

Mr. McCormack said.

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice was told of the security breach, which was first reported in The Washington Times on Thursday evening. Mr. McCormack said security measures used to monitor records of high-profile people like Mr. Obama worked properly in the three instances to alert department officials of the breaches.

Mr. Obama's campaign said that the breaches were reprehensible.

"This is an outrageous breach of security and privacy, even from an administration that has shown little regard for either over the last eight years," said Bill Burton, a spokesman for the Obama campaign. "Our government's duty is to protect the private information of the American people, not use it for political purposes. This is a serious matter that merits a complete investigation, and we demand to know who looked at Senator Obama's passport file, for what purpose, and why it took so long for them to reveal this security breach."

Mr. Obama learned of the passport situation while he was flying from West Virginia to Oregon on Thursday night. Aboard his campaign plane, he declined to comment. Upon landing in Portland shortly after 1 a.m. Eastern, he did not make a statement about the incident.

This is the second time that such a breach has occurred at the State Department during a presidential campaign. In 1992, a similar breach took place when State Department officials looked up data on then-presidential candidate Bill Clinton, amid rumors that had tried to renounce his citizenship in order to dodge the draft while he was a Rhodes scholar at Oxford during the Vietnam War.

Patrick F. Kennedy, the under secretary of state for management, said that he and other top officials at the State Department found out about this most recent problem Thursday afternoon, after Mr. McCormack received a telephone query from a reporter who had been alerted of the incident.

"I will fully acknowledge that this information should have been passed up the line," Mr. Kennedy told reporters Thursday night in a hastily called teleconference. "We have a sophisticated computer tracking system that looks at this when it sees anything that's inappropriate. But, I will admit, they failed to pass the information up the chain to a sufficiently high level."

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