

Statement of Representative Henry A. Waxman
March 23, 2000

I am glad we are holding today's hearing. It will provide us an opportunity to explore whether there was any wrongdoing in the attempt to coordinate the Automated Records Management System -- known as the ARMS system -- with the Lotus e-mail network.

We are all aware that during the past few years many false and reckless accusations have been made about Administration officials. We should not repeat these mistakes today. Instead, in evaluating the ARMS/Lotus interface, we must investigate whether certain acts were the result of sinister motives or simply routine mistakes.

Serious accusations -- some involving potential criminal conduct -- have already been made about the ARMS/Lotus interface, so it is essential we do our best to clarify the record.

We have already learned, for instance, that no one in the Clinton Administration ever suggested that specific e-mails or category of e-mails be excluded from the ARMS system. We have also learned that no one in the Clinton Administration designed the system or had any role in creating the ARMS/Lotus interface or the interface defect. Moreover, we know that no one in the Clinton White House even knew before June 1998 that some e-mails were being excluded from the ARMS/Lotus interface and, consequently, not being submitted to Congress or the Department of Justice.

We have also learned that the White House has provided Congress with over 7,000 e-mails pursuant to congressional requests. Some of these e-mails have been repeatedly used by the Chairman and other Republican leaders as evidence of White House wrongdoing. The production of those e-mails would seemingly put to rest any question that the White House was trying to keep damaging information from Congress.

By the end of today, we will be in a better position to answer three remaining questions. First, did any White House employee make an improper threat to any of the contract or subcontract employees of Northrop Grumman? Second, did anyone at the White House try to impede the efforts to fix the problem created by a contract employee? Finally, why didn't the White House notify this Committee and other investigators when the ARMS/Lotus interface problem was discovered?

We will likely receive conflicting testimony on whether threats were made, so we will have to evaluate the credibility of the witnesses on that point. We will also have to evaluate what involvement, if any, the President, the Vice President, or other senior White House officials may have had with this issue.

From what we know now, however, it appears unlikely that anyone at the White House tried to obstruct efforts to repair the ARMS/Lotus interface. And I believe that Beth Nolan, who will testify at the end of today's hearing, may have a reasonable explanation for the delay in the White House's notification of Congress about the ARMS/Lotus interface problem.

I look forward to listening to today's witnesses. If it appears that any wrongdoing has occurred regarding the ARMS/Lotus interface, we should take appropriate action. By the same token, however, we should also be sure to correct the record if there is no evidence of wrongdoing.

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