

# Congress of the United States

## House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND REFORM

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WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6143

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<https://oversight.house.gov>

May 4, 2021

Ms. Dana Remus  
Counsel to the President  
The White House  
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Ms. Remus:

We are conducting oversight of Special Envoy for Climate John Kerry's reported decision to provide potentially classified intelligence to Iran. Secretary Kerry allegedly not only provided Iran with sensitive information during his time as Secretary of State, but also while President Trump was in office in an apparent attempt to undermine his Administration. This raises serious concerns about Secretary Kerry's fitness to serve in his current role with the National Security Council (NSC) and whether these allegations should affect Secretary Kerry's ability to maintain a security clearance.

According to the *New York Times*, Secretary Kerry leaked potentially highly sensitive intelligence about Israel, a U.S. ally, to Iran, a state sponsor of terror and enemy of the U.S.<sup>1</sup> On its face this is highly concerning, but combined with Secretary Kerry's other actions it was a potential malicious act undermining the security of the United States. Secretary Kerry's actions are particularly troubling because he currently serves on the NSC, "[t]he President's principal forum for considering national security and foreign policy matters with his or her senior advisors and cabinet officials."<sup>2</sup> This position of public trust requires a security clearance, and it is unclear whether the White House Security Office has investigated Secretary Kerry's ability to maintain a security clearance in light of these new allegations.

On an audio tape leaked last weekend Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif claims Secretary Kerry informed him of "at least 200 times" that "Israel had attacked Iranian interests" in Syria.<sup>3</sup> It is unclear if the conversation between Secretary Kerry and Foreign Minister Zarif occurred before or after these strikes were publicly disclosed by Israel. Secretary Kerry's decision to share this information with Iran—despite its relationship with international terror organizations—poses serious questions about his ability to maintain the security clearance required to serve on the NSC.

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<sup>1</sup> Farnaz Fassihi, *Iran's Foreign Minister, in Leaked Tape, Says Revolutionary Guard Set Policies*, N.Y. TIMES (Apr. 25, 2021), <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/04/25/world/middleeast/iran-suleimani-zarif.html>.

<sup>2</sup> *National Security Council*, THE WHITE HOUSE (last accessed Apr. 28, 2021), <https://www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/>.

<sup>3</sup> Fassihi, *supra* note 1.

This is not the first time that Secretary Kerry undermined U.S. foreign policy interests by talking with Iran. He also met with Foreign Minister Zarif as a private citizen in 2017, 2018, and 2019. The goal of these meetings was reportedly “to devise a political strategy to undermine the Trump administration.”<sup>4</sup> Secretary Kerry’s decision to provide information to Iran poses serious questions about his ability to serve in a role of public trust.

In the prior Congress, Democrats launched an investigation into the security clearance process at the White House regarding “grave breaches of national security” such as “disregarding established procedures for safeguarding classified information.” The allegations related to Secretary Kerry necessitate a similar review.<sup>5</sup> The actions by Secretary Kerry appear to undermine his ability to continue representing the United States on the world stage as well as maintain a security clearance.

To better understand what, if any steps, the White House has taken to review the allegations and ensure our nation’s security, please provide the following documents and information no later than May 18, 2021, for the time period November 3, 2020, to the present:

1. All documents and communications related to the background investigations and security clearances of Secretary John Kerry, including but not limited to:
  - a. Information provided in response to questions in Sections 19, 20A, 20B, and 20C of any security clearance applications, renewal applications, or amendments;
  - b. All documents relating to investigative and steps taken relating to security clearances including Foreign Influence and Foreign Preference; and
  - c. Any other documents submitted by Secretary John Kerry relating to contacts with foreign nationals;
2. All documents and communications between or among members of President Biden’s Transition Team and the White House referring or relating to background investigations, White House clearances, interim security clearances, or permanent security clearances of Secretary John Kerry; and
3. Documents sufficient to show whether President Biden’s Transition Team or the White House granted access to sensitive or classified information to Secretary John Kerry pending a permanent security clearance being granted.

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<sup>4</sup> Ben Wolfgang & Guy Taylor, *Biden team colluded with Iran to foil Trump diplomacy*, WASH. TIMES (Feb. 21, 2021), <https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2021/feb/21/john-kerry-held-backchannel-talks-iran-javad-zarif/>.

<sup>5</sup> Letter from Elijah E. Cummings, Chairman, H. Comm. on Oversight & Reform, to Pat Cipollone, Counsel to the President (Jan. 23, 2019).


Ms. Dana Remus

May 4, 2021

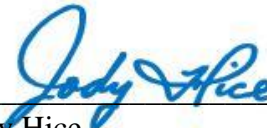
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The Committee on Oversight and Reform is the principal oversight committee of the House of Representatives and has broad authority to investigate “any matter” at “any time” under House Rule X. Thank you for your attention to this important inquiry.

Sincerely,



James Comer  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Oversight and Reform



Jody Hice  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Government  
Operations



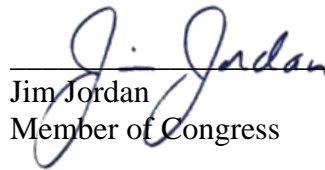
Glenn S. Grothman  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on National Security



Michael Cloud  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Economic and  
Consumer Policy



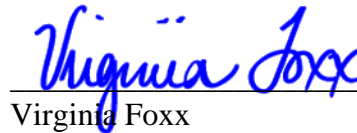
Ralph Norman  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Environment



Jim Jordan  
Member of Congress



Paul A. Gosar, D.D.S.  
Member of Congress



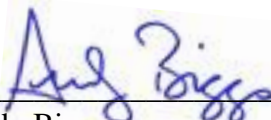
Virginia Foxx  
Member of Congress



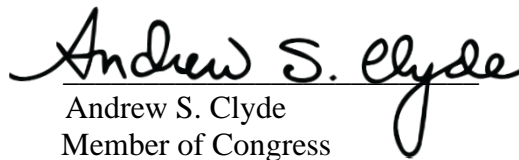
Bob Gibbs  
Member of Congress



Fred Keller  
Member of Congress



Andy Biggs  
Member of Congress



Andrew S. Clyde  
Member of Congress

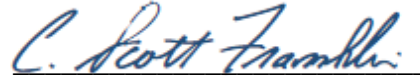
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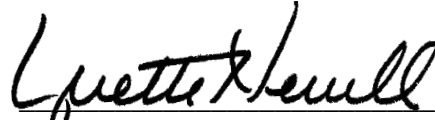
Nancy Mace  
Member of Congress



Scott Franklin  
Member of Congress



Jake LaTurner  
Member of Congress



Yvette Herrell  
Member of Congress



Byron Donalds  
Member of Congress

cc: The Honorable Carolyn Maloney, Chairwoman  
Committee on Oversight and Reform

The Honorable Gerald E. Connolly, Chairman  
Subcommittee on Government Operations

The Honorable Stephen F. Lynch, Chairman  
Subcommittee on National Security

The Honorable Raja Krishnamoorthi, Chairman  
Subcommittee on Economic and Consumer Policy

The Honorable Ro Khanna  
Subcommittee on Environment