

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

August 20, 2020

The Honorable Chris Van Hollen
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Van Hollen,

On August 8, 2020, you gave public comments regarding our investigation into potential conflicts of interest relating to the Obama administration's policy decisions regarding Ukraine and Burisma while the Vice President's son was on Burisma's board. You stated that this investigation is "part of an effort from Russia and Russian intelligence and Putin to spread this disinformation here in the United States."¹ You further stated that "it's outrageous that senators would allow themselves to be used for this purpose."²

Your comments show a lack of understanding about our investigation. They are not only factually inaccurate but also such a gross mischaracterization of our actual investigation that you are promoting a false narrative based on disinformation that only benefits Russia.

As we have stated publicly since before your Saturday interview, our investigation is focused on Obama administration records from the State Department, National Archives, Department of Justice, other federal agencies, and the U.S. consulting firm Blue Star Strategies, as well as speaking with current and former U.S. government officials. How, exactly, is this disinformation? Is it the *one* foreign national we spoke with about his communications and personal visits with the Obama administration; a DNC operative; and Blue Star Strategies, a prominent Democratic consulting firm?

If any of the material we've acquired from the Obama administration is, in your opinion, part of a Russian disinformation campaign, then that says more about the faults of the previous administration than it does about our inquiry.

Regarding reports that we have received "packages" of information from certain Ukrainian nationals – that is false. Further, the only relevant disinformation that we are aware of are documents that Minority Leader Schumer, Senator Warner, Speaker Pelosi, and Chairman Schiff referenced in their recent letter that your Democratic colleagues have introduced into our investigation. For example, the Schumer letter references a document, created by a Ukrainian

¹ "Interview with MSNBC's Ali Velshi." YouTube video, 7:10. Posted by "Senator Chris Van Hollen," August 8, 2020. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WEW24DQ-y8M&feature=youtu.be>.

² *Id.*

national that mentions our names along with other Republican senators and administration officials, to suggest falsely that we *might* have received information from this individual. Liberal media outlets have picked up that reference, clearly from a leak, even though we have not received any information from that person, including tapes, and we have publicly and privately stated as much. To repeat, the only document in our investigation that has been described as disinformation is a document that *your Democratic colleagues*, not us, introduced into the record. If you and your colleagues are so concerned about disinformation, why do you continue to promote it?

As we've stated to your Democratic colleagues and the media, we have neither sought out, relied upon, nor publicly released anything that could even remotely be considered disinformation.

Truth be told, you and your Democratic colleagues should know a thing or two about Russian disinformation. For example, in April, we sought and received declassified versions of footnotes in the Justice Department Inspector General's FISA report.³ Among other things, those footnotes revealed that the FBI received reporting in January 2017 and February 2017 that parts of the Democratic National Committee's and Clinton Campaign's Steele dossier were part of a Russian disinformation campaign.⁴ We are not aware of you or your Democratic colleagues commenting publicly on this disturbing revelation. Where is your outrage about concerns of *actual* Russian disinformation contained in the Steele Dossier and Russian disinformation paid for by the Democratic National Committee and Hillary Clinton campaign? The Steele Dossier is the very definition of election interference, yet we hear no objections from you and your Democratic colleagues.

Many of your Democratic colleagues repeatedly pushed the now-debunked Trump/Russia collusion conspiracy theory and the Steele Dossier in public, on the Senate floor, in Committee meetings, and in the press. Based on the underlying intelligence reports that were withheld from the American people and Congress until recently, it is plain that when your colleagues peddled the dossier, they peddled Russian disinformation. Indeed, Russian Intelligence Services knew about the dossier in early July 2016, before the FBI opened Crossfire Hurricane, which made the dossier the perfect vehicle to use for a disinformation campaign to sow chaos and discord. You and your Democratic colleagues gave them exactly what they wanted. Rather than heed these hard lessons, you seem intent on repeating them.

³ U.S. Dep't of Justice, Office of Inspector Gen., Review of Four FISA Applications and Other Aspects of the FBI's Crossfire

Hurricane Investigation (Dec. 2019), <https://www.justice.gov/storage/120919-examination.pdf>.

⁴ Letter from Richard Grenell, Acting Dir. of Nat'l Intelligence, to Sens. Charles E. Grassley & Ron Johnson, Chairmen (Apr. 15, 2020), <https://www.grassley.senate.gov/sites/default/files/2020-04-15%20ODNI%20to%20CEG%20RHJ%20%28FISA%20Footnote%20Declassification%29.pdf>.

Your public statements about our investigation knowingly and recklessly promote false narratives for political purposes, which undermines efforts to stop foreign disinformation campaigns. Your public comments do more to amplify Ukrainian voices that you assert are engaged in disinformation and results in more apparent disinformation being inserted in the Congressional record and public record than if you respected the serious work of our committees. Just as we wrote to Minority Leader Schumer, Senator Warner, Speaker Pelosi, and Chairman Schiff in response to their error-laden letter, we call on you to stop playing political games with this issue. It is simply too important.

Sincerely,



Charles E. Grassley
Chairman
Committee on Finance



Ron Johnson
Chairman
Committee on Homeland Security
and Governmental Affairs