

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

SUBCOMMITTEE ON READINESS

SUBCOMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE,
EMERGING THREATS, AND CAPABILITIES

COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY

SUBCOMMITTEE ON
INTELLIGENCE AND COUNTERTERRORISM

SUBCOMMITTEE ON CYBERSECURITY,
INFRASTRUCTURE PROTECTION, AND
INNOVATION



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

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October 6, 2020

The Honorable John Ratcliffe
Director of National Intelligence
Washington, DC 20511

Dear Director Ratcliffe:

As a former Central Intelligence Agency officer and as a former special assistant to the first Director of National Intelligence, I am intimately familiar with your obligation to provide unvarnished, fact-based analysis to senior policy officials. You rightly acknowledged this obligation during your Senate confirmation hearing.¹ But after extensive reading of classified intelligence on election security, I am concerned that your recent public statements on foreign interference in our elections are not supported by the facts, as briefed to Congress by career intelligence officers. Your actions appear intent at distracting from the primary threat to our democratic process posed by Russia, and instead amplifying claims about China's influence efforts. My primary concern is that you are seeking to bolster a future case by President Trump, if he loses, that Chinese interference caused his loss.

Since at least July, your office has released public statements that draw a false equivalency between the capabilities, intent, and breadth of Russian and Chinese efforts to influence our public policy and our election.² These public statements do not accurately reflect information

¹ Testimony of John Ratcliffe, U.S. Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, May 5, 2020. Transcript. "If confirmed as [Director of National Intelligence], you have my commitment to deliver timely, accurate, and objective intelligence and to speak truth to power; be that with Congress or within the administration. Let me be very clear: Regardless of what anyone wants our intelligence to reflect, the intelligence I will provide if confirmed will not be altered or impacted by outside influence." <https://www.bgov.com/core/news/#!/articles/Q9VI7X8JMDC0>

² <https://www.dni.gov/index.php/newsroom/press-releases/item/2139-statement-by-ncsc-director-william-evanina->

produced by the Intelligence Community, and that career intelligence officers briefed to Congress as recently as Thursday, October 1. This information came only to a small number of Members of Congress because you announced in late August that you would not brief all Members of Congress on election threats.³ More recently, you declassified information—which the Intelligence Community cannot corroborate—as part of an apparent effort to undermine the past assessments of nonpolitical career intelligence analysts.⁴ Press reports indicate that you released this information despite concerns from the leadership of both the Central Intelligence Agency and National Security Agency.⁵ The uncorroborated claims, which you hastily briefed to Republican Senators on September 29, were subsequently repeated by the President during the first presidential debate in a further attack on the patriotic, hard-working women and men of the Intelligence Community which you lead.^{6, 7}

Based on the gravity of these issues, I must ask the following:

1. Will you commit to immediately allowing the Directors of the Central Intelligence Agency and the National Security Agency to brief all Members on threats to our elections, so that they can receive information the Intelligence Community is obligated to provide Congress?
2. Will you commit that any assessments of foreign interference produced after the November 3 election will be produced and briefed to Congress by career Intelligence Community analysts with knowledge of the full body of information regarding Russia's and China's activities?
3. Will you commit to testify in front of Congress, together with the Director of the Central Intelligence Agency and the Director of the National Security Agency given the gravity of these matters? The American public has a right to understand your analysis, not just people with security clearances. Such testimony would of course be subject to 18 U.S. Code 1001 which provides a criminal penalty for knowingly and willfully giving materially false testimony before Congress.

election-threat-update-for-the-american-public

³ <https://thehill.com/homenews/senate/514274-read-congressional-intel-committees-will-no-longer-receive-full-briefings-on>

⁴ Per your September 29 letter to Senator Graham: "The [Intelligence Community] does not know the accuracy of this allegation or the extent to which the Russian intelligence analysis may reflect exaggeration or fabrication." https://www.judiciary.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/09-29-20_Letter%20to%20Sen.%20Graham_Declassification%20

⁵ <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-russia-intelligence/cia-nsa-chiefs-opposed-release-of-unverified-russia-intelligence-to-republican-lawmaker-sources-idUSKBN26M7JO>

⁶ <https://www.politico.com/news/2020/09/30/john-ratcliffe-russia-briefing-424125>

⁷ <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/release-of-unverified-russian-intelligence-sparks-questions-about-politicization>

Affirmative commitments in these three areas would help to reassure Members of Congress, and the American people, that the U.S. Intelligence Community will assess foreign influence free from partisan political pressure, as is your obligation and consistent with your sworn testimony before the Senate.

With voters already casting ballots in many states and election day rapidly approaching, I request a reply from you by October 20, 2020.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Elissa Slotkin". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a period at the end.

Elissa Slotkin
Member of Congress

cc:

The Honorable Gina C. Haspel, Director, Central Intelligence Agency
General Paul M. Nakasone, Director, National Security Agency