

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

November 21, 2023

VIA ELECTRONIC TRANSMISSION

The Honorable Antony Blinken
Secretary
Department of State

Dear Secretary Blinken:

On October 12, 2023, I sent you a letter with respect to the State Department’s (State) oversight of \$6 billion the Biden administration has given Iran access to as part of a prisoner swap agreement.¹ On November 20, 2023, State responded but failed to sufficiently answer three of my questions:²

1. Please describe what you meant by “strict oversight” of these funds, including which government agencies are involved and their respective roles, and what enforcement mechanisms are in place to ensure compliance and, if necessary, punish Iran for violating the terms of the deal.
2. Please describe what components of the State Department are responsible for conducting this oversight, to include the title and ranks of responsible government officials.
3. Please describe the information that led “[t]he U.S. and Qatari governments...to block Iran from accessing this money.”³

Concerning the first question, State said, “[t]he United States will have full visibility and will exercise strict oversight as to how and when these funds are used.”⁴ However, State failed to describe what it means by “exercise strict oversight,” as my initial letter asked. State also wrote, “[i]n close coordination with the U.S. Department of the Treasury Office of Foreign Assets Control

¹ Letter from Senator Charles Grassley, Ranking Member, Senate Budget Committee, to Antony Blinken, Secretary, Department of State, (Oct. 12, 2023), https://www.grassley.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/grassley_to_blinken_-_strict_oversight1.pdf.

² Letter from Naz Durakoglu, Assistant Secretary, Department of State Bureau of Legislative Affairs, to Senator Charles Grassley, Ranking Member, Senate Budget Committee, (Nov. 20, 2023) (on file with Comm. staff).

³ Monica Alba, Elyse Perlmutter-Gumbiner, & Katherine Doyle, *U.S. and Qatar agree to not release Iran’s \$6B*, NBC NEWS, (Oct. 12, 2023), <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/white-house/us-qatar-agree-not-release-iran-6-billion-prisoner-swap-rcna120135>.

⁴ Letter from Durakoglu, *supra* note 2.

(OFAC), we have established a rigorous oversight process for these funds and remain confident they will not be diverted towards sanctionable transactions.”⁵ While State identified OFAC as an involved government agency, State failed to describe what OFAC’s respective role will be, whether it will be the only agency involved, and what “oversight process” means and consists of. Lastly, State claimed, “[h]owever, if Iran seeks to [divert money toward sanctionable transactions], we also retain the ability to ensure Iran cannot utilize these funds.”⁶ However, State failed to explain what enforcement mechanisms are in place to ensure compliance and, if necessary, punish Iran for violating the terms of the deal.

The Department failed to answer questions two and three.⁷

In light of the State’s failure to sufficiently respond to my questions, please fully answer all aforementioned questions and provide all records⁸ no later than December 5, 2023.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter. Should you have any questions, please contact Jace Pimentel of my Committee staff at (202) 224-0642.

Sincerely,



Charles E. Grassley
Ranking Member
Committee on the Budget

⁵ *Id.*

⁶ *Id.*

⁷ *Id.*

⁸ “Records” include any written, recorded, or graphic material of any kind, including letters, memoranda, reports, notes, electronic data (emails, email attachments, and any other electronically created or stored information), calendar entries, inter-office communications, meeting minutes, phone/voice mail or recordings/records of verbal communications, and drafts (regardless of whether they resulted in final documents).