



UNITED STATES GENERAL ACCOUNTING OFFICE  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20548

*M/S 110171*



FEDERAL PERSONNEL AND  
COMPENSATION DIVISION

AUG 1 1979

B-115398

Mr. H. Patrick Swygert,  
Special Counsel *DLG 02541*  
Office of Special Counsel  
1717 H Street, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20419



Dear Mr. Swygert:

As part of our oversight activities at the Office of Special Counsel we evaluated the physical security procedures currently used for controlling access to case files. We discussed these matters with your staff. In our opinion, the files are not adequately protected from unauthorized access.

We noted the following deficiencies.

- Written security procedures have not been established to instruct employees in protecting files from unauthorized access.
- Several employees who work in the file room reportedly have keys to the room but may not actually have the need for access to the case files.
- The lock on the supply cabinet where all the file cabinet keys are stored is broken. As a result, anyone having access to this room has possible access to all of the case files.
- No record is maintained for the date and time the file cabinets are opened and closed, and by whom.
- Files containing confidential information are not labeled or stamped to identify them as warranting special physical protection and control.

*Classified records  
Confidential  
Fed. records only.*

*Letter Report*

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--Cleaning personnel have keys to the file room. Even though several employees are usually present when cleaning personnel arrive, the situation is not in line with good security procedures.

Since the Office of Special Counsel is required to maintain the confidentiality of whistleblowers, we believe you should take immediate steps to strengthen the physical security of case files. We suggest the following for your consideration.

1. Develop written security procedures for the physical protection and control of all case files. Special attention should be given to those files containing confidential information.
2. Employees who work in the file room but do not have the need for access to the case files should not have a key to the room, or preferably be moved out of the file room.
3. File cabinet keys should be placed in a secure container, preferably in a room other than the file room.
4. Each file cabinet should have a form to record the date and time it was opened and closed and by whom. Each cabinet should also have a magnetic open/closed sign attached to it. This sign would give quick feedback as to whether the cabinet was locked or not.
5. A protection sheet or stamp should be used on the outside of all case files containing confidential information so these files can be quickly identified if misplaced and would not be opened unnecessarily.
6. Cleaning personnel should not have keys to the file room. Arrangements should be made to have the file room cleaned during normal working hours or have an authorized employee present at all times while the file room is cleaned.

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7. A form should be displayed on or near the file cabinets showing the name, address, and telephone number of the individual(s) to be notified in emergency situations.

We are confident you will agree that it is important to provide adequate security for confidential case files. In our opinion, current security for these files is inadequate and provides no assurance that the confidentiality of the material is protected. We believe you would want this matter to receive immediate attention. We would be willing to discuss any plans you have for implementing improved security procedures, if you desire.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Harold E. Lewis". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Harold E. Lewis  
Assistant Director-in-Charge