

State Department Still Stonewalls on International Abduction of Children

After *Insight's* blistering investigative report on the State Department's mishandling of international kidnapping cases in which American children have been abducted (see "State Abandons Kidnapped Kids," June 14), *news alert!* has learned, Attorney General Janet Reno rejected the State-led committee report on missing children and ordered the group to rewrite it.

The initial 47-page report was a whitewash that failed to tell the entire truth about the many problems parents face when trying to recover their kidnapped children, according to many parents interviewed. In most cases, parents never recover their children. The *Insight* article quickly became a "must read" for congressional investigators attempting to get up to speed on the issue, according to sources close to the kidnapping tragedies.

Congress has been waiting for the State Department to issue a final report to Reno and is growing impatient with State's dance around the issue, according to a congressional source. "It took the committee eight months to write

that report, and now Reno has remanded it back to the committee to be rewritten," says a congressional source close to the issue. "Who knows how long it will take them to rewrite it?"

House International Relations Committee Chairman Benjamin Gilman of New York had been waiting for the report before holding hearings, but sources tell *news alert!* that he has waited long enough. Hearings are expected in mid-September.

In the meantime, the General Accounting Office, or GAO, has met with Gilman's staff and denied allegations reported by *Insight* that senior management has withheld resources and manpower necessary to do a thorough investigation, pushed GAO investigators to issue a "toned-down" report and has received little or no cooperation from the State Department. Nonetheless, the GAO continues to probe and plans to present its report to Gilman in time for the hearings.

But Gilman isn't the only one interested in this. The Senate Judi-

ciary Committee also plans to hold hearings in the fall to find out why no one at State has been heeding the cries of the kidnapped children.

Meanwhile, *Insight* has filed a Freedom of Information Act request for all State Department records involving the cases of several parents who have fallen victim to kidnapping of children by former spouses. These parents sent notarized letters to *Insight* waiving their privacy rights in these matters to expedite action. Some of the parents claim they have been made to wait for years since requesting these personal files and have yet to see documents detailing so much as the status of their cases.

According to files obtained by *Insight* on other child-kidnap cases, State Department employees have been less than sympathetic toward the frantic parents and sometimes belittle them, calling some mothers "mentally unbalanced" and in other cases offering legal advice to the kidnapers.

The State Department has not yet responded to *Insight's* latest request.