

Removal of Media Inquiries Email Address from DOJ's "Special Counsel's Office" Webpage

Website Monitoring Mini-report

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The purpose of "mini-reports" is to inform journalists, experts, and the public about a reported or developing news story. A "mini-report" is a condensed version of one of the Web Integrity Project's [website monitoring reports](#), created on a rapid timeline to explain a narrowly scoped alteration. It is not a comprehensive analysis of a website.

Summary of findings and context:

The U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) "Special Counsel's Office" page (Webpage 1) was altered at the end of March 2019 to remove the "FOR MEDIA INQUIRIES" header and the media inquiries email address in the page's sidebar. The removal happened a week after the Special Counsel, Robert Mueller, delivered his final report on Russian interference in the 2016 presidential campaign to the U.S. Attorney General. On April 18, 2019, the Attorney General released a redacted version of the Special Counsel's final report, commonly known as the "Mueller Report."

The removed email address for media inquiries was SpecialCounselPress@usdoj.gov. An email sent to this address returns an automatic reply that reads, "This mailbox is no longer in use. For media inquiries regarding the Special Counsel's Office, please contact Peter Carr at peter.carr@usdoj.gov." Peter Carr was the spokesperson for the Office of Special Counsel and the primary point-of-contact for the media. According to [Politico](#), Carr returned to his permanent position as Public Affairs Specialist in the DOJ Office of Public Affairs by April 17, 2019. The Special Counsel's general email address (special.counsel@usdoj.gov) remains on the page, but no media contact information is available.

Webpage 1:

Page title: Special Counsel's Office

Page status: Altered

- Before: [March 28, 2019, 4:29 PM ET](#)
- After: [March 29, 2019, 6:54 PM ET](#)

URL: <https://www.justice.gov/sco>

Description of change:

1. The "FOR MEDIA INQUIRIES" section was removed from the sidebar of the page (Screenshot 1).
 - a. The section listed the email address for press inquiries related to the Mueller Investigation: SpecialCounselPress@usdoj.gov.
 - b. An email sent to the SpecialCounselPress@usdoj.gov address returns an automatic reply that reads "This mailbox is no longer in use. For media inquiries regarding the Special Counsel's Office, please contact Peter Carr at peter.carr@usdoj.gov" (Screenshot 2).

Note: The Office of Public Affairs (OPA) is the DOJ's central media unit. The "Special Counsel's Office" page does not link directly to contact information for OPA. However, interested journalists could use the main DOJ website menu to navigate to the "[Contact the Department](#)" page and there find a link to OPA's "[Contact the Office](#)" page. The page lists contact phone numbers, but no email addresses.

Screenshot 1: A comparison of the [March 28, 2019](#) and [March 29, 2019](#) versions of the "Special Counsel's Office" page, as captured by the Internet Archive's Wayback Machine. Red highlights indicate removed content.

The screenshot shows two side-by-side versions of the DOJ Special Counsel's Office website. The left version is dated March 28, 2019, and the right version is dated March 29, 2019. Both pages have the same header and navigation menu. The main content area is identical, including the text about Robert S. Mueller III's appointment and the list of related court documents. The primary difference is in the sidebar. In the 'Before' version, the 'LEADERSHIP' section includes a 'FOR MEDIA INQUIRIES' link with the email address 'specialcounsel@usdoj.gov'. In the 'After' version, this link and email address are removed, leaving the sidebar content sparse.

Screenshot 2: The automatic reply received from SpecialCounselPress@usdoj.gov on 2:54 PM ET on April 18, 2019, in response to an email with the subject line "Test."



Sarah John <sjohn@sunlightfoundation.com>

Automatic reply: Test
1 message

SpecialCounselPress <SpecialCounselPress@usdoj.gov>
To: Sarah John <sjohn@sunlightfoundation.com>

Thu, Apr 18, 2019 at 2:52 PM

This mailbox is no longer in use. For media inquiries regarding the Special Counsel's Office, please contact Peter Carr at peter.carr@usdoj.gov.