

WASHINGTON (21 January) - A dispute between the Obama Administration and Republicans on the Committee on Homeland Security over the Congress' right to conduct independent investigations of the Executive Branch ended when the Administration provided the Committee copies of a security manual it had withheld during Congressional hearings last month.

At issue was whether the Transportation Security Administration had to comply with 49 USC §114(r)(2), which prohibits the TSA from withholding sensitive security documents from the Congress. The TSA wanted to wait until after the holiday travel season and after its own internal reviews were completed before providing a more recent copy of a security manual that was improperly released in March of last year. The Members of Congress wanted to compare the most recent version of the document to the March version to identify what security vulnerabilities were created when the TSA identified its mistake in December.

"The fact that this manual was available for nine months on the Internet before TSA realized what it had done is disappointing, and unfortunately, this incident demonstrated a certain level of negligence within the agency. TSA's attempts to then keep the Congress from conducting a thorough assessment of the damage was simply inexcusable," stated Ranking Member Dent of the Subcommittee on Transportation Security and Infrastructure Protection.

"I am pleased, however, that the TSA has recognized its necessity to comply with the law and I look forward to fully reviewing the document to better understand the depth of the security breach caused by the manual's accidental disclosure by TSA."

"Revealing sensitive information of this nature is a major self-inflicted breach of our nation's security. Thankfully TSA has stopped stonewalling Congressional oversight so that we can determine just how damaging this leak was and ensure that the Department is taking all the necessary steps to secure the traveling public," said Bilirakis, Ranking Member of the Subcommittee on Management, Investigations, and Oversight.