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## Special Counsel Bloch Resigns Under Pressure

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Office of Special Counsel chief Scott J. Bloch resigned under pressure after meeting with White House officials yesterday, five months after the FBI raided his home and his government office as part of an ongoing obstruction of justice probe.

Bloch had refused persistent demands from lawmakers and his own employees to leave before the end of the Bush administration, writing to the president on Monday that he would fulfill his five-year term and exit in January.

Citing the Greek playwright Sophocles and defending his tenure at the office designed to protect whistleblowers, Bloch wrote that "doing the right thing can result in much criticism and controversy from every side."

Employees learned of Bloch's removal at a hastily called 4 p.m. meeting when they were instructed not to accept his phone calls and told that he no longer had access to the office. The interim chief will be William E. Reukauf, a career employee, according to a White House news release.

In recent weeks several of Bloch's top deputies have left the office, blaming untenable workplace conditions and distractions that stemmed from the criminal investigation.

The OSC is supposed to be a haven for federal whistleblowers and disgruntled employees. But the tables turned under Bloch, who previously worked at the Justice Department's Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives.

Bloch came under fire shortly after joining the whistleblower unit in 2004. Employees claimed that he engaged in political bias and improperly handled scores of cases. By his own account, White House officials twice had asked him to resign, but he refused.

Debra S. Katz, an attorney representing OSC employees who had chafed under Bloch's leadership, said she is pleased that "the Bush administration has finally acted to remove this rogue presidential appointee."

The U.S. attorney in the District of Columbia, the FBI and the inspector general at the Office of Personnel Management are examining Bloch's use of a contract company to scrub his computer hard drive, even as the inspector general investigated his treatment of employees and whistleblowers. Prosecutors declined to comment yesterday, but sources familiar with the case said no law enforcement action is imminent.

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