

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

January 21, 2016

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

In January 2014, CIA personnel conducted an unauthorized, unprecedented search of Senate committee files, including the emails and other files of Senate staff investigating the CIA's use of torture. The CIA Inspector General stated in a July 2014 report that this search involved "improper agency access to SSCI files." A review board selected by CIA Director Brennan concluded in December 2014 that this CIA search "resulted in inappropriate access to SSCI work product."

When Director Brennan was publicly asked about this search in March 2014 he initially attempted to deny that the CIA had improperly accessed Senate files, stating that "nothing could be further from the truth" and "that's just beyond the scope of reason in terms of what we would do." The reports of both the Inspector General and the CIA review board show that this denial was contradicted by the facts.

In June 2014, senior officials from the FBI, NSA and the ODNI all testified publicly that it would be inappropriate for their agencies to secretly search Senate files without external authorization. We are encouraged that most members of your administration appear to recognize that such a search would be an unacceptable violation of constitutional checks and balances.

Unfortunately, despite multiple requests, Director Brennan still has not publicly acknowledged that this search was improper, or even made a commitment that the CIA will not conduct such searches in the future. This is wholly unacceptable behavior in a democracy.

You have repeatedly spoken about the need for the American public to have confidence that senior intelligence officials respect US laws and the Constitution. Director Brennan's refusal to acknowledge that unauthorized clandestine searches of Senate files are improper has clearly undermined that confidence.

We believe that it is necessary for you to address this matter directly, and to ensure that senior officials in your administration recognize the importance of adhering to the rule of law. We ask that you instruct Director Brennan to acknowledge that the CIA's unauthorized search of Senate files was improper and will not be repeated.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Ron Wyden
United States Senator



Mazie Hirono
United States Senator



Martin Heinrich
United States Senator