

'99 FEB 9 PM5:39

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

February 9, 1999

Feb 18
meeting

MEMORANDUM FOR PHIL CAPLAN

FROM:  DAN BURKHARDT

SUBJECT: MAIL HANDLING PROCEDURES

This is a short outline of issues related to handling mail that may contain dangerous substances. There are three main issues:

(1) Briefings. Since you and I last spoke about this issue, John Dankowski has had discussions with Chuck Easley about providing briefings regarding the threat posed by dangerous substances in mail that enters the White House and procedures for handling such mail. A briefing regarding the threat would be limited to a relatively small group -- perhaps you, me, Delia Cohen, and Tony Mendoza. The briefing regarding procedures, both established and proposed, would be to a broader audience of staff and volunteers who might need to know such procedures as part of their duties.

(2) Current Plans. Dankowski has told Delia and me that the Secret Service already has proposed establishing "crash buttons" on telephones in offices where mail is opened. These buttons, when engaged, would immediately connect the office with the section of Secret Service responsible for handling dangerous substances. Delia and I have identified five offices for such buttons: the Mail Room, Mail Analysis, First Lady Correspondence, the Gift Unit, and Student Correspondence. John also stated that the Secret Service has proposed developing information sheets to post by workstations that would outline the procedures for handling dangerous substances.

(3) Future Plans. These plans would attempt to limit the threat of dangerous substances entering the White House complex by: (a) restructuring the mail flow within the complex so that all mail is opened at one location; or (b) moving the mail opening function off-site. Whether either of these options are implemented requires a decision regarding the actual threat posed by dangerous substances entering the complex (i.e., the likelihood that such substances could enter and the threat that they would pose once here). Neither of the proposed remedies would entirely address the threat unless all mail -- including all mail to the First Family as well as all staff mail -- is either opened in one place on the complex or is opened off-site.

I know that you are interested in expeditiously pursuing this issue, and I can meet with you at your convenience.