

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 9, 2018

The Hon. Steve Linick
Inspector General
U.S. Department of State
Office of the Inspector General
SA-39
1700 North Moore Street, Arlington, VA, 22209

Dear Mr. Inspector General:

We request that your office conduct an investigation into whether improper motives underlay personnel decisions affecting career State Department officials since January 2017.

In particular, we request that you investigate allegations that senior State Department officials sought to reassign, limit, or otherwise interfere with the work of career employees, based on perceptions about their past work, association with a prior administration, place of birth or ethnic origin, or private political beliefs, in violation of the Department's policies and regulations, applicable civil service protections, and federal law.

On March 15, 2018, the Ranking Members of the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform and House Committee on Foreign Affairs wrote to the State Department and White House to express concern about documents showing that senior Trump Administration officials discussed with each other, as well as with outside political and policy advisers, the need to "clean house" at the Department.¹

It does not appear that these discussions were isolated occurrences. We have each heard from numerous career employees who have alleged that they have suffered adverse consequences based on inappropriate considerations. We are gravely concerned that these personnel decisions demonstrate a widespread and systematic pattern of behavior and abuse of power.

Political intrusion into personnel decision making, including forcing people out of the Department, is damaging to the Department, counter to the very idea of a dedicated civil service, and would run afoul of civil service protections. No employee should work in fear that he or she needs to demonstrate loyalty to a current administration or suffer negative consequences based on work for a prior administration.

There should be no political litmus test for civil servants. In fact, our system depends on their willingness to serve the public through multiple administrations and their ability to provide professionalized and expert counsel no matter the party in power. Career State Department employees

¹ Letter from Ranking Member Elijah E. Cummings, House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, and Ranking Member Eliot L. Engel, House Committee on Foreign Affairs, to John Kelly, White House Chief of Staff et al. (Mar. 15, 2018) (online at <https://democrats-oversight.house.gov/sites/democrats.oversight.house.gov/files/documents/2018-03-15.EEC%20Engel%20to%20WH%20%26%20State.pdf>).

The Honorable Michael Horowitz
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take an oath to uphold the Constitution; not to serve one Secretary, one President, one Congress, or one viewpoint. They serve the American people.

In light of the allegations and evidence, we urge you to undertake a comprehensive review of any such efforts to target career employees for a lack of perceived loyalty, including:

1. A review of all documents and communications referring or relating to any career employee's ethnicity, nation of origin, political beliefs, political loyalty, affiliations with a prior administration, or any related factor in relation to any personnel decisions, including communications originating from, copying, or directed to members of the transition team or outside political and policy advisors;
2. A determination of whether senior political appointees of the Trump Administration used any impermissible factors, including an employee's ethnicity, nation of origin, political beliefs, loyalty, affiliations with a prior administration, or any related factor, in making personnel decisions;
3. A determination of whether any career employees were subject to any adverse personnel actions based on their perceived ethnicity, nation of origin, political beliefs, loyalty, affiliations with a prior administration, or any related factor;
4. A review of whether career employees reported concerns or filed complaints that they were being targeted based on their perceived ethnicity, nation of origin, political beliefs, loyalty, affiliations with a prior administration, or any related factor; and a determination of whether those complaints were addressed appropriately; and
5. A determination of whether any senior officials have violated civil service protections, Department regulations, or federal law in taking personnel actions on the basis of an employee's perceived ethnicity, nation of origin, political beliefs, loyalty, affiliations with prior administration, or any related factor.

Given the gravity of these allegations, we urge your office to give this matter immediate and sustained attention.

Sincerely,

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|  ELIOT L. ENGEL Ranking Member House Foreign Affairs Committee |  ROBERT MENENDEZ Ranking Member Senate Foreign Relations Committee |  ELIJAH E. CUMMINGS Ranking Member Committee on Oversight and Government Reform |
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