

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 9, 2021

## **VIA ELECTRONIC TRANSMISSION**

Ms. Tamara A. Johnson  
Acting Intelligence Community Inspector General

Dear Acting Inspector General Johnson:

On May 24, 2021, the Washington Post reported on a unit within the Department of Commerce (DOC) called the Investigations and Threat Management Service (ITMS).<sup>1</sup> That report noted that the office evolved from a security unit designed to protect DOC officials into a “counterintelligence operation that collected information on hundreds of people inside and outside the department.”<sup>2</sup> The report also noted that the ITMS conducted covert searches of employees’ offices at night utilizing latex gloves, shoe coverings, hairnets, balaclava-style face masks and a lock-picking set, kept in a duffel bag.<sup>3</sup> The unit also reportedly conducted broad key word searches on DOC computer servers looking for Chinese words connected to talent recruitment programs.<sup>4</sup> These searches reportedly lacked proper predication and disproportionately targeted Asian American employees within the DOC.<sup>5</sup>

The Washington Post reported that the DOC’s Inspector General launched multiple investigations and in one instance it’s been alleged that the inspector general questioned the ITMS’s authority to conduct criminal investigations.<sup>6</sup> According to an Action Memorandum from the DOC Inspector General, that office “coordinated with the OIG for the Intelligence Community to obtain potential points of contact regarding authority for units conducting counter-intelligence investigations.”<sup>7</sup> In the DOC’s 2018 budget submission to Congress, it described the function of the ITMS unit as following:

The program’s investigative findings directly inform key decision-makers (including senior U.S. Government and Secretarial officials) and stakeholders (NSS, ODNI, DOJ) about serious threats to national security or public safety, and enable OSY (Office of Security) to target and refine its security services against rapidly emerging threats which would have remained unidentified by other government agencies. The program fulfills U.S. national strategic requirements involving counterintelligence, transnational organized crime, and counterterrorism.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> ITMS was previously called the Investigations and Threat Management Division (ITMD).

<sup>2</sup> Shawn Boburg, *Commerce Department security unit evolved into counterintelligence-like operation, Washington Post examination found*, The Washington Post (May 24, 2021).

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/investigations/2021/05/24/commerce-department-monitoring-itms/>.

<sup>3</sup> *Id.*

<sup>4</sup> *Id.*

<sup>5</sup> *Id.*

<sup>6</sup> *Id.*

<sup>7</sup> Action Memorandum for File, DOC Office of Inspector General, Office of Criminal Investigations (Aug. 2, 2017).

<sup>8</sup> U.S. Department of Commerce, FY 2018 Congressional Submission.

[https://www.osec.doc.gov/bmi/budget/FY18CBJ/DM\\_CJ\\_2018\\_Master\\_with\\_pagination\\_OB\\_revision\\_05\\_22\\_17.pdf](https://www.osec.doc.gov/bmi/budget/FY18CBJ/DM_CJ_2018_Master_with_pagination_OB_revision_05_22_17.pdf).

In addition, according to the Washington Post, the ITMS conveyed information about some of its cases to the FBI and the Department of Homeland Security's Office of Intelligence and Analysis.<sup>9</sup>

Clearly, the ITMS believes itself to be a counter-intelligence unit; however, it is unclear as to whether or not it has the authority to operate as one. I am writing this letter to better understand the IC IG's affiliation with the ITMS and what, if any, assistance it provided to that unit. Accordingly, please answer the following questions no later than June 23, 2021:

1. Did the DOC Inspector General "coordinate" or otherwise communicate with the IC IG regarding the ITMS? If so, when and what was the subject matter?
2. Did the DOC Inspector General "obtain potential points of contact regarding authority for units conducting counter-intelligence investigations" from the IC IG? If so, who and when?
3. Did the IC IG provide any guidance to the DOC Inspector General regarding the authority to conduct counter-intelligence investigations? If so, what was that guidance and when was it given?
4. Is the IC IG aware of any affiliation between the Intelligence Community and the ITMS? If so, please explain.

Please send all unclassified material directly to the Committee. In keeping with the requirements of Executive Order 13526, if any of the responsive documents do contain classified information, please segregate all unclassified material within the classified documents, provide all unclassified information directly to the Committee, and provide a classified addendum to the Office of Senate Security. The Committee complies with all laws and regulations governing the handling of classified information. The Committee is not bound, absent its prior agreement, by any handling restrictions or instructions on unclassified information unilaterally asserted by the Executive Branch.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



Charles E. Grassley  
Ranking Member  
Committee on the Judiciary

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<sup>9</sup> Shawn Boburg, *Commerce Department security unit evolved into counterintelligence-like operation, Washington Post examination found*, The Washington Post (May 24, 2021), <https://www.washingtonpost.com/investigations/2021/05/24/commerce-department-monitoring-itms/>.