



441 G St. N.W.
Washington, DC 20548

May 9, 2018

The Honorable Donald F. McGahn, II
Assistant to the President and
White House Counsel
The White House

Dear Mr. McGahn:

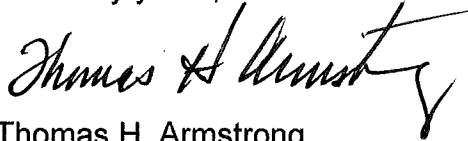
I write to express concern about the policy of certain White House offices regarding communication with the Government Accountability Office (GAO). Specifically, I understand that attorneys from your office and the National Security Council (NSC) will not respond to inquiries or otherwise engage with GAO staff during the course of our reviews. This approach represents a clear departure from past practice.

Generally, GAO's need to interact with these White House offices is fairly limited, arising most frequently in the context of matters involving White House or NSC coordination among executive branch agencies on interagency initiatives. On these occasions, GAO has a history of working with attorneys from your office and the NSC to obtain information needed for our reports. GAO staff contact these attorneys with targeted requests for critical information after completing work at the agencies or entities primarily responsible for the programs or activities under review. Under these circumstances, we seek the information or perspective that only these staff can provide. Notably, our interaction also provides White House Counsel and the NSC with visibility into the ongoing work of GAO.

Over the past year, GAO has requested information and meetings when preparing reports on topics clearly involving White House interests and expertise. These reports concern such diverse topics as the role of the NSC in the coordination of conflict prevention, mitigation, and stabilization efforts abroad; Inspector General vacancies; and the cost of presidential travel and related security measures. In response to our requests, White House Counsel and NSC staff have either refused to have any discussion with GAO staff or not responded at all, illustrating the recent change in policy.

I am concerned about the implications of this new policy regarding communication with GAO, particularly in our performance of a core function, namely, contributing to Congress's constitutional oversight. Given the importance of this matter, I would ask that you correct any misunderstanding that we may have or reconsider this approach to engaging with GAO. I look forward to hearing from you at your earliest convenience and would appreciate a response no later than May 25, 2018.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Thomas H. Armstrong". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial "T".

Thomas H. Armstrong
General Counsel