



One Hundred Tenth Congress
U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Homeland Security
Washington, DC 20515

July 27, 2007

Ms. Frances F. Townsend
Assistant to the Secretary for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism
White House Legislative Affairs
Eisenhower Executive Office Building, Room 212
1650 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20503

Dear Ms. Townsend:

In June 2007, staff of the Committee on Homeland Security requested, on behalf of Representative Peter A. DeFazio, an opportunity to review the classified annexes to Homeland Security Presidential Directive-20 (HSPD-20).

Initially, White House staff agreed to provide the Committee with a copy of this important document for Mr. DeFazio's review. However, on July 18, 2007, White House staff informed the Committee that the request had been reconsidered and rejected. In fact, the Committee staff was told the document is "close hold," and "frankly we are not willing to share it." This response is as troubling as it is shocking.

According to unclassified sections of the Directive, the intention of HSPD-20 is to establish a continuity of operations across the Federal government during potential catastrophic emergencies. Further, HSPD-20 seeks to establish a cooperative effort among the executive, legislative, and judicial branches. If accomplished, this cooperative effort could help assure that during and after catastrophic emergencies the Federal Government continues to operate within a framework that preserves and respects the system of checks and balances contained in the Constitution.

We can think of no basis for you to deny Members of the Committee on Homeland Security the opportunity to review this document in a secure setting. In addition to the standard oath of secrecy taken by all members of Congress, members of the Committee on Homeland Security are required to sign an oath agreeing not to disclose any classified information received during the course of their service on the Committee.

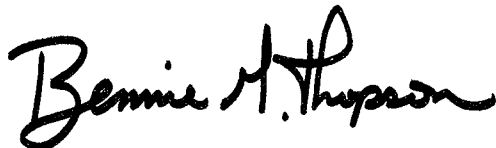
Thus, we request that you provide the classified HSPD-20 annexes to the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Homeland Security by August 2, 2007. Pursuant to Rule X (3)(g) and Rule XI of the Rules of the House of Representatives, if you determine that you will not provide the requested material, please provide a written response explaining the rationale for that decision no later than August 3, 2007.

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Should you have any questions, please contact Cherri Branson, Chief Oversight Counsel,
Committee on Homeland Security, at (202) 226-2616.

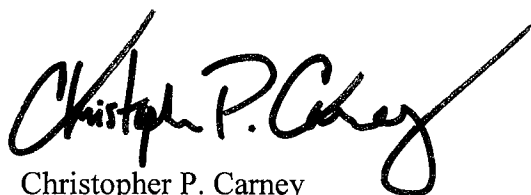
Sincerely,



Bennie G. Thompson
Chairman



Peter A. DeFazio



Christopher P. Carney
Chairman
Subcommittee on Management, Investigations, and
Oversight