

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to your questions.

I began my investigative career six years ago as a field investigator and quickly advanced to become a director at Defense Investigators Group. During my tenure, I gained experience working several hundred cases, including workers' compensation and disability, general liability, auto liability, and workplace investigations. Of those investigations approximately one-hundred pertained to workplace issues, largely stemming from findings that the subjects of those cases were malingering or overstating injuries. At times, it became necessary for me to determine conclusively that the employers' stated concerns were based on merit factors, and each time, I found that they were. My ability to ascertain the facts and circumstances of those cases is why I was promoted quickly and ultimately selected to head the investigation that has led to my presence here today.

The Martin/Pluta investigation, which was supposed to be only two to five statements, took six months to complete because as the process started, I became a veritable hotline for employees at CFPB, who called to discuss their own maltreatment at the Bureau, mainly at the hands of Scott Pluta or Dane D'Alessandro.

The sum of my findings was that Scott Pluta retaliated against Angela Martin after she filed a formal complaint of discrimination and retaliation. In concert with at least three facilitators, Mr. Pluta effectively removed Ms. Martin from her position as Chief Counsel of Consumer Response, and saw her relegated to a lesser position in another office. Mr. Pluta attempted to justify Ms. Martin's removal by expressing doubt as to her ability to perform her duties as Chief Counsel; however, his criticisms largely occurred after she filed her complaint. This was a major indicator that Mr. Pluta's rationale for demoting Ms. Martin for what he perceived as shortcomings was masking his other motives.

Mr. Pluta unilaterally determined that Ms. Martin deserved a demotion and did not utilize due process in demoting her. Mr. Pluta issued a mid-year review stating that Ms. Martin's work performance was unacceptable. Despite her prior positive reviews, he neglected to place her on a Performance Improvement Plan (PIP), which would have allowed an opportunity to identify and correct her stated deficiencies. Instead, he incorporated the negative review as part of his justification for removing Ms. Martin from her position as Chief Counsel.

Complaints were lodged against Ms. Martin by her subordinates, Cathaleen Skinner and Cora Hume, in less than one week's time following Ms. Martin's complaint. Mr. Pluta not only took the subordinates' claims far more seriously than Ms. Martin's, he stated conclusively in his negative review of Ms. Martin that she had retaliated against the subordinates although their claims had yet to be investigated, much less substantiated.

The lack of vetting, together with the very timing of the subordinates' complaints, suggests that the EEO process itself was used by Mr. Pluta, as well as Ms. Skinner and Ms. Hume, as a means to effectuate Ms. Martin's dismissal from Consumer Response. I found that Ms. Skinner, in particular, not only stood to benefit directly from Ms. Martin's removal from her position as Chief Counsel, but by the time this case drew to a close, she was actually poised to take over Ms. Martin's former role.

I found that Ms. Martin was subjected to relentless hostility at the hands of her colleague, and Mr. Pluta's known third facilitator, Dane D'Alessandro. Mr. Pluta did little, if anything, to curtail Mr. D'Alessandro's continued open bashing, bullying, and marginalization of Ms. Martin. Mr. D'Alessandro too, had something to gain by Ms. Martin's departure from Consumer Response; namely, control of Consumer Response, unfettered by adherence to policies and procedures set forth by the Bureau itself.

I found that the general environment in Consumer Response is one of exclusion, retaliation, discrimination, nepotism, demoralization, devaluation, and other offensive working conditions which constitute a toxic workplace for many of its employees.

Even as Defense Investigators Group concluded the investigation the retaliation against Ms. Martin continued at the hands of Mr. Pluta, who at that point had not even bothered to conceal it.

Several individuals were interviewed during the course of this investigation; yet fewer than half consented to go on the record for fear of reprisal. Those who came forward stated openly that they were either seeking other employment, or had no doubt that would become necessary, due to their collective lack of faith in the ability of the Human Capital Office to protect them.

Mr. Pluta should not have been able to carry out such a transparent scheme against Ms. Martin. The expectation of the Bureau's Human Capital Office should have been to uphold the rights of its employees, and yet Mr. Pluta's wilful violation of Ms. Martin's rights has been allowed to continue, despite the early written warnings in my summary issued in mid-September 2013 as well as a subsequent rough draft report issued later that month, prior to the final report submission in December.

The Bureau's Human Capital Office is in receipt of extensive documentation that Defense Investigators Group gathered and attached as exhibits to the report. The evidence of the documentation suggests a pervasive disregard for employee rights that is entrenched in the Office of Consumer Response. Those responsible for curtailing Mr. Pluta's activities were apparently compelled to ignore, cover, or downplay them instead of taking corrective action. The corrosive environment of the CFPB workplace was engendered by the bureau's perpetual failure to uphold its own EEO policies.



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