

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 4, 2019

The Honorable Michael Pompeo
Secretary
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Mr. Secretary:

The Committees on Foreign Affairs, Intelligence, and Oversight and Reform of the United States House of Representatives (“Committees”), write jointly to request documents from and interviews with personnel of the Department of State (“Department”) related to communications between President Donald J. Trump and President Vladimir Putin of the Russian Federation.

According to media reports, President Trump, on multiple occasions, appears to have taken steps to conceal the details of his communications with President Putin from other administration officials, Congress, and the American people.¹ The President reportedly seized notes pertaining to at least one meeting held with President Putin and directed at least one American interpreter not to discuss the substance of communications with President Putin with other federal officials.

On February 21, 2019, we wrote a joint letter to the White House requesting basic information about whether the President in fact destroyed records relating to his conversations with President Putin—in violation of the Presidential Records Act—or if he did not, where those records are currently located.² The White House failed to provide any response to our inquiry. As a result, we are now expanding our investigation.

¹ *Trump Has Concealed Details of His Face-to-Face Encounters with Putin from Senior Officials in Administration*, Washington Post (Jan. 13, 2019) (online at www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/trump-has-concealed-details-of-his-face-to-face-encounters-with-putin-from-senior-officials-in-administration/2019/01/12/65f6686c-1434-11e9-b6ad-9cfd62dbb0a8_story.html).

² Letter from Chairman Elijah E. Cummings, Committee on Oversight and Reform, Chairman Eliot Engel, Committee on Foreign Affairs, and Chairman Adam B. Schiff, Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, to Acting White House Chief of Staff Mick Mulvaney (Feb. 21, 2019) (online at <https://oversight.house.gov/sites/democrats.oversight.house.gov/files/documents/2019-02-21.EEC%20Engel%20Schiff%20to%20Mulvaney-WH%20re%20PRA.pdf>).

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These allegations, if true, raise profound national security, counterintelligence, and foreign policy concerns, especially in light of Russia's ongoing active measures campaign to improperly influence American elections. In addition, such allegations, if true, undermine the proper functioning of government, most notably the Department's access to critical information germane to its diplomatic mission and its ability to develop and execute foreign policy that advances our national interests. Finally, these allegations present serious concerns that materials pertaining to specific communications may have been manipulated or withheld from the official record in direct contravention of federal laws, which expressly require that Presidents and other administration officials preserve such materials.

Congress has a constitutional duty to conduct oversight over the Department and the White House to determine, among other things, (i) the impact of those communications on U.S. foreign policy, (ii) whether federal officials, including President Trump, have acted in the national interest, and (iii) whether the applicable laws, regulations, and agency procedures with respect to diplomatic communications with President Putin and other foreign leaders have been complied with and remain sufficient. As the House Committees with legislative and oversight jurisdiction over these issues, we require information regarding the following subjects:

- The substance of President Trump's communications with President Putin, including any discussion between the two individuals—during in-person encounters and phone calls—on matters that are within the Committees' jurisdiction;
- The existence and contents, if applicable, of any documents related to President Trump's communications with President Putin;
- Whether any such communications have provided a basis for reconsideration, modification, or implementation of foreign policy;
- Whether President Trump or any person(s) acting at his behest or with his knowledge sought to conceal, obscure, or otherwise misrepresent the substance of those communications to other federal officials, departments, or agencies, and/or to shield President Trump from scrutiny by Congress or law enforcement; and
- Whether President Trump, or any person(s) acting at his behest or with his knowledge, failed to create records of, or in any way destroyed, suppressed, mishandled, or otherwise withheld any federal or presidential records, contrary to federal law, including the Federal Records Act and Presidential Records Act.

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Accordingly, the Committees request that, by March 15, 2019, the Department produce all documents and communications, regardless of form and classification, that refer or relate to any communications between President Trump and President Putin, including in-person meetings and telephone calls, for the timeframe January 20, 2017, to present.

Specifically, the Committees request the Department produce complete and unredacted copies of:

1. All documents referring or related to in-person meetings, or preparation for in-person meetings, between President Donald Trump and President Vladimir Putin, whether in a bilateral or multilateral setting;
2. All documents referring or related to telephone calls, or preparation for telephone calls, between President Trump and President Putin;
3. All documents referring or related to records of any written communications between or about communications between President Trump and President Putin;
4. All documents referring or related to any guidance provided to Department personnel, including but not limited to, the Secretary of State and staff in the Office of the Secretary, concerning the Federal Records Act and/or the Presidential Records Act and the legal obligation to prepare and retain records of meetings with foreign leaders; and
5. All documents referring or related to compliance or noncompliance with federal records laws including the Federal Records Act and/or the Presidential Records Act, including any efforts to obtain and properly maintain records that relate to communications between President Trump and President Putin.

The Department is expected to produce a complete set of any and all responsive records to each of the three Committees. Both the House and the Committees are authorized and equipped to take possession and handle classified documents, whether produced in electronic or physical form. For additional instructions concerning the production of documents, please refer to the attached Document Production Protocol. Should the Department identify responsive

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documents that it believes to be subject to any privilege(s), such documents, as well as the rationale for the purported privilege, should be identified at the time productions are made.

In addition, the Committees request that the Department identify and make available for transcribed interviews all Department employees, contractors, or detailees, whether current or former, with knowledge of these communications, including, but not limited to:

1. All staff, including but not limited to linguists, translators, or interpreters who participated in attended, or in any way listened in on President Trump's in-person meetings with President Putin, as well as President Trump's phone calls with President Putin;
2. Relevant personnel assigned to the offices of the Secretary, Deputy Secretary, Under Secretary for Political Affairs, the Executive Secretariat, the Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, and relevant U.S. missions in Finland, Germany, Vietnam, and Argentina, who were either present at the events at which Presidents Trump and Putin communicated, or have knowledge about such communications, including:
 - a. personnel staffing or otherwise assisting then-Secretary of State Rex Tillerson at the July 7, 2017 G-20 meeting in Hamburg, Germany;
 - b. personnel staffing or otherwise assisting Secretary of State Michael Pompeo at the July 16, 2018 meeting in Helsinki, Finland;
 - c. personnel who became privy to formal or informal written or oral readouts of those communications, either via other U.S. government employees or from foreign counterparts; and
 - d. personnel who were responsible for advising Department personnel, including but not limited to, the Secretary of State and staff in the Office of the Secretary, concerning the Federal Records Act and/or the Presidential Records Act and the legal obligation to prepare and retain records of meetings with foreign leaders, and/or who were responsible for obtaining and properly maintaining such records.

The Committees are prepared to work cooperatively with the Department to facilitate the production of documents and scheduling the requested interviews, as initial steps in conducting Congressional oversight on diplomatic communications that are central to American foreign policy and national security. Staff for each of the Committees will jointly schedule a meeting with the Bureau of Legislative Affairs shortly to discuss this request and ensure the scope is properly understood by the Department.

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Thank you for your prompt attention to this request.

Sincerely,



Eliot Engel
Chairman
Committee on Foreign Affairs



Adam B. Schiff
Chairman
Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence



Elijah Cummings
Chairman
Committee on Oversight and Reform

Enclosure

cc: The Honorable Michael McCaul
Ranking Member, Foreign Affairs Committee

The Honorable Devin Nunes
Ranking Member, Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence

The Honorable Jim Jordan
Ranking Member, Committee on Oversight and Reform