

May 27, 2003

Kenneth M. Mead
Inspector General
U.S. Department of Transportation
400 7th Street, S.W., Room 9210
Washington, D.C. 20590

Dear Mr. Mead:

I am deeply troubled by recent news reports that Congressman Tom DeLay has admitted that his office contacted officials in the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) in an effort to enlist their assistance in dealing with a local political dispute in his home state of Texas.

As I am sure you are aware, on May 12, 2003, a number of Democratic state legislators absented themselves from the Texas state house, and the Republican Speaker of the Texas House took aggressive actions to track them down, including ordering the Texas Department of Public Safety to find and bring in the missing legislators. The Department of Public Safety, among other things, contacted an office in the Department of Homeland Security to obtain assistance in this search. Moreover, on May 14, 2003 a commander in the Texas Department of Public Safety ordered documents and other materials related to the search to be destroyed.

It has now been revealed that, in addition to the actions of the legislative leadership and the Department of Public Safety, Rep. DeLay also took part in the efforts to round up the missing legislators. In particular, according to reports in the *Dallas Morning News*, *Houston Chronicle* and *Washington Post*, Rep. DeLay has admitted that his office contacted the FAA on May 12, 2003, in an effort to locate the private plane belonging to Rep. Pete Laney, former Democratic Speaker of the Texas House of Representatives. These actions raises serious questions about whether federal government resources were used, or sought to be used, to support one side in a local partisan political dispute.

In light of these reports, I ask that you conduct a full investigation into this matter and that, in particular, you provide me with the following information:

1. A list of all calls or other contacts between Rep. DeLay (or his staff) or any other person and any FAA employee seeking either assistance or information concerning Rep. Laney's plane and/or the missing Texas legislators, including who initiated and

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received the call or contact, when the contact was made, and the substance of the contact.

2. A description of any actions the FAA or any of its employees took as a result of any contact listed in response to Item 1.
3. If any action was taken by any FAA employee, whether and to what extent the action was appropriate and within the mission of the agency.
4. To the extent any action by an employee of the FAA was inappropriate, the steps that are being taken to ensure that this does not happen again.

If you have any questions concerning this letter, please contact Beth Grossman of my staff at (202) 224-9256.

Sincerely,

Joseph I. Lieberman
Ranking Member