BUS. TIMES, Sep. 4, 2015.

The Department briefed Committee staff on the methodology for the revisions to the Danger Pay policies on September 30, 2015. Officials explained that, under the new policy, although the assessment of conditions on the ground has led to a reduction in danger pay, in many cases hardship pay has increased, such as for many posts in Mexico and Saudi Arabia. To enable the Committee to better understand the Department's revisions to its Danger Pay policies, please provide the following documents and information as soon as possible, but by no later than 5:00 p.m. on October 23, 2015:

1. All documents sufficient to explain the decision to modify Danger Pay for all posts in Mexico.
2. All documents sufficient to explain the decision to modify Danger Pay for all posts in Saudi Arabia, including the 15 percent allocation to those in the location marked "Other" in the Department's online Danger Pay chart.⁷

The Committee on Oversight and Government Reform is the principal oversight committee of the House of Representatives and may at "any time" investigate "any matter" as set forth in House Rule X.

When producing documents to the Committee, please deliver production sets to the Majority staff in room 2157 of the Rayburn House Office Building and the Minority staff in room 2471 of the Rayburn House Office Building. The Committee prefers, if possible, to receive all documents in electronic format. An attachment to this letter provides additional information about responding to the Committee's request.

Please contact Cordell Hull of the Oversight Committee staff at (202) 225-5074 or Sally Williamson with Ranking Member Cummings' staff at (202) 225-5051 with any questions about this request. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Jason Chaffetz
Chairman



Elijah E. Cummings
Ranking Member



Ron DeSantis
Chairman
Subcommittee on National Security



Stephen F. Lynch
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on National Security

Enclosure

⁷ U.S. Dep't of State, "Danger Pay Allowance (DSSR 650) Percentage of Basic Compensation," available at https://aoprals.state.gov/Web920/danger_pay_all.asp (State's Danger Pay chart as of Sep. 20, 2015).

Responding to Committee Document Requests

1. In complying with this request, you are required to produce all responsive documents that are in your possession, custody, or control, whether held by you or your past or present agents, employees, and representatives acting on your behalf. You should also produce documents that you have a legal right to obtain, that you have a right to copy or to which you have access, as well as documents that you have placed in the temporary possession, custody, or control of any third party. Requested records, documents, data or information should not be destroyed, modified, removed, transferred or otherwise made inaccessible to the Committee.
2. In the event that any entity, organization or individual denoted in this request has been, or is also known by any other name than that herein denoted, the request shall be read also to include that alternative identification.
3. The Committee's preference is to receive documents in electronic form (i.e., CD, memory stick, or thumb drive) in lieu of paper productions.
4. Documents produced in electronic format should also be organized, identified, and indexed electronically.
5. Electronic document productions should be prepared according to the following standards:
 - (a) The production should consist of single page Tagged Image File ("TIF"), files accompanied by a Concordance-format load file, an Opticon reference file, and a file defining the fields and character lengths of the load file.
 - (b) Document numbers in the load file should match document Bates numbers and TIF file names.
 - (c) If the production is completed through a series of multiple partial productions, field names and file order in all load files should match.
 - (d) All electronic documents produced to the Committee should include the following fields of metadata specific to each document:

BEGDOC, ENDDOC, TEXT, BEGATTACH, ENDATTACH,
PAGECOUNT, CUSTODIAN, RECORDTYPE, DATE, TIME, SENTDATE,
SENTTIME, BEGINDATE, BEGINTIME, ENDDATE, ENDTIME, AUTHOR, FROM,
CC, TO, BCC, SUBJECT, TITLE, FILENAME, FILEEXT, FILESIZE,
DATECREATED, TIMECREATED, DATELASTMOD, TIMELASTMOD,
INTMSGID, INTMSGHEADER, NATIVELINK, INTFILPATH, EXCEPTION,
BEGATTACH.
6. Documents produced to the Committee should include an index describing the contents of the production. To the extent more than one CD, hard drive, memory stick, thumb drive, box or folder is produced, each CD, hard drive, memory stick, thumb drive, box or folder should contain an index describing its contents.

7. Documents produced in response to this request shall be produced together with copies of file labels, dividers or identifying markers with which they were associated when the request was served.
8. When you produce documents, you should identify the paragraph in the Committee's schedule to which the documents respond.
9. It shall not be a basis for refusal to produce documents that any other person or entity also possesses non-identical or identical copies of the same documents.
10. If any of the requested information is only reasonably available in machine-readable form (such as on a computer server, hard drive, or computer backup tape), you should consult with the Committee staff to determine the appropriate format in which to produce the information.
11. If compliance with the request cannot be made in full by the specified return date, compliance shall be made to the extent possible by that date. An explanation of why full compliance is not possible shall be provided along with any partial production.
12. In the event that a document is withheld on the basis of privilege, provide a privilege log containing the following information concerning any such document: (a) the privilege asserted; (b) the type of document; (c) the general subject matter; (d) the date, author and addressee; and (e) the relationship of the author and addressee to each other.
13. If any document responsive to this request was, but no longer is, in your possession, custody, or control, identify the document (stating its date, author, subject and recipients) and explain the circumstances under which the document ceased to be in your possession, custody, or control.
14. If a date or other descriptive detail set forth in this request referring to a document is inaccurate, but the actual date or other descriptive detail is known to you or is otherwise apparent from the context of the request, you are required to produce all documents which would be responsive as if the date or other descriptive detail were correct.
15. Unless otherwise specified, the time period covered by this request is from January 1, 2009 to the present.
16. This request is continuing in nature and applies to any newly-discovered information. Any record, document, compilation of data or information, not produced because it has not been located or discovered by the return date, shall be produced immediately upon subsequent location or discovery.
17. All documents shall be Bates-stamped sequentially and produced sequentially.
18. Two sets of documents shall be delivered, one set to the Majority Staff and one set to the Minority Staff. When documents are produced to the Committee, production sets shall be delivered to the Majority Staff in Room 2157 of the Rayburn House Office Building and the Minority Staff in Room 2471 of the Rayburn House Office Building.

19. Upon completion of the document production, you should submit a written certification, signed by you or your counsel, stating that: (1) a diligent search has been completed of all documents in your possession, custody, or control which reasonably could contain responsive documents; and (2) all documents located during the search that are responsive have been produced to the Committee.

Definitions

1. The term “document” means any written, recorded, or graphic matter of any nature whatsoever, regardless of how recorded, and whether original or copy, including, but not limited to, the following: memoranda, reports, expense reports, books, manuals, instructions, financial reports, working papers, records, notes, letters, notices, confirmations, telegrams, receipts, appraisals, pamphlets, magazines, newspapers, prospectuses, inter-office and intra-office communications, electronic mail (e-mail), contracts, cables, notations of any type of conversation, telephone call, meeting or other communication, bulletins, printed matter, computer printouts, teletypes, invoices, transcripts, diaries, analyses, returns, summaries, minutes, bills, accounts, estimates, projections, comparisons, messages, correspondence, press releases, circulars, financial statements, reviews, opinions, offers, studies and investigations, questionnaires and surveys, and work sheets (and all drafts, preliminary versions, alterations, modifications, revisions, changes, and amendments of any of the foregoing, as well as any attachments or appendices thereto), and graphic or oral records or representations of any kind (including without limitation, photographs, charts, graphs, microfiche, microfilm, videotape, recordings and motion pictures), and electronic, mechanical, and electric records or representations of any kind (including, without limitation, tapes, cassettes, disks, and recordings) and other written, printed, typed, or other graphic or recorded matter of any kind or nature, however produced or reproduced, and whether preserved in writing, film, tape, disk, videotape or otherwise. A document bearing any notation not a part of the original text is to be considered a separate document. A draft or non-identical copy is a separate document within the meaning of this term.
2. The term “communication” means each manner or means of disclosure or exchange of information, regardless of means utilized, whether oral, electronic, by document or otherwise, and whether in a meeting, by telephone, facsimile, email (desktop or mobile device), text message, instant message, MMS or SMS message, regular mail, telexes, releases, or otherwise.
3. The terms “and” and “or” shall be construed broadly and either conjunctively or disjunctively to bring within the scope of this request any information which might otherwise be construed to be outside its scope. The singular includes plural number, and vice versa. The masculine includes the feminine and neuter genders.
4. The terms “person” or “persons” mean natural persons, firms, partnerships, associations, corporations, subsidiaries, divisions, departments, joint ventures, proprietorships, syndicates, or other legal, business or government entities, and all subsidiaries, affiliates, divisions, departments, branches, or other units thereof.

5. The term “identify,” when used in a question about individuals, means to provide the following information: (a) the individual's complete name and title; and (b) the individual's business address and phone number.
6. The term “referring or relating,” with respect to any given subject, means anything that constitutes, contains, embodies, reflects, identifies, states, refers to, deals with or is pertinent to that subject in any manner whatsoever.
7. The term “employee” means agent, borrowed employee, casual employee, consultant, contractor, de facto employee, independent contractor, joint adventurer, loaned employee, part-time employee, permanent employee, provisional employee, subcontractor, or any other type of service provider.