



July 21, 2026

William J. Pulte
Acting Director of National Intelligence
Office of the Director of National Intelligence
Washington, D.C. 20511

RE: Request for Review of Access to Classified Information for Former Members of Special Counsel Jack Smith's Staff

Dear Acting Director Pulte,

We write to respectfully request that you review the security clearance eligibility for former members of Special Counsel Jack Smith's team, including Molly Gaston, Thomas Windom, Carli Rodriguez-Feo, Julie Edelstein, William O'Neil, Stephanie Van Buskirk, and potentially others, for their failure to properly handle classified information, as detailed in a recent report from Senator Chuck Grassley's office.¹

I. Who We Are

The Center to Advance Security in America (CASA) is a nonpartisan organization dedicated to improving the safety and security of the American people. CASA educates and informs the American people about the actions of their government and its officials that impact their safety; peace and security; democracy, civil rights, and civil liberties; and privacy.

II. Background

On November 18, 2022, Smith was appointed by Attorney General Merrick B. Garland as Special Counsel to investigate would-be second-term President Trump.² After President Trump's historic victory in 2024, Smith dropped the charge that President Trump improperly handled classified documents.³

¹ Chuck Grassley, "Biden DOJ Personnel Exposed Classified Materials While Special Counsel Jack Smith Prosecuted Trump, Records Show," News Release, July 8, 2026, <https://www.grassley.senate.gov/news/news-releases/biden-doj-personnel-exposed-classified-materials-while-special-counsel-jack-smith-prosecuted-trump-records-show>.

² U.S. Department of Justice Archives, "Special Counsel Jack Smith," accessed July 10, 2026, <https://www.justice.gov/archives/sco-smith>.

³ Paula Reid, et al., "Special counsel Jack Smith drops election subversion and classified documents cases against Donald Trump," CNN, November 25, 2024, <https://www.cnn.com/2024/11/25/politics/trump-special-counsel-jack-smith/index.html>.



On July 8, 2026, Senator Chuck Grassley disclosed messages between members of Smith’s team indicating they potentially mishandled classified information.⁴ The messages obtained by the U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee show a number of potentially significant breaches of Sensitive Compartmented Information Facility (SCIF) and classified-information protocols.

First, Smith’s own team members were astonished by what they described as a staff member “clearing someone without the need-to-know confirmation.”⁵

Second, Smith’s team members identified Stephanie Van Buskirk as someone who opened—and did not close—a SCIF containing highly sensitive national security information.⁶

Finally, William O’Neil asked Thomas Windom to close the SCIF and then told other team members that the SCIF had, in fact, been closed by Windom.⁷ The next morning, however, O’Neil glibly stated that the SCIF was already open in the morning because no one had closed it the night before—even though O’Neil is the one who confirmed it had been closed by Windom.⁸

Whether O’Neil lied about Windom closing the SCIF the night before or Windom failed to successfully close the SCIF, these actions constitute serious lapses in protocol for handling classified information.

III. Relevant National Security Adjudicative Guidelines

As you know, the SEAD-4 adjudicative guidelines are the standards used by federal agencies across the U.S. government to determine whether an individual is eligible for access to classified information or to hold a sensitive position.⁹ One of the adjudicative guidelines is Guideline K – Handling Protected Information. This involves issues with improper handling, disclosure, or safeguarding of classified or protected information.

⁴ Senator Chuck Grassley, “Biden DOJ Personnel Exposed Classified Materials While Special Counsel Jack Smith Prosecuted Trump, Records Show,” News Release, July 8, 2026, <https://www.grassley.senate.gov/news/news-releases/biden-doj-personnel-exposed-classified-materials-while-special-counsel-jack-smith-prosecuted-trump-records-show>.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Office of the Director of National Intelligence, “Security Executive Agent Directive 4 (SEAD-4): National Security Adjudicative Guidelines,” dni.gov, June 8, 2017, <https://www.dni.gov/files/NCSC/documents/Regulations/SEAD-4-Adjudicative-Guidelines-U.pdf>.



This guideline sets forth the legal framework to review whether to suspend access to classified information to someone who has potentially mishandled classified information. Specifically, it states (in part):

“Deliberate or negligent failure to comply with rules and regulations for protecting classified or other sensitive information raises doubt about an individual's trustworthiness, judgment, reliability, or willingness and ability to safeguard such information, and is a serious security concern.”¹⁰

Given the circumstances, we believe there is there is ample evidence to restrict the subjects access to classified information and are hopeful you will initiate a review.

IV. Conclusion

Smith's team was no stranger to the protocols and procedures for handling classified information. This is especially true in light of their targeted prosecution of President Trump for alleged mishandling of classified information—an offense they appear far more guilty of than President Trump. Because of the Special Counsel team's specialized knowledge on handling classified information, the security lapses revealed by Grassley are particularly egregious.

In an abundance of caution for the national security of the United States, we respectfully urge you to initiate an investigation into the conduct of Smith's team and, if these facts are substantiated, revoke security clearances for all members of the team who engaged in violations of national security protocols.

Thank you for your attention to this critical national security matter and for your continued service to the United States of America.

Respectfully,

James Fitzpatrick
Director
Center to Advance Security in America
james@advancing-america.org
@SecureUSA
www.advancing-america.org

¹⁰ Ibid.