

Privileged and Confidential Information



To: Peter Pope, Sean Maloney
Fr: Darren Dopp
Re: Press Office operations

Use of state aircraft by elected officials and State Police security coverage of elected officials are two matters that have been the subject of regular scrutiny by reporters for a long, long time. In fact, I have been dealing with such inquiries from the media for almost 20 years. Here are some of the issues and example I recall. I am fairly confident of my recollection on each point:

- In the mid-90s, when I was a senior press officer to Governor Cuomo (1988-1994), there was a long-running controversy about the Governor's use of a state plane for "political" events. I responded to numerous requests for flight manifests and the Governor's schedule. As part of the response, I would have described the policy of that administration, which permitted political events, including fundraising events, if two-thirds of the day could be considered government related. If less than two-thirds of the day was governmental, it was the policy of the administration to have the Governor's campaign pay for full cost of the flight.
- During the Cuomo years, there were also small controversies regarding Cuomo family members using state aircraft and questions about whether family members required state police protection. I was involved in responding to these issues publically.
- In 1994, candidate George Pataki sharply criticized Governor Cuomo's use of the plane and vowed to sell the aircraft. However, after he took office, he too, was criticized for using the plane for political purposes. (See "Air Pataki" Replace "Air Cuomo" articles. See as well national article on other states' governor use of aircraft.)
- As Communication Director for the Department of Law from (1998-2006), I handled numerous requests from reporters about Attorney General Spitzer's public and private activities. Throughout the period, there were few occasions when the Attorney General was asked to accompany the Governor on state aircraft, so there were only infrequent requests for that particular information (flight manifests). But there were many requests for the Attorney General's schedule, and the nature and extent of his security detail. I responded to those inquires or directed others to do so.
- In 2005, there were a series of news articles about a dispute between Governor Pataki and Majority Leader Bruno over the Majority Leader's use of a state helicopter. (See Pataki Grounds Bruno NYP)
- During the Fall of 2006, I fielded numerous requests for information on state elected officials' use of state employees as drivers. These requests were prompted by the Hevesi scandal. As the Attorney General's office was involved in the investigation, reporters wanted to know details of who drove the Attorney General and his family. There was a flurry of calls in late October regarding Senator Bruno, following comments he made on this topic. (See Hevesi Refuses to Quit; Pataki to Review Scandal. Note Bruno comments on Page 3.)
- In December of 2006, citing my former experiences as Senior Press Officer to Governor Cuomo and Communications Director for the AG, I made a request for clear and strict

rules regarding use of state aircraft and other state resources. The point I made was that successive governors had communications problems because of perceived improper use of state aircraft. While I did not work out the details of the administration's new policy, I did provide input.

- In early January, as Communications Director for the Governor, I fielded a series of inquiries about State Police security coverage for former Governor Pataki. (See Pataki Given 24-Hour Security at Taxpayer Cost, NYP)
- From mid-January to April, I fielded repeated inquiries about former Governor Pataki use of the state plane and private planes chartered at government expense. (See Pataki's Bill for Jet Hits Turbulence NYP) Our office also received requests for flight manifests for Governor Spitzer and others, including Senator Bruno and either I supplied that information or directed others to do it.
- In early May, I responded to a series of inquiries regarding the Governor's flights to California and other states on campaign fund raising trips. (See Spitz Jets Off to Chase California Cash NYP) The specific inquiry at that time involved the California trip and whether a state plane was used. But these inquiries also included requests for information on the Governor's overall use of the state aircraft and his schedule. I believe I subsequently sought more information, and when I received it, reviewed it carefully and then consulted with others to ensure that all of the Governor's events were related to state business. With one exception, everyone was comfortable that proper procedures were followed.
- Also, at some point in May, I would have received my first comments/requests from reporters for information about Majority Leader Bruno's use of the state helicopter. I believe this was in connection with articles that appeared announced GOP fundraisers in NYC. (See Counting Cash and Nickels Welcome articles) I was at this point that I believe I made a verbal request for flight manifests or schedule or itinerary information for any others who used the aircraft. When I received this information, I would have consulted with others to determine whether Lt. Gov. Paterson's or Sen. Bruno's information presented any problems. (These were the only others who used the aircraft during the period) With one exception for Paterson, the consensus was that there was no cause for concern. With regard to Senator Bruno, no one believed that the information proved or disproved anything.
- A period of a couple of weeks passed without inquiries from any reporters. This coincided with the hectic end of the legislative session. After the session was over and the Capitol was quiet again, a specific reporter inquired again and FOIL-ed for the information.