

GREGORY W. MEEKS, NEW YORK
CHAIRMAN

SOPHIA A. LAFARGUE
STAFF DIRECTOR



MICHAEL T. MCCAUL, TEXAS
RANKING REPUBLICAN MEMBER

BRENDAN P. SHIELDS
REPUBLICAN STAFF DIRECTOR

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

January 22, 2021

President Joseph R. Biden Jr.
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We are deeply concerned about the poisoning of leading Russian political activist Alexey Navalny on August 20, 2020, with a Novichok chemical nerve agent and that the United States has yet to hold those responsible accountable. As such, we formally request the executive branch investigate, without delay, whether the Government of the Russian Federation has used chemical weapons in violation of international law or has used lethal chemical weapons against its own nationals pursuant to Section 306 of the Chemical and Biological Weapons Control and Warfare Elimination Act of 1991 (22 USC 5604) (“the CBW Act”).

In the months since the attack on Mr. Navalny, labs in Germany, France, and Sweden, as well as tests by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, have confirmed that he was exposed to a Novichok nerve agent. The European Union also has determined that the attack “was only possible with the consent of the [Russian] Presidential Executive Office” and the involvement of Russian security services. It also affirmed that the Novichok nerve agent “is accessible only to State authorities in the Russian Federation.” The investigative research group Bellingcat also conducted an investigation that provided extensive evidence of the Russian security service’s complicity in the attack. Mr. Navalny himself called one of the implicated Russian agents pretending to be a senior security official, extracting a detailed confession.

In response, the European Union and the United Kingdom imposed sanctions on several Russian individuals believed to have played a role in the planning and execution of the poisoning, as well as a Russian state scientific research center accused of deploying the banned nerve agent.

The United States under the previous Administration, however, failed to comply with the CBW Act and ignored prior requests to report to Congress on the information the executive branch possess on the poisoning. Therefore, we urge your Administration to conduct this investigation, submit your findings to Congress, and make a determination without delay. If your investigation confirms that the Putin regime was behind this brazen attack – as the overwhelming evidence presented by our allies and independent researchers suggests – then it must be held accountable.

Moreover, the unlawful detention of Mr. Navalny upon his return to Russia on January 17 and subsequent imprisonment without due process and via a sham judicial proceeding is appalling. We condemn this miscarriage of justice and call on your Administration to work closely with allies and partners to pressure the Kremlin to immediately release him. We greatly appreciate your strong and principled comments to date demanding the same.

The United States should not turn a blind eye to the Putin regime's use of chemical weapons in contravention of international law and fundamental principles of human rights, nor the Kremlin's growing willingness to use poison and bullets to silence its political opponents at home and even beyond its borders. The Putin regime must be made to understand that such unacceptable behavior will always be met with significant costs from the United States and the rest of the free world.

Sincerely,



GREGORY W. MEEKS
Chairman



MICHAEL T. McCAUL
Ranking Republican Member