

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

July 7, 2021

VIA ELECTRONIC TRANSMISSION

The Honorable Antony Blinken
Secretary
Department of State

Dear Secretary Blinken:

On May 4, 2021, I wrote to you and the State Department Inspector General (OIG) inquiring about the steps each of you planned to take with respect to the serious allegations that former Secretary of State John Kerry disclosed sensitive information to Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif and potentially violated his security clearance obligations by doing so.¹ You have thus far failed to respond.

On May 12, 2021, the OIG provided a preliminary response and on July 1, 2021, the OIG provided a final response to me and noted that it had communicated with the State Department's Bureau of Diplomatic Security (DS) regarding the allegations against Mr. Kerry. In that July 1, 2021, letter the OIG noted that DS is vested with primary responsibility for investigating and adjudicating security clearances.² The OIG also noted that DS "is aware of the allegations" against Mr. Kerry and "will review them with the appropriate entities."³ The OIG also noted that it will consider a potential review of DS's handling of the allegations "at a later date."⁴

Accordingly, in order to better understand Mr. Kerry's obligations and responsibilities as a former Secretary of State with respect to information sharing and whether any security incidents occurred, please answer the following no later than July 21, 2021:

¹ Press Release, Senator Charles Grassley, Ranking Member, Committee on the Judiciary (May 5, 2021)

<https://www.grassley.senate.gov/news/news-releases/grassley-calls-on-state-department-and-its-inspector-general-to-investigate-national-security-allegations-against-john-kerry>. On April 25, 2021, the New York Times reported on an audiotape recording of Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif in which he talked about his interactions with former Secretary of State John Kerry. According to the report, Zarif said that Secretary Kerry told him, to Zarif's "astonishment," that Israel "had attacked Iranian interests in Syria at least 200 times." Secretary Kerry's role at the State Department came to an end in January of 2017 with the transition to the Trump administration; however, Secretary Kerry, during an appearance on the Hugh Hewitt radio show in September of 2018, admitted to meeting with Zarif "three or four times" since leaving office, and admitted to discussing the scrapped nuclear deal and other issues. It is unclear exactly when Secretary Kerry allegedly told Zarif of these military attacks, the nuclear deal, and other issues and whether these topics were a matter of public record at the time of discussion. Farnaz Fassihi, Iran's Foreign Minister, in Leaked Tape, Says Revolutionary Guards Set Policies, The New York Times (April 25, 2021). <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/04/25/world/middleeast/iran-suleimani-zarif.html>

² Diana R. Shaw, Acting Inspector General, U.S. Department of State to Senator Charles Grassley, Ranking Member, Senate Judiciary Committee (July 1, 2021).

³ *Id.*

⁴ *Id.*

1. Has the Bureau of Diplomatic Security begun an inquiry into the allegations against Mr. Kerry? If so, when? If not, why not?
2. What “appropriate entities” have you inquired with?
3. Has the Bureau of Diplomatic Security identified any security incidents? If so, please describe whether they are security infractions or security violations.
4. Have any disciplinary actions been imposed? If so, please describe them. If not, why not?

In addition to the above questions, I request that you provide me rolling updates on the progress of your security review.

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 matter. Should you have questions, please contact Josh Flynn-Brown of my committee staff at 202-224-5225.

Sincerely,



Charles E. Grassley
Ranking Member
Committee on the Judiciary