

February 27, 2002

The Paul Revere Forum: National Security Whistleblowers Speak, Canon House Office Building, Room 402

Prepared Remarks of Senator Chuck Grassley, of Iowa

Good morning, friends and patriots. Thank you for the chance to address you about an issue of growing importance in our nation today: national security whistleblowing.

It is especially an honor to meet the legendary Frank Serpico. He is a role model and inspiration to all of those who would stand up and tell the truth. Our country is indebted to him.

For nearly two decades, I have learned from, appreciated and honored whistleblowers. Throughout all my oversight investigations over the years, whistleblowers have been the key, whether it was uncovering \$700 toilet seats at the Defense Department, bad science at the FBI crime lab or the failure to prosecute millions of dollars in contract fraud. Documents alone will not give you sufficient information about a dysfunctional bureaucracy. Only whistleblowers can explain why something is wrong and provide the best evidence to prove it. Then we can fix the problem and hold the miscreants responsible. Only whistleblowers can help us understand the culture that produces wrongful behavior. Understanding the culture is the key to fixing the problem real institutional reform. In that regard, whistleblowers are national assets.

Our gathering here, today, is to express the need for better protections for whistleblowers, especially national security whistleblowers. And we are here to honor some of the nation's foremost whistleblowers who have done an important service for their country.

Since September 11, government agencies have placed a greater emphasis on secrecy and restricted information for security reasons, understandably so in some cases. But, with these restrictions come a greater danger of stopping the legitimate disclosure of wrongdoing and mismanagement, especially about public safety and security. That is why all of you and what you do are more important now than ever. Bureaucracies have an instinct to cover up their misdeeds and mistakes, and that temptation is even greater when a potential security issue can be used as an excuse. You serve as a check against this instinct and temptation.

At the FBI, where I've focused a lot of my oversight efforts over the years, agents who blow the whistle about problems or wrongdoing didn't have the same protection as others in the government. We're going to fix that with the FBI Reform Bill that Sen. Pat Leahy and I are introducing today.

Just this week we've seen a perfect example of why protecting whistleblowers on

security issues is so important. Airline security is a big worry for everyone these days, and what happened on September 11 should reinforce for everyone that security at the nation's airports and on airplanes should be paramount. Well, here we are more than five months after September 11, and we're seeing that there still are big gaps in airport security. Thanks to Bogdan Dzakovic, an FAA official who secretly tests airport security. Mr. Dzakovic, who is here today, has put his career at risk by coming forward with these revelations, but he did the right thing.

Last of all, but also most importantly, I would like to briefly acknowledge the five whistleblowers here today.

Randy Robarge, who showed how unprotected nuclear power plants are against commercial airliners in the event of a crash, as well as other security issues. Because of that, he was fired from his company.

Darlene Catalan, a former U.S. Customs agent, blew the whistle on the vulnerabilities of our borders to the smuggling of drugs and terrorist weapons.

Ron Timm, who turned in critical reports about security gaps at Energy Department nuclear weapons facilities. The Energy Department didn't like what he was saying and they stopped using his company.

Mathew Zipoli, who exposed serious security lapses where he did security work at Lawrence Livermore Labs.

And Bogdan Dzakovic, who just recently revealed the security vulnerabilities of the nation's airports, as I mentioned earlier.

Just as Frank Serpico before them, these brave and dedicated patriots deserve our gratitude. And we honor them today by making this forum a sounding board for the American people to hear this message.

I hope that this year the public will rally around this cause. It is becoming increasingly clear that whistleblowing is crucial to the protection of the national security. Thank you again for the invitation to speak to you today.