



One Hundred Eighteenth Congress  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Committee on Foreign Affairs  
2170 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

January 23, 2023

The Honorable Antony Blinken  
Secretary of State  
U.S. Department of State  
2201 C Street NW  
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Blinken:

The Foreign Affairs Committee is concerned about the national security and foreign policy implications of classified documents found at the Penn Biden Center for Diplomacy and Global Engagement (the Center),<sup>1</sup> where you and several high-ranking State Department officials worked prior to your current executive branch appointments.<sup>2</sup> I appreciate your stated intention to cooperate fully with ongoing investigations.<sup>3</sup> In furtherance of that intention, the Committee would like to better understand the role you and other Department officials played at the Center, as well as the extent of your knowledge and access to the documents found at the Center. Furthermore, reports suggesting that the University of Pennsylvania – the school affiliated with the Center – accepted tens of millions of dollars from undisclosed Chinese investors between 2017 and 2019<sup>4</sup> raise questions about the Center’s potential ties to – or benefits derived from –

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<sup>1</sup> Matt Viser, Tyler Pager, Carol D. Leonnig and Yasmeeen Abutaleb, *Inside the White House document strategy and its pitfalls*, THE WASHINGTON POST (Jan. 18, 2023), <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2023/01/18/biden-strategy-classified-documents-backfired/>.

<sup>2</sup> Thomas Catenacci and Cameron Cawthorne, *Several top White House officials worked for Biden at his think tank where classified docs discovered*, FOX NEWS (Jan. 11, 2023), <https://www.foxnews.com/politics/several-top-white-house-officials-worked-biden-think-tank-classified-docs-discovered>; Melissa Quinn, *House Oversight chairman asks University of Pennsylvania for info on Biden think tank donors, visitor logs*, CBS NEWS (Jan. 18, 2023), <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/biden-documents-house-oversight-committee-james-comer-university-of-pennsylvania/>.

<sup>3</sup> Rob Crilly, *Antony Blinken says he was ‘surprised’ classified documents were found at the Biden think tank HE directed – and promises full cooperation with Department of Justice probe*, DAILY MAIL (JAN. 23, 2023), <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-11646413/Antony-Blinken-says-no-knowledge-government-documents-taken-Penn-Biden-Center.html>.

<sup>4</sup> Alana Goodman, *Watchdog Calls for Transparency from University of Pennsylvania's Biden Center*, WASHINGTON FREE BEACON (Jan. 19, 2021), <https://freebeacon.com/democrats/watchdog-calls-for-transparency-from-university-of-pennsylvanias-biden-center/>.

that funding, interactions you or others had with the donors, and whether People's Republic of China (PRC) linked individuals ever entered the Center and came within close proximity of classified U.S. intelligence information.

The Committee is aware of the dangers that come with unauthorized handling of sensitive and classified information,<sup>5</sup> so the discovery that important state secrets, including those in one of the highest classification categories in the U.S. government, were improperly stored in an office in which you worked is of grave concern.<sup>6</sup> The Committee takes its responsibility to oversee State Department officials and their conduct seriously. In order to attain clarity regarding senior State Department officials' possible connections to classified documents found at the Center, I hereby request that you provide the Committee the following documents and information no later than February 6, 2023:

1. All documents and communications since November 1, 2022 and January 23, 2023 regarding the presence of sensitive and classified materials at the Penn Biden Center, President Biden's residences and offices, and any other location associated with President Biden or the Biden family;
2. Please confirm whether any classified or sensitive materials found at the Penn Biden Center, President Biden's residences and offices, and any other location associated with President Biden or the Biden family are State Department records or materials. If so, please provide a log of all documents, along with corresponding dates on which they were created, and the subject matter to which the documents pertain;
3. A detailed explanation of your (Secretary Blinken's) role with the Penn Biden Center, including but not limited to:
  - a. Your role, duties, and dates of employment at the Center;
  - b. When you became aware of the presence of sensitive or classified materials at the Penn Biden Center;
  - c. Whether you had access to the spaces where sensitive and classified materials were found;
  - d. Your involvement in fundraising activities for the Center or the University of Pennsylvania (including donor outreach/engagement), and whether you had

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<sup>5</sup> See John Malcom and Charles Stimson, *The Biden Classified Documents Fiasco: What Do We Know So Far?*, THE HERITAGE FOUNDATION (Jan. 18, 2023), <https://www.heritage.org/homeland-security/commentary/the-biden-classified-documents-fiasco-what-do-we-know-so-far>.

<sup>6</sup> Oona Goodin-Smith, *How a Penn think tank is connected to DOJ review of Biden's classified documents*, THE PHILADELPHIA INQUIRER (Jan. 10, 2023), <https://www.inquirer.com/news/classified-documents-penn-biden-center-investigation-20230110.html>; see Maegan Vazquez, Marshall Cohen, MJ Lee, Arlette Saenz and Zachary Cohen, *What we know about Joe Biden's private office where classified documents were found*, CNN (Jan. 13, 2023), <https://www.cnn.com/2023/01/13/politics/biden-penn-center-what-we-know/index.html>.

knowledge of donations to the university by any PRC persons/sources;<sup>7</sup>

- e. Were you involved in any discussions regarding the propriety of the University of Pennsylvania accepting donations from PRC persons/sources? If so, please elaborate the extent of your involvement, and any opinions you provided university administrators;
  - f. Were you involved in meetings/engagements with foreign persons who had made or went on to make donations to the University of Pennsylvania or the Penn Biden Center? If so, please identify all such instances, and the extent of your involvement;
  - g. Your involvement in President Biden's appointment as Benjamin Franklin Presidential Practice Professor at the University of Pennsylvania;
  - h. A list of all PRC persons and/or their representatives you met with while employed at the Center;
4. A detailed explanation of your involvement with businesses related to the PRC in your role at WestExec Advisors, including but not limited to:
- a. WestExec's work advising clients on "China-related risks in an era of strategic competition";<sup>8</sup>
  - b. WestExec's work advising U.S. research universities seeking funds from PRC sources (which could potentially put U.S. government funding at risk) to "navigate these issues with the Department of Defense" or other U.S. government entities;<sup>9</sup>
5. A detailed explanation of Ambassador Guttman and Ambassador Cohen's interactions with the People's Republic of China (PRC) in their respective capacities as President and Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the University of Pennsylvania, and presently as U.S. diplomats, including but not limited to:
- a. A detailed explanation of why donations to the University of Pennsylvania from PRC persons/sources reportedly increased to \$61 million in 2017-2019, up from

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<sup>7</sup> Including PRC citizens; PRC residents; entities, including but not limited to, corporations, partnerships, or limited liability companies created or organized in the PRC or under the laws of the PRC; and trusts or estates formed under the laws of the PRC.

<sup>8</sup> Yuichiro Kakutani, "Biden-Linked Firm WestExec Scrubs China Work from Website," WASHINGTON FREE BEACON (Dec. 2, 2020), <https://freebeacon.com/elections/biden-linked-firm-westexec-scrubs-china-work-from-website/>.

<sup>9</sup> *Id.*

\$19 million in the previous four years;<sup>10</sup>

- b. Any interactions with PRC or Chinese Communist Party officials;
  - c. A detailed description of all fundraising activities from all sources related to the PRC, including the identity of the donors and the purposes for which the funds were solicited/offered and ultimately utilized;
  - d. Any travel to the PRC;
  - e. Confirmation of whether Ambassador Guttman and Ambassador Cohen ever had access to the Center generally, and specifically to the spaces where sensitive and classified materials were found;
  - f. Their role in the establishment and operation of the Beijing-based Penn Wharton China Center;
6. A detailed explanation of Ambassador Michael Carpenter's, Deputy Ambassador Jeffery Prescott's, and former Deputy Secretary Brian McKeon's roles at the Penn Biden Center, including but not limited to:
- a. Each of their roles, duties, and dates of employment at the Center;
  - b. When each first became aware of the presence of sensitive or classified materials at the Center;
  - c. Whether each official had access to the spaces where sensitive and classified materials were found;
  - d. Each official's involvement in fundraising activities for the Center or the University of Pennsylvania (including donor outreach/engagement), and whether they had knowledge of donations to the university by any People's Republic of China (PRC) persons/sources;<sup>11</sup>
  - e. Each official's involvement in any discussions regarding the propriety of the University of Pennsylvania accepting such donations from PRC persons/sources. For any official who had such involvement, please elaborate the extent of their involvement, and any opinions they provided university administrators;

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<sup>10</sup> Alana Goodman, Watchdog Calls for Transparency from University of Pennsylvania's Biden Center, WASHINGTON FREE BEACON (Jan. 19, 2021), <https://freebeacon.com/democrats/watchdog-calls-for-transparency-from-university-of-pennsylvanias-biden-center/>.

<sup>11</sup> Including PRC citizens; PRC residents; entities, including but not limited to, corporations, partnerships, or limited liability companies created or organized in the PRC or under the laws of the PRC; and trusts or estates formed under the laws of the PRC.

- f. A list of all foreign nationals and/or their representatives each official met with while employed at the Center; and
7. A detailed explanation of any State Department engagement with the Department of Education regarding protocols and or “best practices” involving Chinese or other foreign donations to U.S. institutions of higher education, and any guidance/input provided by the State Department.

Thank you for your assistance with these matters. I look forward to your prompt responses.

Sincerely,



Michael T. McCaul  
Chairman

CC: Rep. Gregory Meeks, Ranking Member  
House Foreign Affairs Committee