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

June 30, 2023

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

Dear Secretary Blinken:

Media reports indicate that Special Envoy for Iran, Robert Malley, was placed on unpaid leave after his security clearance was suspended earlier this year amidst an investigation into potential mishandling of classified documents.<sup>1</sup> These reports raise serious concerns both regarding Malley's conduct and whether the State Department misled Congress and the American public.

In a statement to the media, Special Envoy Malley confirmed, "I have been informed that my security clearance is under review. I have not been provided any further information, but I expect the investigation to be resolved favorably and soon. In the meantime, I am on leave."<sup>2</sup> According to CNN, a U.S. official indicated that "Malley's clearance was suspended amid a State Department diplomatic security investigation into the possible mishandling of classified information."<sup>3</sup>

This news follows the troubling recent revelation that the Biden Administration held indirect "proximity talks" with the Iranian regime in May 2023, underscoring the importance of congressional oversight on Iran negotiations and policy, and for transparency and accountability on the part of the Department and the rest of the Biden Administration.

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<sup>1</sup> See Kylie Atwood et al., *Biden's Iran envoy placed on leave after security clearance suspended amid investigation into possible mishandling of classified material, sources say*, CNN, (June 29, 2023, 6:06 PM EDT), <https://www.cnn.com/2023/06/29/politics/rob-malley-leave-investigation-classified-material/index.html>; Barak Ravid, *U.S. special envoy for Iran Rob Malley on leave, says security clearance "under review"*, AXIOS, (June 29, 2023), <https://www.axios.com/2023/06/29/rob-malley-leave-security-clearance-investigation-iran>.

<sup>2</sup> *Id.*

<sup>3</sup> Atwood, *supra* note 1.

While the suspension of Special Envoy Malley's clearance is independently troubling, our concern is compounded by the State Department's failure to respond to the Committee's efforts to conduct oversight of its negotiations with and policy toward Iran. Since April 11, 2023, the Committee has repeatedly requested Special Envoy Malley's testimony, which the Department has not fulfilled, despite Special Envoy Malley's numerous press engagements dating back to May 30, 2023.<sup>4</sup>

Senior State Department officials informed the Committee that Special Envoy Malley was unable to testify or brief because he was on personal leave due to the illness of a close family member, for which my staff expressed sympathy. At no point did the Department indicate that Special Envoy Malley's security clearance was suspended or under review, or that he was being investigated for potential misconduct.

CNN similarly reported that "[t]he move to suspend Malley's security clearance was not communicated widely within the State Department or across the Biden administration, as the department kept him in his role and made no official announcements about replacing him."<sup>5</sup> Some officials at the State Department were told that Malley was handling personal matters, which is why he had taken a back seat on the Iran portfolio."<sup>6</sup>

The Department's failure to inform Congress of this matter demonstrates at best a lack of candor, and at worst represents deliberate and potentially unlawful misinformation.<sup>7</sup>

Given the gravity of the situation, it is imperative that the Department expeditiously provide a full and transparent accounting of the circumstances surrounding Special Envoy Malley's clearance suspension and investigation and the Department's statements to Congress regarding Special Envoy Malley. To shed light on these important matters, please provide the following no later than 5:00 pm on July 11, 2023:

1. A detailed accounting of any and all allegations, investigations, and/or findings of misconduct, including security violations, against Special Envoy Malley;
2. A detailed description of the circumstances surrounding Special Envoy Malley's leave from the Department, including the basis for its communications with Congress; and

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<sup>4</sup> See Mary Louise Kelly et al., *Iran's Nuclear Program Marches Forward, 5 Years After The U.S. Abandoned The Deal*, NPR, (May 29, 2023 5:22 PM EDT), <https://www.npr.org/transcripts/1178934701>.

<sup>5</sup> Atwood, *supra* note 1.

<sup>6</sup> *Id.*

<sup>7</sup> See 18 U.S.C. § 1001(2021) (establishing that a person who "falsifies, conceals, or covers up by any trick, scheme, or device a material fact" or "makes any materially false, fictitious, or fraudulent statement or representation" in "any investigation or review, conducted pursuant to the authority of any committee, subcommittee, commission or office of the Congress, consistent with applicable rules of the House or Senate" is subject to fines of up to \$250,000 or imprisonment of up to five years).

3. All documents and communications referring or relating to the review and/or suspension of Special Envoy Malley's clearance, his leave, and allegations and/or investigations of potential misconduct against him, including but not limited to:
  - a. Any personnel actions involving Special Envoy Malley since January 20, 2021;
  - b. All documents and communications referring or relating to suspensions, reviews, and/or investigations of Special Envoy Malley's security clearance since January 20, 2021;
  - c. All documents and communications referring or relating to Special Envoy Malley's leave since January 20, 2021; and
  - d. All documents and communications referring or relating to the Department's communications with Congress regarding Special Envoy Malley's leave, including the suspension, review, and/or investigation of his security clearance, since January 20, 2021.

I additionally request that the Department and the Biden Administration make Acting Special Envoy for Iran Abram Paley and National Security Council Coordinator for the Middle East and North Africa Brett McGurk available to testify in a public hearing and provide a classified briefing to the Committee by the end of July 2023.

I look forward to your prompt reply.

Sincerely,



Michael T. McCaul  
Chairman  
House Foreign Affairs Committee

CC:

Rep. Gregory W. Meeks, Ranking Member  
House Foreign Affairs Committee