



**Permanent Select Committee  
on Intelligence  
U.S. House of Representatives**

April 7, 2020

The Honorable Richard Grenell  
Acting Director of National Intelligence  
Office of the Director of National Intelligence  
Washington, D.C. 20511

Dear Acting Director Grenell:

I am writing to express my concern that you are pursuing organizational and personnel changes at the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI) without consulting and seeking authorization from Congress and in a manner that undermines critical intelligence functions. This effort appears to be proceeding despite the Coronavirus pandemic and amid indications, exemplified by a March 10 briefing to Members of Congress, of political interference in the production and dissemination of intelligence. These developments call into question both your commitment to ensuring that the Intelligence Community's (IC) work on behalf of our nation is not inappropriately influenced by political considerations, as required by law and that the IC will continue to speak truth to power.

Consistent with Congress' longstanding, bipartisan commitment to ensuring the independence of the IC, the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence (the Committee) will undertake additional oversight of the following intelligence activities:

- 1. Reorganization of ODNI.** Congress has neither authorized organizational changes at ODNI, nor appropriated funds for that purpose. Additionally, ODNI has not communicated to the Committee any intelligence rationale for potential changes to ODNI's staffing and structure, including reductions to the staff of the National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC) or in the overall number of IC personnel detailed to ODNI in support of core functions. The Committee is concerned, moreover, by the removal or departure of every Senate-confirmed official at ODNI, as well as of other senior officials across ODNI's leadership team, including NCTC Acting Director Russell Travers and Acting Deputy Director Peter Hall.

President Trump did not nominate you for confirmation as permanent DNI, and it would be inappropriate for you to pursue any additional leadership, organizational, or staffing changes to ODNI during your temporary tenure. Any effort, moreover, to remove or otherwise initiate personnel actions against apolitical career officers based on their perceived loyalty to the President would contravene civil service protections.

To inform the Committee's oversight, you are requested to provide by **April 16, 2020**: (a) a detailed written explanation for all potential organizational and personnel changes at ODNI, including, but not limited to, NCTC, under active consideration; (b) a list of all third parties with whom you or your staff consulted regarding the potential organizational changes; and (c) all internal communications and records, including any with the White House, pertaining to the removal of Russell Travers as Acting Director of NCTC and the departure of Peter Hall as Acting Deputy Director.

- 2. Termination of the IC Inspector General (IC IG).** Late in the evening of April 3, President Trump announced that he was firing Michael Atkinson, the Inspector General of the Intelligence Community (IC IG). The next day, the President confirmed publicly that he had fired Mr. Atkinson because Mr. Atkinson had sought to transmit to the congressional intelligence committees a credible whistleblower complaint of urgent concern—one that implicated the President himself and was required by law to be transmitted to Congress.<sup>1</sup> President Trump's remarks leave no doubt that his firing of Mr. Atkinson was politically motivated reprisal. As Mr. Atkinson himself observed on April 5, "it is hard not to think that the President's loss of confidence in me derives from my having faithfully discharged my legal obligations as an independent and impartial Inspector General, and from my commitment to continue to do so."<sup>2</sup>

Mr. Atkinson acted with the highest integrity and remarkable professionalism, even as he was falsely attacked by the President and his supporters in Congress for staying true to his oath. Your predecessor, then-Acting DNI Joseph Maguire, confirmed this when he testified before the Committee in September 2019 that Mr. Atkinson's handling of the Ukraine whistleblower matter was fully consistent with the law and established procedures. Consequently, the Committee is reviewing the circumstances of Mr. Atkinson's dismissal, including whether his termination was intended to curb any ongoing investigations or reviews being undertaken by his office.

Pursuant to 50 U.S.C. § 5033(f), you are hereby requested to confirm in writing to the Committee by **April 16, 2020**, whether you have ever exercised your authority to prohibit Mr. Atkinson, or recently named Acting IC IG, Thomas Monheim, from "initiating, carrying out, or completing any investigation, inspection, audit, or review" and, if so, the nature of the investigation(s) prohibited and the reasons for the exercise of such authority.

The Committee also requests that you provide by **April 16, 2020**, a written certification from the Acting General Counsel of ODNI that officials, yourself included, will not permit

---

<sup>1</sup> The White House, *Remarks by President Trump, Vice President Pence, and Members of the Coronavirus Task Force in Press Briefing* (Apr. 4, 2020) (Remarks of President Trump) ("I thought he [Mr. Atkinson] did a terrible job. Absolutely terrible. He took a whistleblower report, which turned out to be a fake report — it was fake. It was totally wrong. It was about my conversation with the President of Ukraine. He took a fake report and he brought it to Congress, with an emergency. Okay? Not a big Trump fan — that, I can tell you."), available at: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-president-trump-vice-president-pence-members-coronavirus-task-force-press-briefing-19>.

<sup>2</sup> Statement by Michael Atkinson, April 5, 2020.

retaliation or reprisals against anyone who has made, or in the future makes, protected disclosures of misconduct to Congress or Inspectors General.

Finally, you are also reminded of your legal obligation under 50 U.S.C. § 5033(k)(1) to submit to the Committee **on or before May 30, 2020** the IC IG's semi-annual report for the six-month period ending March 31, 2020. By law, that report must contain, among other things: (1) a "list of the title or subject of each investigation, inspection, audit, or review conducted during the period covered by such report"; (2) a "description of significant problems, abuses, and deficiencies relating to the administration of programs and activities of the intelligence community within the responsibility and authority of the [DNI]"; and (3) a "certification of whether or not the Inspector General has had full and direct access to all information relevant to the performance of the functions of the Inspector General."<sup>3</sup>

- 3. Election Security.** Reports indicate that one or more members of your staff may be inappropriately interfering with the production and briefing of intelligence information on election security to Congress, including information that was briefed to all Members on March 10.<sup>4</sup> If accurate, this politicization of intelligence would constitute a grave breach of your duty as Acting DNI to preserve the independence of the IC, protect the integrity of U.S. elections, and keep the Congress fully and currently informed of intelligence activities, including by providing national intelligence that is "independent of political considerations."<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, it calls into doubt whether Congress and the American people can trust that the IC will continue producing unvarnished intelligence assessments on foreign interference efforts as the 2020 presidential election approaches. The Committee will be undertaking vigorous oversight of these matters and expects that ODNI will refrain from seeking to influence or otherwise interfere in the collection, analysis, and dissemination of intelligence, including to Congress.

As part of the Committee's oversight, you are requested to produce to the Committee **by April 16, 2020**, any and all communications regarding the participation of the Director of the National Counterintelligence and Security Center in the March 10 briefing, as well as any and all communications regarding the assessment that he presented at the briefing. Further, the next elections security quarterly update to House committees from the Intelligence Community Executive and Leadership Board is due in May. It is critical that Congress remain apprised of activities surrounding the security of the 2020 presidential election,

---

<sup>3</sup> 50 U.S.C. § 3033(k)(1)(B).

<sup>4</sup> See, e.g., *Intelligence Officials Temper Russia Warnings, Prompting Accusations of Political Influence*, N.Y. Times (Mar. 10, 2020), *online at*: <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/10/us/politics/election-interference-briefing-trump.html>.

<sup>5</sup> 50 U.S.C. §3024(a)(1) and (2). ("(1) The Director of National Intelligence shall be responsible for ensuring that national intelligence is provided—(A) to the President; (B) to the heads of departments and agencies of the executive branch; (C) to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and senior military commanders; (D) to the Senate and House of Representatives and the committees thereof; and (E) to such other persons as the Director of National Intelligence determines to be appropriate. (2) Such national intelligence should be timely, objective, *independent of political considerations*, and based upon all sources available to the intelligence community and other appropriate entities." (emphasis added)).

especially during the Coronavirus pandemic. Accordingly, the Committee requests a written elections security update by **May 30, 2020**.

The Committee expects ODNI's full cooperation on these and other matters, consistent with the statutory obligation, pursuant to 50 U.S.C. § 3091, to keep the Committee "fully and currently informed of the intelligence activities of the United States," and also in furtherance of the constructive relationship that has existed between the Committee and your office under prior DNIs. I also look forward to your appearance before the Committee at the earliest practicable opportunity.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Adam B. Schiff". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "A" and "S".

Adam B. Schiff  
Chairman

Cc: The Honorable Devin Nunes  
Ranking Member