

**chatterbox****Gagging the Fuzz, Part 6**

The Park Service formally terminates its truth-telling police chief.

By Timothy Noah

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The National Park Service [formally terminated](#) Teresa Chambers on July 9. Chambers is the Park Police chief [who was canned](#) this past December for [answering truthfully](#) some questions posed to her by a *Washington Post* reporter about how budget constraints had forced a reduction in police patrols in parks and on parkways around Washington, D.C. For months prior to that interview, we now know from an [affidavit](#) Chambers filed June 28, Chambers had been harassed by her two superiors, National Park Service Director Fran Mainella and Deputy Director Don Murphy, over her refusal to disguise within the Park Service and its parent agency, the Interior Department, these patrol reductions. (The reductions were potentially embarrassing because the Bush White House doesn't want to admit, *even to itself*, that it's not putting its money where its mouth is on homeland defense.) The National Park Service put Chambers on administrative leave for her sins. The expectation was that it would fire her. Now it has.

The timing is significant. Earlier that day, Chambers had filed a [motion](#) with the Merit Systems Protection Board, which adjudicates whistleblower complaints by federal workers, urging the MSPB to reinstate her in her job pending its final ruling and to prevent the Park Service from formally dismissing her. The Park Service responded within hours by firing Chambers before the MSPB could rule on her motion, thereby mooting it.

The MSPB will still rule, however, on whether the Park Service's firing constitutes illegal retaliation against a whistleblower, which clearly it does. Chambers, alas, will have to proceed without the help of the Office of Special Counsel, a federal agency that argues whistleblower complaints before the MSPB. The OSC [agreed to take Chambers' case](#) in February, but for inexplicable reasons it failed to act within the customary 120 days. "We just continued to give them extensions," Chambers told Chatterbox. After "about three weeks," however, Chambers decided to file her own complaint, as the law allows. The June 28 affidavit and the July 9 motion were both part of that effort. As is usual under such circumstances, the OSC will now withdraw from the case.

Chambers says she has no idea why the OSC moved so slowly on so simple a case: "I know the investigator was very thorough." But Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility, a private advocacy group that has been publicizing Chambers' case, [notes pointedly](#) that the special counsel, Scott Block, is "a recent Bush appointee." Insinuation: Politics inspired foot-dragging. But Chatterbox has to believe that the net political effect of Chambers' case—particularly her abrupt firing last week, which leaves her without a salary—will be political embarrassment for the Bushies. Maybe it's time for candidate John Kerry to start talking up the Park Police chief's firing as an example of the Bush administration's willful blindness toward the consequences of its policies and its viciousness toward those who won't play along.

*Teresa Chambers Archive:*

April 14, 2004: "[Gagging the Fuzz, Part 5](#)"

March 25, 2004: "[Gagging the Fuzz, Part 4](#)"

Feb. 19, 2004: "[Gagging the Fuzz, Part 3](#)"

Jan. 12, 2004: "[Gagging the Fuzz, Part 2](#)"

Dec. 30, 2003: "[Gagging the Fuzz](#)"

*Timothy Noah writes "Chatterbox" for Slate.*

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