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Security Agents Charge Dept. of Energy with 'Fraud, Waste, and Abuse' in new letter



BY: **Adam Kredo**
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am

Special agents tasked with protecting the Department of Energy (DOE) have blown the whistle on what they describe as a dangerous culture of "fraud, waste, and abuse" that includes drinking on the job, mismanagement of weapons, falsification of security reports, and "wasteful spending" that reaches all the way to the deputy secretary of energy.

Current and former agents in the DOE's Office of Special Operations (OSO), which is tasked with

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protecting the secretary and other senior officials, allege a stunning lapse in security guidelines and procedures intended to deal with a catastrophic situation, according to a recent letter sent to lawmakers and obtained by the *Washington Free Beacon*.

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The agents letter exposes a dysfunctional security office marred by corruption.

From wasteful spending habits to agents consuming alcohol on the job, the security officers decry a culture of “mismanagement” and cronyism that has led at least 14 “highly qualified and experienced line agents” to quit their posts in protest over the past several years.

“From its very inception, this office is completely backwards,” the agents write.

“This negligence has perpetuated a disgusting cycle of promoting unqualified agents to key positions which has led to an incredibly high attrition rate among line agents, an inappropriately low level of tactical readiness, and ultimately an increased liability and risk to the Secretary, Deputy Secretary, and special agents.”

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The office of the DOE’s inspector general received the letter nearly three weeks ago, sources said.

A DOE spokesperson would not immediately comment on the letter, maintaining that he needed to locate it internally first.

Among the allegations is the claim that Deputy Secretary of Energy **Daniel Poneman** has demanded executive protection during all international travel so that he can “maintain his business class travel status,” rather than because there are credible threats on his safety, the letter states.

One Capitol Hill source said that the cost to fly Poneman and his security detail in business class is extremely wasteful.

“Deputy Secretary Poneman has wasted hundreds of thousands of dollars in taxpayer’s money as one of the most traveled administration officials because he thinks

he s too good to sit with the 99 percent," the source said. ~~Not~~ only does he owe Congress and the administration an answer for this, he owes us our money back."

Employees in the OSO which operates under DOE s Office of Healthy, Safety, and Security (HHS) are routinely mismanaged and in some cases have engaged in highly unethical behavior, according to the letter.

The letter alleges Program Manager James Toczko covered up the fact that personnel have been caught ~~consuming~~ alcoholic beverage[s] while on duty."

Additionally, ~~two~~ of the four current [Security] Detail Leaders of the four current Detail Leaders [have not been] allowed to perform assigned duties by request of the Secretary, Deputy Secretary."

Agents are also said to be ill-equipped and not trained to effectively handle an emergency security situation, according to the letter, which outlines a litany of ways in which ~~management~~ has failed in its core responsibilities."

There has been a ~~failure~~ to provide basic safety equipment to agents such as body armor and updated medical equipment until agents are forced to file [Occupational Safety and Health Administration] complaints," the letter alleges.

The agents also describe a failure to ~~manage~~ and use" certain protective measures such as ~~secure~~ communications."

No clear guidelines have been issued for the legal use of firearms by security agents, the letter states.

There has been a ~~failure~~ to provide clarification of legal standing, scope of authority, or firearms policy by General Council despite frequent requests," the whistleblowers claim.

The hostile climate in DOE s OSO has prompted security agents to resign their posts in frustration, the letter states.

~~Management~~ has remained largely intact, while under their

leadership they have driven out more than fourteen (14) highly qualified and experienced line agents in merely four years," the disgruntled security officers claim in the letter. In addition, the remaining line agents are aggressively seeking employment elsewhere."

There is entirely too much liability inherent to this profession to be forced to work in an environment of constant uncertainty created solely on part of unqualified managers," the letter adds, noting that the OSO boasts a 24 month attrition rate of 55 percent and a 48 month attrition rate of approximately 100 percent" among certain classes of security agents.

This level of turnover is rare and may bolster the argument that there is a large measure of dissatisfaction among the OSO s employees.

A dearth of clear guidelines and protocols has fostered an inability to respond to security threats, the letter claims.

Over time, there has been a failure to develop, implement and evaluate policies such as an active shooter response, fire evacuation, direct threat to [the secretary], medical emergency, security room operations and duress system response, and a bomb threat."

The letter writers, whose names are not attached to a copy of the letter obtained by the *Free Beacon*, attribute the widespread dysfunction to a fundamental breakdown in leadership.

The core issue is simply this: There is no true standard for any process here at DOE-OSO," they write. This office and its internal issues are a result of its failing leadership."

Multiple years of neglect, indecision, self-interest and lack of basic leadership" have compounded the problems the office faces, the letter adds. At all levels of management, there has been a complete failure to take accountability and ownership of the program."

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