

October 12, 2023

VIA ELECTRONIC TRANSMISSION

The Honorable Antony Blinken
Secretary
U.S. Department of State

Dear Secretary Blinken:

In June 2023, it was reported that Robert Malley, the Biden administration's Special Envoy for Iran, was placed on unpaid leave and that his security clearance was suspended pending an internal investigation into allegations that he mishandled classified information.¹ The Special Envoy for Iran is responsible for developing, coordinating, and implementing the State Department's Iran policy and reports directly to the Secretary of State.² Malley was specifically hired by the Biden administration to restart the failed Iran Nuclear Deal from the Obama administration.³ It has also been reported that the State Department's Diplomatic Security investigation has been turned over to the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI).⁴ The allegations against Malley draw serious concern and demand additional information from the Biden administration.

The State Department's lack of transparency communicating on the status of Mr. Malley's role is unacceptable. In May 2023, State Department officials told Congress that Mr. Malley was on "extended personal leave" and suggested that his absence might be related to a family health issue not any mishandling of classified information.⁵ Yet, State officials said they learned of Mr. Malley's change in status from paid to unpaid leave shortly after questions about his status were raised at the State Department's regular afternoon briefing in late June 2023.⁶

¹ Matthew Lee. Associated Press Politics via The Hill, *Biden's Iran envoy placed on unpaid leave pending a review of his handling of classified document*, (June 29, 2023). <https://thehill.com/homenews/ap/ap-politics/ap-bidens-envoy-for-iran-placed-on-leave-while-facing-a-review-of-his-security-clearance/>, (last accessed: 10/9/2023).

² U.S. Department of State, Special Envoy for Iran, see: <https://www.state.gov/bureaus-offices/secretary-of-state/special-envoy-for-iran/> (last accessed: 10/9/2023).

³ See Dave Lawyer, Barak Ravid. AXIOS. *Biden Picks Rob Malley as envoy for Iran*. (January 29, 2023). <https://www.axios.com/2021/01/29/rob-malley-biden-iran-envoy-nuclear-deal>. (last accessed: 10/10/2023).

⁴ Morgan Chalfant. Semafor. *FBI investigates Biden Iran envoy over classified information*. (July 7, 2023). See: <https://www.semafor.com/article/07/07/2023/fbi-investigates-biden-iran-envoy-malley/>. (Last accessed: 10/9/2023).

⁵ Matthew Lee. Associated Press Politics via The Hill, *Biden's Iran envoy placed on unpaid leave pending a review of his handling of classified document*, (June 29, 2023). <https://thehill.com/homenews/ap/ap-politics/ap-bidens-envoy-for-iran-placed-on-leave-while-facing-a-review-of-his-security-clearance/>, (last accessed: 10/9/2023).

⁶ *Id.* Also see: Department of State Press Briefing – June 29, 2023, led by Matthew Miller, Department Spokesperson. See: <https://www.state.gov/briefings/departments-press-briefing-june-29-2023/>. (last accessed: 10/9/2023). On July 13, 2023 I, along with other Members of Congress, wrote to the State Department's Office of Inspector General (IG) requesting an independent investigation into whether the State Department complied with all appropriate laws and regulations with regard to the suspension of Malley's access to classified information. In response, the IG conducted preliminary work and determined that the State Department's response warranted a special review, which is ongoing.

The State Department has yet to provide a public update on the status of Robert Malley's employment or the investigation of his security clearance. However, the Department updated the X (formerly known as Twitter) account for the Office of the Special Envoy of Iran to show a picture of Deputy Special Envoy Abram Paley along with a caption that states "Office of the Special Envoy for Iran – Deputy Special Envoy Abram Paley."⁷ At an August 14, 2023, State Department Press Briefing the Department was asked if this update to the X account meant that Mr. Malley had been dismissed from his role or would not be returning for significant period of time, which a spokesperson for the Department stated that "I have no specifics to offer ... Abram Paley is leading the department's work in this area," meaning Iran.⁸ It is also problematic that, in the absence of information, there is reporting that "the information vacuum has been filled in part by speculative stories in...Iranian media outlets."⁹

It is critical that a full and thorough review be conducted regarding allegations of Malley's mishandling of classified information and that the Congress be given information with respect to the basis of the investigation and its results. In order to inform Congress as it conducts oversight on this matter, I request an update on the investigation into Malley and a copy of the final report of investigation upon completion of this matter. Notably, the State Department provided such a report to me with respect to Secretary Clinton's mishandling of highly classified information.¹⁰

Thank you for your attention to this matter. If you have any questions, please contact my Budget Committee staff at (202) 224-0642.

Sincerely,



Charles E. Grassley
Ranking Member
Committee on the Budget

cc: Gentry Smith, Assistant Secretary, U.S. Department of State Bureau of Diplomatic Security
Diana Shaw, Acting IG, U.S. Department of State

⁷ X Account (formerly known as Twitter) for the Office of the Special Envoy for Iran. See: <https://twitter.com/usenvoyiran>. (last accessed: 10/9/2023).

⁸ Department of State Press Briefing – August 14, 2023, led by Vedant Patel, Principal Deputy Spokesperson. See: <https://www.state.gov/briefings/departments-press-briefing-august-14-2023/>. (last accessed: 10/10/2023).

⁹ Betsy Woodruff Swan and Nahal Toosi. Politico. *'It's not good': GOP angry over Biden team's handling of Iran envoy probe*. (July 12, 2023). See: <https://www.politico.com/news/2023/07/12/gop-angry-over-biden-team-handling-iran-envoy-probe-00106023>. (last accessed: 10/9/2023).

¹⁰ See: Senator Chuck Grassley Press Release. *State Dept. 's Clinton Server Review Found 38 Individuals Culpable for 91 Security Violations*. (10/18/2019). <https://www.grassley.senate.gov/news/news-releases/state-dept-s-clinton-server-review-found-38-individuals-culpable-91-security>.