



ICE Chief of Staff Takes Leave Amid Allegations of Lewd Conduct in Agency

Suzanne Barr, chief of staff for Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), has “voluntarily placed herself on [leave](#),” amid allegations that she created a “frat-house” style work environment. Barr is currently under internal review by the Department of Homeland Security, which is investigating allegations of lewd conduct inside ICE. Several ICE employees have come forward to complain about behavior within the agency. Employees have provided sworn affidavits regarding graphic remarks made by two top officials at ICE. The affidavits were submitted as part of a discrimination and retaliation [suit](#) filed by James T. Hayes, Jr., head of the New York office for ICE.



**U.S. Immigration
and Customs
Enforcement**

Hayes’ case names Department of Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano as the sole defendant but also makes substantial mention of Barr, as well as Dora Schriro, who began working for the DHS in February 2009, several months after Hayes was promoted to director of ICE Detention and Removal Operations.

According to Hayes, Schriro was unqualified for the position she was given because she had no law enforcement experience. “Schriro did have experience, however, working with Secretary Napolitano,” Hayes writes. “Schriro enjoyed a long-standing relationship with the secretary.” Hayes maintains that he was pushed aside because of that relationship, and because he was not a female.

Schriro’s relationship with Napolitano is not specifically defined in the lawsuit, although there have been rumors that Napolitano is a lesbian — rumors she denied in 2002. Schriro has publicly spoken about how much she looks up to Napolitano, naming her as one of her greatest influences. “Janet Napolitano is one of the smartest people I’ve ever met,” she told Education Update. “She’s totally capable of having a great time wherever she is and regardless of the workload.”

Hayes is accusing Napolitano of promoting Schriro simply because they were close personal friends, and he contends that he experienced retaliation from Napolitano after he complained to the Equal Employment Opportunity Office about Schriro’s promotion.

According to Hayes’ lawsuit, in late 2009, DHS launched or re-opened at least six different misconduct probes against him that all ended with findings that they were “without merit.” “On information and belief, these investigations were initiated by the agency in order to intimidate the plaintiff,” the suit avers.

Likewise, the lawsuit accuses Barr of conducting several conference calls during which she looked for excuses to terminate Hayes’ employment. It also states that Schriro had assumed some of Hayes’ responsibilities before he was removed from his Washington ICE job and assigned to the New York



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office.

Robin Campbell, press secretary for the New York City Department of Correction, denied Hayes' accusations, insisting, "Commissioner Schriro's selection and service at DHS was based on the merits. Any suggestion to the contrary is false."

The *Daily Mail* [reports](#), "The suit also accuses Napolitano of turning the department into a female-run 'frat house' where male staffers were routinely humiliated and on the receiving end of 'sexually charged crimes.'"

The Hayes lawsuit includes allegations that ICE Chief of Staff Suzanne Barr was guilty of repeated "sexually offensive behavior" that seemed intent on "humiliating and intimidating male employees." Hayes claimed that Barr even called a male colleague in his hotel room and screamed, used explicit language, and offered to perform oral sex on the colleague.

Likewise, the lawsuit gives an illustration of the "frat-house"-type atmosphere at the agency, stating that in 2009, Barr "removed the entire contents of the offices of three male employees, including nameplates, computers and telephones, to the men's bathroom at ICE headquarters." Barr is also being accused of taking the work phone of a male special agent and then telling his female supervisor "that the male employee had a crush on the female supervisor and fantasized about her." The suit adds, "Further, Barr promoted and otherwise rewarded those male employees who play along with her sexually charged games."

The allegations made by Hayes were described by a DHS spokesman as "unfounded"; however, observers have noted that the newly submitted affidavits appear to corroborate some of Hayes' claims. The affidavits describe two incidents that took place in 2009, specifically detailing actions taken by Barr, who is mentioned in the Hayes lawsuit.

Fox News reports, "In the newly emerging affidavits, one of the employees claimed that in October 2009, while in a discussion about Halloween plans, the individual witnessed Barr turn to a [male] senior ICE employee and say: 'You a sexy (expletive deleted).' " The affidavit asserts that Barr then examined the crotch of the senior employee and asked a lewd question. The affidavit continues, "Several employees laughed nervously."

The other affidavit details a 2009 trip to Colombia that was attended by ICE Director John Morton, Suzanne Barr, and Ray Parmer, ICE special agent in charge of Homeland Security Investigations in New Orleans. According to that employee's account, Parmer and Barr were "drinking heavily" at the home of the deputy chief of mission for the U.S. Embassy, and at one point Parmer took the Blackberry of another employee and sent "lewd messages" to Barr. The affidavit went on to say: "During this party, Suzanne Barr approached me and offered to [perform oral sex]."

Both affidavits were submitted to the defense attorney in the case filed by Hayes against DHS Secretary Janet Napolitano.

ICE Director of Public Affairs Brian Hale asserted,

ICE doesn't comment on unfounded claims and will respond to Mr. Hayes' allegations as appropriate through the judicial system. ICE has referred these allegations to the DHS Office of Inspector General and the ICE Office of Professional Responsibility for review. Ms Barr has voluntarily placed herself on leave pending the outcome of this review.

Meanwhile, Hayes' attorney, Morris Fischer, contends that his legal team is gathering more information



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to compile a solid case. “People are coming out of the woodwork on this because this is such a serious matter and people want to see this agency’s mess cleaned up,” he explained.

Hayes is seeking \$335,000 in damages.



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