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April 9, 2015

The Honorable Charles E. Grassley
Chairman
Senate Committee on the Judiciary
224 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Grassley:

Thank you for your letter dated March 19, 2015, regarding State Department employees' email communications.

We responded to your letter on March 26, explaining that we are conducting preliminary work to determine the proper scope and methodology for a review of the Department's email communication policies and practices, among other things. We will provide a briefing to you or to Committee staff to discuss our plans once we have completed that work.

We are prepared, however, to respond to several of the questions raised in your letter at this time. Specifically, set forth below are responses to question numbers 1, 4, 7, 8, 9 and 10.

When and how did the State Department OIG become aware of Secretary Clinton's and Ms. Abedin's decision not to use government e-mail? [Question 1]

Based on my staff's current knowledge, the OIG was not aware of Secretary Clinton's and Ms. Abedin's use of a private email system until recent media reports.

When faced with employees who are using non-government email accounts for government business, what steps has the OIG engaged in to take corrective action? [Question 4]

In the past, when faced with employees who were using non-government email accounts for government business, the OIG questioned such activities.

For instance, in the August 2012 inspection report on Embassy Nairobi, Kenya, OIG noted that "[t]he Ambassador's requirements for use of commercial email in the office and his flouting of direct instructions to adhere to Department policy have placed the information management staff in a conundrum: balancing the desire to be responsive to their mission leader and the need to adhere to Department regulations and government information security standards."¹

¹ <https://oig.state.gov/system/files/196460.pdf>

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The OIG recommended that Embassy Nairobi cease using commercial email to process Department information and use authorized Department automated information systems for conducting official business.

Will the State Department OIG examine whether the designation of Ms. Abedin as an SGE was consistent with the standards for the use of that designation? [and] Will the State Department OIG examine whether sufficient safeguards against conflicts of interest were in place in the case of Ms. Abedin and other SGEs with outside employment at the State Department? [Questions 7 and 8]

At this time, the OIG intends to examine the Department's SGE program to determine if it conforms to applicable legal and policy requirements, including whether or not the program, as implemented, includes safeguards against conflicts of interest.

What steps does the OIG normally take to ensure SGEs are not involved in conflicts of interest? [Question 9]

The OIG conducts general oversight of the Department consistent with the Inspector General Act and its amendments as well as all applicable standards. In the event that an allegation is received by the OIG involving possible conflicts by an SGE employee, the OIG would conduct a review to determine whether administrative or criminal action is warranted.

What steps will the State Department OIG take to determine whether Ms. Abedin improperly used non-government email accounts to conduct government business? [Question 10]

As noted in my letter to you dated March 26, 2015, the OIG commenced preliminary work to determine the proper scope and methodology for a review of the Department's email communication policies and practices, among other things.

Please feel free to contact me or the OIG's Director of Congressional Affairs, Ryan Holden at (202) 663-0380 if you have any questions.

Sincerely,



Steve A. Linick
Inspector General

cc: The Honorable Patrick J. Leahy, Ranking Member
Senate Committee on the Judiciary

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