



ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
1400 DEFENSE PENTAGON
WASHINGTON, DC 20301-1400

PUBLIC AFFAIRS

SEP 06 2012

Dear Pentagon Press Association Leaders,

I am responding to your July 20 letter regarding the Department of Defense's efforts to protect classified information from unauthorized disclosure.

The Secretary and Chairman both believe strongly in freedom of the press and encourage good relations between the Department and the press corps. Their efforts to stop the unauthorized disclosures of classified information do not involve restricting press access to DoD officials. As you know, the law requires all federal employees and military personnel to appropriately safeguard classified information from unauthorized public disclosure.

Secretary Panetta directed the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs (OASD-PA), in conjunction with the Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence (USD-I), to *review* media reports for possible unauthorized disclosure of classified information. This is one of several initiatives the Secretary has directed to more effectively identify, refer for investigation, and mitigate risks of known or suspected unauthorized disclosures of classified information.

Your letter possesses several questions about monitoring and surveillance of journalists. The Department of Defense does not conduct electronic or physical surveillance of journalists. The review of media reports is part of an effort to improve the Department's tracking of unauthorized disclosures so that operational risk can be effectively mitigated and to ensure the referral of any possible violations of law to law enforcement agencies in a timely manner. This applies to both domestic and foreign media reports.

I hope this letter addresses your questions about the steps the department has taken to help ensure all department personnel are upholding their commitments to protect classified national defense information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "George E. Little".

George E. Little
Acting Assistant Secretary of Defense
for Public Affairs

