

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

July 12, 2007

The Honorable Conrad C. Lautenbacher
Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere
and NOAA Administrator
Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C.

Dear Administrator Lautenbacher:

In recent weeks, you and the Department of Commerce have taken several controversial steps at the Tropical Prediction Center (TPC), which appear to be in response to public statements by the Center's new director that the failure of your agency to plan for the replacement of the *QuikScat* satellite would damage the Center's ability to track and forecast hurricanes."¹ The most recent step involves placing TPC Director X. William Proenza on administrative leave until August 9, allegedly because his presence would "inhibit" the work of a management assessment team that you sent to review the Center's operations. We understand that team is scheduled to report back to you on July 20.

Our Committees are deeply concerned with the turmoil that has engulfed the Center and about several of your actions which may have partially created this volatile situation. These include your decision to send this management assessment team to the Center, an all-hands NHC staff meeting during official hours in which it is alleged that staff was pressured to sign on to what became a well-publicized letter of complaint about Dr. Proenza, and the actual removal - temporary or otherwise - of Dr. Proenza. This is particularly significant as the 2007 hurricane season has already begun. We have a number of questions relating to the process by which these decisions were reached and are writing to request relevant records (as defined in the Attachment to this letter). Therefore, please provide the following:

1. All records relating to the decision to transfer Dr. Proenza from his position in the National Weather Service (NWS) Southern Region Office to the position as Director of the Tropical Prediction Center of the National Center for Environmental Prediction (NCEP);

¹ The "Tropical Prediction Center includes the National Hurricane Center and provides forecasts of the movement and strength of tropical weather systems and issues watches and warnings for the U.S. and surrounding areas." (<http://www.ncep.noaa.gov/>; accessed July 10, 2007)

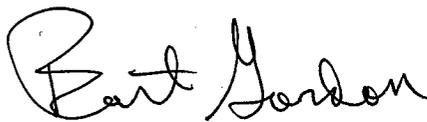
2. All records relating to Dr. Proenza's briefings to National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) senior staff regarding the needs of the Tropical Prediction Center and National Hurricane Center following his installment as Center director;
3. Records of any and all communications involving the following persons relating to public comments made by Dr. Proenza in the period from January 1, 2007 to July 9, 2007;
 - Yourself
 - Jack Kelly
 - Scott Rayder
 - Eric Webster
 - Mary Glackin
 - Dr. Louis Uccellini
 - Dr. X. William Proenza
 - Dr. Edward Rappaport
 - Dr. Ahsha Tribble
4. All records relating to the preparation, approval and delivery of a memorandum from Mary Glackin, Acting Assistant Administrator for Weather Services and Director, National Weather Service, to Dr. Proenza, dated June 14, 2007, and entitled "Operating Procedures\Instructions;"
5. All records relating to a meeting between Dr. Uccellini and Dr. Proenza on April 13, 2007;
6. All records relating to any communication between yourself and your superior officials at the Department of Commerce to request assistance from other Department elements and offices to constitute the operational assessment team;
7. All records relating to the preparation and approval of the memorandum to Dr. James Turner from you, dated June 26, 2007, and entitled "Operational Assessment of Tropical Prediction Center;"
8. All records relating to the preparation, approval and delivery of a memorandum to employees of the Tropical Prediction Center from you, dated June 29, 2007, and entitled "Operational Assessment of Tropical Prediction Center;"
9. All records relating to the preparation, approval and delivery of a letter from you to Dr. Proenza, delivered July 9, 2007, placing him on administrative leave;
10. All records relating to the preparation, approval and delivery of a memorandum to employees of the Tropical Prediction Center from you, dated July 7, 2007, and entitled "Tropical Prediction Center Administrative Changes;"

11. All records relating to any communications between any employee of the Tropical Prediction Center and any person(s) listed under item (3), between January 1 and July 9, 2007, relating to Director Proenza and/or the ability of the Tropical Prediction Center to carry out its assigned functions and responsibilities; and
12. All records relating to activities conducted under the "NOAA Celebrates 200 Years of Science, Service and Stewardship" campaign, to include records for any and all events conducted or scheduled in connection with such campaign and records relating to budgeting and spending for agency actions related to that campaign.

While the Committees recognize the need to minimize impacts on operations at the Tropical Prediction Center, we still must insist on an expedited response to this request. Your records, as well as those of Mr. Rayder, Ms. Glackin, Dr. Uccellini, and Dr. Tribble should be produced no later than July 17, 2007. Copies should be provided to representatives of both the relevant Majority and Minority staffs of the Committees on Science and Technology and Energy and Commerce. Our staffs will work with the agency to identify a mutually acceptable schedule for producing materials for the other elements of this request, but this process should begin no later than July 23, 2007.

If your staff has any questions or needs additional information, please contact Dan Pearson of the Committee on Science and Technology (225-8772) and John Sopko of the Committee on Energy and Commerce (225-2927).

Thank you for your assistance in this matter.

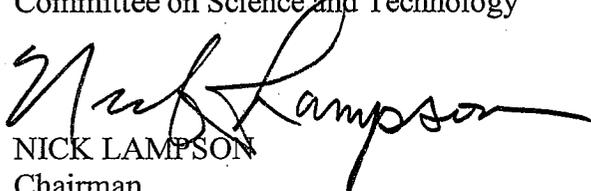


BART GORDON
Chairman
Committee on Science and Technology

Sincerely,



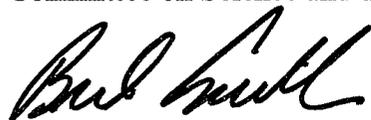
JOHN DINGELL
Chairman
Committee on Energy and Commerce



NICK LAMPSON
Chairman
Subcommittee on Energy and Environment
Committee on Science and Technology



BART STUPAK
Chairman
Subcommittee on Oversight and
Investigations
Committee on Energy and Commerce



BRAD MILLER
Chairman
Subcommittee on Investigations and Oversight
Committee on Science and Technology

ATTACHMENT

1. The term "records" is to be construed in the broadest sense and shall mean any written or graphic material, however produced or reproduced, of any kind or description, consisting of the original and any non-identical copy (whether different from the original because of notes made on or attached to such copy or otherwise) and drafts and both sides thereof, whether printed or recorded electronically or magnetically or stored in any type of data bank, including, but not limited to, the following: correspondence, memoranda, records, summaries of personal conversations or interviews, minutes or records of meetings or conferences, opinions or reports of consultants, projections, statistical statements, drafts, contracts, agreements, purchase orders, invoices, confirmations, telegraphs, telexes, agendas, books, notes, pamphlets, periodicals, reports, studies, evaluations, opinions, logs, diaries, desk calendars, appointment books, tape recordings, video recordings, e-mails, voice mails, computer tapes, or other computer stored matter, magnetic tapes, microfilm, microfiche, punch cards, all other records kept by electronic, photographic, or mechanical means, charts, photographs, notebooks, drawings, plans, inter-office communications, intra-office and intra-departmental communications, transcripts, checks and canceled checks, bank statements, ledgers, books, records or statements of accounts, and papers and things similar to any of the foregoing, however denominated.
2. The terms "relating," "relate," or "regarding" as to any given subject means anything that constitutes, contains, embodies, identifies, deals with, or is in any manner whatsoever pertinent to that subject, including but not limited to records concerning the preparation of other records.