

Judicial Watch: Hillary Clinton's Top State Department IT Pleads the Fifth

Yet another key figure in the case of Hillary Clinton's private email server has invoked his Fifth Amendment-protected right against self-incrimination on Monday.

Judicial Watch issued the following statement after Director of Information Resource Management of the Executive Secretariat John Bentel "pled the Fifth" during a sworn deposition. The deposition was ordered by U.S. District Court Judge Emmet G. Sullivan.

Mr. Bentel answered over 90 questions with "On advice from my legal counsel, I decline to answer the question and I invoke my Fifth Amendment rights."

Mr. Bentel, on advice of Obama Justice Department and personal counsel, refused to answer any questions about whether Hillary Clinton was paying his legal fees, offered him employment or other financial incentives. There were three government attorneys and two personal attorneys present for the deposition.

On Aug. 19, 2016, Judge Sullivan granted Judicial Watch's request to depose Bentel, citing significant discrepancies in Bentel previous statements on the Clinton non- email system:

The Court is persuaded that Mr. Bentel should be deposed because the record in this case appears to contradict his sworn testimony before the [House Select] Benghazi Committee ... Specifically, Mr. Bentel testified that he was not aware that Secretary Clinton's email account was housed

on a private server until media reports in 2015 ... However, several emails indicate Mr. Bentel knew about the private server as early as 2009.

In ordering Bentel's deposition, Judge Sullivan also cited a May 2016 Inspector General's report that found:

Mr. Bentel told employees in his office that Secretary Clinton's email arrangement had been approved by the State Department's legal staff and also instructed his subordinates not to discuss the Secretary's email again:

In one meeting, one staff member raised concerns that information sent and received on Secretary Clinton's account could contain Federal records that needed to be preserved in order to satisfy Federal recordkeeping requirements. According to the staff member, the Director stated that the Secretary's personal system had been reviewed and approved by Department legal staff and that the matter was not to be discussed any further. ... According to the other S/ES-IRM staff member who raised concerns about the server, the Director stated that the mission of S/ES-IRM is to support the Secretary and instructed the staff never to speak of the Secretary's personal email system again.

Judicial Watch deposed seven former Clinton top aides and current State Department officials, including top Clinton aides Cheryl Mills and Huma Abedin. Judicial Watch also deposed IT official Brian Pagliano, who asserted his Fifth Amendment right not to testify during the Judicial Watch deposition. And Clinton last week answered Judicial Watch's question under oath regarding her non-government email system.

The depositions are part of a Judicial Watch lawsuit against the State Department for failure to comply with the Freedom of Information Act. The government watchdog group is seeking records about the controversial employment status of Huma Abedin, deputy chief of staff to former Secretary Clinton.

“The fact that yet another State Department official took the Fifth highlights the disturbing implication that criminal acts took place related to the Clinton email and our Freedom of Information Act requests,” says Judicial Watch President Tom Fitton.