

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

January 26, 2018

Dear Mr. Inspector General:

We request that you conduct an immediate review of the State Department's personnel practices related to detailing staff to work on the Secretary of State's Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) surge.

Our staffs have been in touch with whistleblowers alleging that the Department is engaging in prohibited personnel practices that appear to conflict with agency regulations and policies. The information we have received corroborates recent reporting by *CNN* on the same matter. We ask that you look into allegations that the Department has unlawfully targeted employees for political reasons due to their work under the last Administration.

Our staffs have been made aware of credible allegations that the State Department has required high-level career civil servants, with distinguished records serving administrations of both parties, to move to performing tasks outside of their area of substantive expertise. At the very least, this a waste of taxpayer dollars. At worst, it may constitute impermissible abuse and retaliation.

In addition to being required to work in areas unrelated to their expertise, these employees have not received formal personnel actions indicating the bases for the transfers, the structure in which they are to work, or when these temporary assignments will conclude. In addition, it has been alleged that the Department's leadership has repeatedly ignored requests for clarification from these employees.

These allegations are consistent with a report from *Reuters* dated January 9, 2018, which specifically raises serious concerns that Lawrence Bartlett, head of refugee admissions at the State Department's Population, Refugees and Migration (PRM) bureau, has been removed from his position in PRM because of his work on refugee admissions. Bartlett has been temporarily reassigned to the FOIA office. According to current and former U.S. officials cited by *Reuters*, sending a civil servant of his experience and rank to that office is highly unusual.

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Hon. Steve A. Linick

January 26, 2018

We request that you investigate the State Department's "FOIA surge." Were these personnel assignments made according to U.S. law and Department regulations? Were the rights of the Department's employees violated? Did political retaliation play any role? We look forward to your quick action on this matter, and we would appreciate an update on your review.

Sincerely,



ELIOT L. ENGEL

Ranking Member

House Committee on Foreign Affairs



ELIJAH E. CUMMINGS

Ranking Member

House Committee on Oversight and  
Government Reform

The Honorable Steve A. Linick

Inspector General for the U.S. Department of State

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