

Top aides to Hillary Clinton testify before Benghazi committee

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The former chief of staff to Hillary Clinton during her four years as secretary of state, Cheryl Mills, testified behind closed doors Thursday before the House special committee investigating the 2012 attack on US facilities in Benghazi, Libya, in which four Americans were killed.

Mills answered questions for several hours, in a session whose topics were said to have included the controversy over Clinton's use of a private email server as well as the events in Benghazi.

Mills is to be followed Friday by Jake Sullivan, who was deputy chief of staff at the State Department and is now the top foreign policy adviser to the Clinton presidential campaign. Sullivan will also be questioned on both Benghazi and the use of the private email server.

Another former Clinton aide, IT specialist Brian Pagliano, who originally set up the private email server for Clinton's 2008 presidential campaign, then adapted it for use in handling her State Department correspondence, informed the committee Monday that he would refuse to testify before it, citing his Fifth Amendment rights.

Pagliano's attorney cited an ongoing FBI investigation into whether national security information was compromised in emails that passed through the private server, which was located at the Clinton residence and later at a commercial provider. He indicated that the political atmosphere surrounding the committee investigation made his client a potential target of unwarranted prosecution.

The committee chairman, Representative Trey Gowdy of South Carolina, said in response to a press inquiry, "You're free to claim whatever inference you want from the fact that" Pagliano did not want to testify. As an experienced prosecutor before election to

Congress, Gowdy is aware that the jury in a criminal case is prohibited from drawing any inference from such a refusal to testify.

Of course the "inferences" that the House Republicans want to promote are directed at Clinton herself. That is why they have insisted on interviewing the aides behind closed doors, rejecting requests that the hearings be open. The aim is to use the subsequent appearance by Clinton, now set for October 22, as the occasion for carefully prepared "revelations" that would be leaked to the media to discredit her presidential campaign.

The Republican-controlled House established the special committee after seven previous investigations in Benghazi conducted by other House committees and subcommittees failed to provide any material that could be used to damage Clinton's presidential prospects.

The latest panel, chaired by Gowdy, discovered Clinton's use of a private email server last summer, and leaked the information to the *New York Times* for publication in March.

What is most remarkable about the Benghazi and email affairs is the incessant focus on process—whether Clinton mishandled secret information or jeopardized its security by using a private email server—while both the Republicans and the corporate-controlled media have been largely indifferent to the content of the emails released so far.

The emails document criminal actions on the part of Clinton, not in "dereliction" of duty, but as an essential part of her service to American imperialism.

A just-released email from Jake Sullivan, for example, emphasizes Clinton's personal responsibility in engineering the US-NATO war on Libya in 2011 that led to the overthrow and murder of Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi and plunged the country into a

bloody civil war that still continues. (It was in the context of that civil war, and CIA efforts to recruit Islamist gunmen in Benghazi for service in another regime-change operation in Syria that the 2012 attack on the US consulate and CIA annex in Benghazi took place).

“Secretary Clinton’s leadership on Libya[.] HRC has been a critical voice on Libya in administration deliberations, at NATO, and in contact group meetings—as well as the public face of the U.S. effort in Libya,” the Sullivan memo says. “She was instrumental in securing the authorization, building the coalition, and tightening the noose around Quaddafi [sic] and his regime.”

That memo would be a significant piece of evidence in a war crimes trial against Clinton.

Another set of emails documents criminal activity of a more personal character. Clinton intervened as secretary of state on behalf of a for-profit education company that later paid her husband Bill Clinton, the former US president, \$16 million over the course of six years for acting as its honorary chancellor.

Laureate International Universities is the largest for-profit college network in the world, operating primarily in Latin America, with a current valuation of as much as \$4 billion. Clinton insisted, in an August 2, 2009 email, that the company should be invited to a State Department function because “It’s a for-profit model that should be represented.” Former President Clinton became honorary chancellor of Laureate in 2010 and held the position until his wife announced her presidential campaign earlier this year.

Laureate also collected several State Department grants during this period, although the amounts of grants were smaller than the \$3 million annual honorarium going to Bill Clinton. Laureate also donated money to the Clinton Foundation and worked with the Clinton Global Initiative.

The company gained from Bill Clinton’s advocacy, expanding from 250,000 students in 2007 to more than 800,000 in 2013, with 50,000 employees in dozens of countries.

Needless to say, this kind of profiteering is engaged in by countless companies, and both Democratic and Republican politicians regard it as their mission to facilitate it.



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