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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON FINANCE
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6200

January 22, 2021

VIA ELECTRONIC TRANSMISSION

Mr. Robert M. Wilkinson
Acting Attorney General
Department of Justice

Dear Mr. Wilkinson:

At a May 1, 2019, Senate Judiciary Committee hearing, I asked then-Attorney General Bill Barr what he was doing to “investigate unauthorized media contacts by the Department and FBI officials during the Russia investigation.” Then-Attorney General Barr answered, “[w]e have multiple criminal leak investigations underway.”

On January 19, 2021, *The New York Times* reported that Operation Echo, the investigation into the leak of information relating to calls between the then-incoming National Security Advisor, Lt. Gen. Flynn, and the Russian Ambassador to the U.S, Sergey Kislyak, is now closed.¹ The report stated, “investigators ultimately found **no** wrongdoing[.]”² A January 12, 2017, *Washington Post* article first reported on those calls.³

On May 29, 2020, after I had requested that the Flynn-Kislyak calls be declassified in the interest of public disclosure, the Director of National Intelligence did so. Accordingly, it is clear that the information leaked to and published by the *Washington Post* on January 12, 2017, was sensitive information at that time and the leak was most likely designed to undermine the Trump administration in its first days.

¹ Nicolas Fandos and Katie Benner, *Justice Dept. Ends Stock Trade Inquiry Into Richard Burr Without Charges*, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/01/19/us/politics/richard-burr-stock-trades-investigation.html#click=//t.co/X2UZbMmCN6>, *The New York Times* (Jan. 19, 2021).

² *Id.* Emphasis added.

³ David Ignatius, *Why did Obama dawdle on Russia's hacking?*, *The Washington Post* (Jan. 12, 2017), https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/why-did-obama-dawdle-on-russias-hacking/2017/01/12/75f878a0-d90c-11e6-9a36-1d296534b31e_story.html; Press Release listing Lt. Gen. Flynn Unmasking Requests from Obama Administration officials, Senator Charles Grassley, Chairman, Finance Committee, Senator Ron Johnson, Chairman, Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee (May 13, 2020), <https://www.grassley.senate.gov/news/news-releases/johnson-grassley-release-information-about-unmasking-americans>.

In light of then-Attorney General Barr's testimony to Congress and *The New York Times* report, the Department must update Congress on whether the reported finding that "no wrongdoing" was identified is in fact true and accurate.

Accordingly, no later than February 5, 2021, please provide all records relating to the Flynn-Kislyak leak investigation, including any report of investigation and closing memoranda.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Chuck Grassley". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Charles E. Grassley
Chairman
Committee on Finance