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# Congress of the United States

## House of Representatives

### Select Committee on Benghazi

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114<sup>TH</sup> CONGRESS

SUSANNE SACHSMAN GROOMS, MINORITY  
STAFF DIRECTOR

October 18, 2015

The Honorable Trey Gowdy  
Chairman  
Select Committee on the Events Surrounding  
the 2012 Terrorist Attack in Benghazi  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

On October 7, 2015, you sent me a 13-page letter making a grave new accusation against former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. Specifically, you accused her of compromising national security and endangering lives.<sup>1</sup>

The problem with your accusation—as with so many others during this investigation—is that you failed to check your facts before you made it, and the CIA has now informed the Select Committee that you were wrong. I believe your accusations were irresponsible, and I believe you owe the Secretary an immediate apology.

It appears that your letter was rushed out to the press to counter the public firestorm caused by Republican Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy's stark admission that Republicans are using millions of taxpayer dollars to damage Secretary Clinton's bid for president. However, your letter only provided further evidence of this fact.

In your letter on October 7, 2015, you stated that Secretary Clinton received an email from Sidney Blumenthal on March 18, 2011, that included the name of someone who purportedly provided information to the CIA. You asserted that this information was classified, arguing that Secretary Clinton “received classified information from Blumenthal—information she should have known was classified at the time she received it.” You then alleged:

Armed with that information, Secretary Clinton forwarded that email to a colleague—debunking her claim that she never sent any classified information from her private email address.

In your letter, you went to great lengths to highlight the gravity of your accusation, stating:

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<sup>1</sup> Letter from Chairman Trey Gowdy to Ranking Member Elijah E. Cummings, House Select Committee on Benghazi (Oct. 7, 2015).

This information, the name of a human source, is some of the most protected information in our intelligence community, the release of which could jeopardize not only national security but human lives.

To further inflate your claim, you placed your own redactions over the name of the individual with the words, "redacted due to sources and methods." To be clear, these redactions were not made, and these words were not added, by any agency of the federal government responsible for enforcing classification guidelines.

Predictably, commentators began repeating your accusations in even more extreme terms, suggesting in headlines for example that "Clinton Burns CIA Libya Contact."<sup>2</sup>

Contrary to your claims, the CIA yesterday informed both the Republican and Democratic staffs of the Select Committee that they do not consider the information you highlighted in your letter to be classified. Specifically, the CIA confirmed that "the State Department consulted with the CIA on this production, the CIA reviewed these documents, and the CIA made no redactions to protect classified information."<sup>3</sup>

Unfortunately, you sent your letter on October 7 without checking first with the CIA. Now that we have done so, we have learned that your accusations were incorrect.

As a result of your actions, the State Department yesterday asked the Select Committee not to reveal the individual's name publicly, not for classification reasons, but to protect the individual's privacy and avoid bringing additional undue attention to this person.<sup>4</sup>

Unfortunately, the standard operating procedure of this Select Committee has become to put out information publicly that is inaccurate and out of context in order to attack Secretary Clinton for political reasons. These repeated actions bring discredit on this investigation and undermine the integrity of the Select Committee and the House of Representatives.

Sincerely,



Elijah E. Cummings  
Ranking Member

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<sup>2</sup> See, e.g., *Incompetent or Indifferent: Clinton Burns CIA Libya Contact*, Washington Examiner (Oct. 10, 2015) (online at [www.washingtonexaminer.com/incompetent-or-indifferent-clinton-burns-cia-libya-contact/article/2573834](http://www.washingtonexaminer.com/incompetent-or-indifferent-clinton-burns-cia-libya-contact/article/2573834)).

<sup>3</sup> Email from Office of Legislative Affairs, Central Intelligence Agency, to Republican and Democratic Staff, House Select Committee on Benghazi (Oct. 17, 2015).

<sup>4</sup> Letter from Department of State to House Select Committee on Benghazi (Oct. 17, 2015).