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One Hundred Sixteenth Congress
U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Foreign Affairs
2170 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515
www.foreignaffairs.house.gov

June 12, 2020

The Honorable Michael R. Pompeo
Secretary
United States Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Mr. Secretary:

This letter serves as a formal, written, public acceptance of your offer to permit Under Secretary for Management Brian Bulatao to appear at a hearing before the Committee on Foreign Affairs in the matter of the firing of State Department Inspector General Steve A. Linick. My office will work with the Department to arrange scheduling and logistics.

I must correct your insinuations about the motives behind this investigation. President Trump's firing spree of inspectors general has undermined the important work of our government's independent watchdogs. The President's apparent effort to remove accountability from his administration has raised bipartisan concerns on Capitol Hill. This investigation seeks to determine whether anything improper motivated the President's decision to remove Mr. Linick.

It is also untrue that I "personally declined to speak to both Mr. Bulatao and [Deputy Secretary of State Steve] Biegun."

With respect to Mr. Bulatao, the Committee on Foreign Affairs in fact asked him to speak with us. On May 22, I sent a letter to Mr. Bulatao requesting his appearance at a transcribed interview¹, the same setting in which Mr. Linick voluntarily appeared on June 3. Considering Mr. Bulatao called Mr. Linick on the evening of Friday, May 15 to

¹ Enclosure attached.

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fire him² and then offered the Department's first attempt at an explanation for the firing—not to Congress but to a *Washington Post* reporter³—it follows that the Committee on Foreign Affairs would wish to hear from him as part of this joint committee investigation.

The State Department, apparently unwilling to permit Mr. Bulatao to answer detailed questions on the record, instead offered to have him brief members of the Committee on Foreign Affairs.⁴ I'll remind you that briefings for members of Congress are, with rare exception, closed-door, off-the-record affairs. As I have explained, because Mr. Bulatao is a fact witness in the matter the Committee is investigating (which was made more apparent during Mr. Linick's transcribed interview), an off-the-record appearance would not be appropriate. The Committee is gratified that the Department has now moved toward a more acceptable accommodation and we will work to find the best date and manner to hear from Mr. Bulatao.

The Department has also requested a phone call between Mr. Biegun and myself to discuss accommodations on this matter. In light of Mr. Linick's testimony, which mentions Mr. Biegun more than a dozen times in connection with the events surrounding the firing, it's become clear that Mr. Biegun is also himself a fact witness to events relevant to our investigation. Given that we are investigating the circumstances of Mr. Linick's firing, my colleagues and I must minimize direct contact about that topic with anyone whose testimony may eventually be sought in this investigation. That's why, at my direction, the Committee on Foreign Affairs sought a staff-level discussion to narrow the parameters of the discussion before I engaged with Mr. Biegun directly. Those conditions remain in place. That is the way that the constitutionally-mandated accommodations process works. This process yielded a successful outcome in which the Department agreed to produce documents regarding allegations of prohibited personnel practices by a number of State Department officials, including Brian Hook.

While the Committee on Foreign Affairs is happy to accept your offer for Mr. Bulatao to appear at a public hearing, I must remind you that such an appearance in no way negates the requests by this Committee, along with the Committee on Oversight and Reform and the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, to hear from a number of other Department officials. Those requests remain in effect, and we expect them to be honored.

Finally, Mike, on a personal note, your letter yesterday made me think back on a long career dealing with Secretaries of State and oversight of our foreign policy. I remember from my

² <https://foreignaffairs.house.gov/cache/files/4/7/47b1f13c-7b02-4b58-a32d-d4cb74ee9291/4260E22C7282CBACBC5D94AA72FAB265.linick-final-redacted.pdf>

³ https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/mike-pompeo-offers-a-telling-explanation-for-why-he-fired-steve-linick/2020/06/11/0e74eeca-ac26-11ea-94d2-d7bc43b26bf9_story.html

⁴ Enclosure attached.

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first term in Congress, your predecessor Jim Baker sitting at the witness table in our hearing room, maybe a bit impatiently, as my own predecessor Dante Fascell called on member after member to ask their five minutes' worth of questions. Jim Baker stayed in that chair, taking the heat and answering as best he could, right to the last member on the dais. I remember similar exchanges—and productive, respectful relationships—with Secretaries Christopher, Albright, Powell, Rice, Clinton, Kerry, and Tillerson. I also remember when we were colleagues, and the zeal you then possessed for congressional oversight on matters such as Benghazi and emails.

So after reading your letter, which was reported in the press shortly after you transmitted it to me, I feel compelled to offer a bit of unsolicited advice: the world listens to the words of America's top diplomat; the world watches the way the branches of our democratic government operate and interact with one another, especially when our constitutionally required checks and balances are at work; the world takes note when individuals who should be standard bearers of American values, character, strength, and courage instead hide behind *ad hominem* attacks against perceived political enemies. The men and women of the State Department, like the American people, expect more from our leaders. I hope you bear in mind the gravity of your position and the example you set during your upcoming final few months in office.

Sincerely,



ELIOT L. ENGEL
Chairman

Attachments:

- May 22, 2020 letter from Chairman Engel to Under Secretary of State for Management
Brian Bulatao
- May 28, 2020 letter from Assistant Secretary of State for Legislative Affairs Mary Elizabeth
Taylor to Chairman Engel
- May 28, 2020 letter from Chairman Engel to Assistant Secretary of State for Legislative Affairs
Mary Elizabeth Taylor
- June 1, 2020 letter from Under Secretary of State for Management Brian Bulatao to Chairman
Engel

cc: The Honorable Michael T. McCaul
Ranking Member
Committee on Foreign Affairs, U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable Carolyn B. Maloney
Chairwoman
Committee on Oversight and Reform, U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable James D. Jordan
Ranking Member
Committee on Oversight and Reform, U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable James Risch
Chairman
Committee on Foreign Relations, U.S. Senate

The Honorable Robert Menendez
Ranking Member
Committee on Foreign Relations, U.S. Senate