

Gonzales: Firings were not improper

by UPI

WASHINGTON - U.S. Attorney General Alberto Gonzales told a congressional committee Thursday he stands by the dismissals last year of eight U.S. attorneys.

"My decision to ask for the resignations of these U.S. attorneys was not based on improper reasons and, therefore, the decision should stand," Gonzales said in remarks prepared for testimony before the House Judiciary Committee.

"It would be improper to remove a U.S. attorney to interfere with or influence a particular prosecution for partisan political gain. I did not do that. I would never do that."

The firings have caused a firestorm because of the Justice Department's initial claims the prosecutors were dismissed for performance reasons. Officials later acknowledged the White House and politics may have played a role.

"Each of those United States attorneys are fine lawyers and dedicated public servants," Gonzales said. "I have publicly apologized to them and to their families for allowing this matter to become an unfortunate and undignified public spectacle, for which I accept full responsibility."

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