

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 10, 2020

The Honorable Michael E. Horowitz
Chair, Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency
Inspector General, Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20530

Dear Mr. Horowitz:

As the chair of the Committee on Oversight and Reform, which has jurisdiction over Inspectors General, and the chairs of numerous other committees and subcommittees that rely on agency Inspectors General to provide rigorous and honest assessments to inform our work, we are writing to express our grave concerns with President Donald Trump's attempts to undermine the independence and integrity of Inspectors General across the government.

Unlike any President in modern history, President Trump has engaged in offensive and unjustified attacks against Inspectors General, criticizing them for following the law, and retaliating against them for telling the truth. We are seeking input directly from the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency on legislative and other proposals to increase your independence and protect you from retaliation, including but not limited to allowing for the removal of top Inspector General officials only for good cause.

Chair of Pandemic Response Accountability Committee

On Monday, President Trump effectively removed Glenn Fine from his position as the Chair of the new Pandemic Response Accountability Committee, which Congress created to oversee federal spending in response to the coronavirus crisis. Mr. Fine, who had been serving as Acting Inspector General of the Department of Defense, had just been selected in compliance with the law Congress passed. Yet the President removed him without explanation, despite his widespread support among the Inspector General community and throughout Congress.

HHS Inspector General's Office

Also on Monday, President Trump attacked Christi Grimm, the Principal Deputy Inspector General of the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). Ms. Grimm is a career civil servant who worked on a report warning that "severe shortages of testing supplies and extended waits for test results limited hospitals' ability to monitor the health of patients and staff." The report also found that U.S. hospitals continued to face "widespread shortages of PPE" and "shortages of critical supplies, materials, and logistics support."¹ Despite the

¹ Office of Inspector General, Department of Health and Human Services, *Hospital Experiences Responding to the COVID-19 Pandemic: Results of a National Pulse Survey March 23-27, 2020* (Apr. 6, 2020) (online at <https://oig.hhs.gov/oei/reports/oei-06-20-00300.pdf>).

objectively factual basis for this report, President Trump attacked Ms. Grimm, accusing her of being an Obama appointee, despite the fact that she served eight years in the Bush Administration, and baselessly tweeting that the report is a “Fake Dossier.”²

Intelligence Community Inspector General

Last Friday, President Trump informed Congress that he was removing Michael Atkinson as Inspector General of the Intelligence Community because he no longer has the President’s “fullest confidence.”³ The next day, President Trump declared publicly that he removed Mr. Atkinson because he is “not a Trump fan” and because he followed the law in alerting the congressional intelligence committees that the whistleblower complaint, which revealed the President’s abuse of power that ultimately led to his impeachment, was being withheld from Congress. President Trump stated, “That man is a disgrace to IGs.”⁴

President Trump was required to notify Congress 30 days *before* removing Mr. Atkinson.⁵ As the Senate report accompanying the Inspector General Reform Act explained:

The Committee intends that Inspectors General who fail to perform their duties properly whether through malfeasance or nonfeasance, or whose personal actions bring discredit upon the office, be removed. The requirement to notify the Congress in advance of the reasons for the removal should serve to ensure that Inspectors General are not removed for political reasons.⁶

There is no credible allegation that Mr. Atkinson failed to perform his duties properly, failed to take any required action, or took any action that might bring discredit on his office. To the contrary, Mr. Atkinson followed the letter and spirit of the law and the President removed him for political reasons.

President Trump also disregarded the 30-day requirement since the website for the Inspector General’s office already lists Thomas Monheim as the new Acting Inspector General.⁷ The President’s actions not only flout the law, but they signal to other Inspectors General that they could be punished for doing their jobs.

² *Fact Check: Trump Baselessly Disputes HHS IG Report, Repeats Several Other False Claims at Monday’s Coronavirus Briefing*, CNN (Apr. 7, 2020) (online at www.cnn.com/2020/04/06/politics/fact-check-trump-coronavirus-briefing-april-6/index.html); Donald J. Trump, Twitter (Apr. 7, 2020) (online at <https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1247545358705664002>).

³ Letter from President Donald J. Trump to Chairman Richard Burr and Vice Chairman Mark R. Warner, Senate Select Committee on Intelligence (Apr. 3, 2020) (online at www.cnn.com/2020/04/03/politics/read-michael-atkinson-letter/index.html).

⁴ *President Trump with Coronavirus Task Force Briefing*, C-SPAN (Apr. 4, 2020) (online at www.c-span.org/video/?470970-1/president-trump-comments-firing-intelligence-community-inspector-general).

⁵ 50 U.S.C. §3033; 5 U.S.C. App. 3, §3(b).

⁶ S.Rept. 110-262 (online at www.congress.gov/110/crpt/srpt262/CRPT-110srpt262.pdf).

⁷ Office of the Inspector General for the Intelligence Community, *ICIG Leadership* (online at www.dni.gov/index.php/who-we-are/organizations/icig/icig-about-us/icig-leadership).

Special Inspector General for Pandemic Recovery Nominee

Finally, the White House also announced on Friday that President Trump intends to nominate Brian Miller to another key position—the Special Inspector General for Pandemic Recovery—which Congress created to oversee coronavirus spending by the Department of the Treasury, including \$500 billion in loans, loan guarantees, and investments.⁸ Mr. Miller currently works as one of President Trump’s attorneys in the White House Counsel’s Office. Prior to serving in this position, Mr. Miller publicly criticized the Inspector General of the General Services Administration (GSA) for reporting on a secret meeting between President Trump and the GSA Administrator about the decision not to relocate the FBI Headquarters building across from Trump Hotel in Washington, D.C.—a meeting the GSA Administrator concealed from Congress during sworn testimony.⁹

Conclusion

Each one of these actions by the President would raise significant concerns by itself. Together, they reflect a campaign of political retaliation and reward that is antithetical to good government, undermine the proper stewardship of taxpayer dollars, and degrade the federal government’s ability to function competently.

We strongly support your mission, especially at this critical time. Congress is appropriating trillions of taxpayer dollars in response to the coronavirus crisis, and Americans across the political spectrum need these funds allocated effectively and efficiently. They do not want these funds squandered, mismanaged, or subjected to waste, fraud, or abuse.

In order to achieve these goals, we must protect the independence and integrity of our Inspectors General. For these reasons, our staffs will be following-up with your office to seek input on proposals we are considering to enhance the independence of Inspectors General, protect them from political retaliation, and support their efforts to report the truth to the Executive Branch, Congress, and the American people.

Sincerely,



Carolyn B. Maloney
Chairwoman
Committee on Oversight and Reform



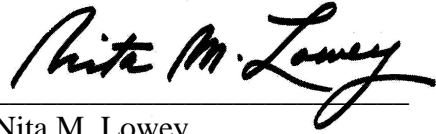
Adam B. Schiff
Chairman
Permanent Select Committee on
Intelligence

⁸ The White House, *President Donald J. Trump Announces Intent to Nominate Individuals to Key Administration Posts* (Apr. 3, 2020) (online at www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/president-donald-j-trump-announces-intent-nominate-individuals-key-administration-posts-27/).

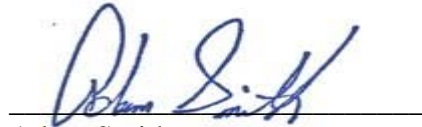
⁹ *IG, GSA Administrator Butt Heads Over Testimony on FBI Headquarters*, Federal News Network (Aug. 28, 2018) (online at <https://federalnewsnetwork.com/agency-oversight/2018/08/oig-gsa-administrator-left-misleading-impression-on-lawmakers-in-fbi-headquarters-testimony/>).



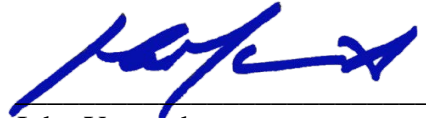
Collin Peterson
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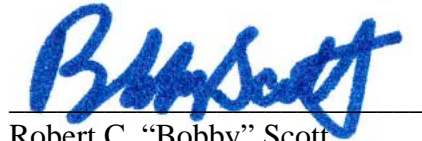
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Committee on Appropriations



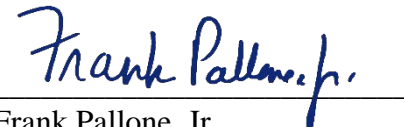
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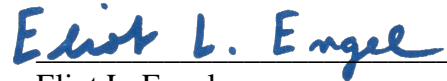
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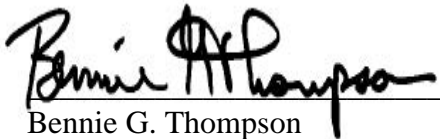
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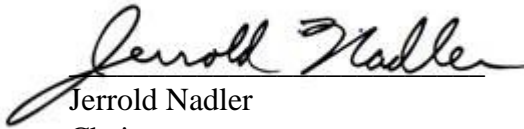
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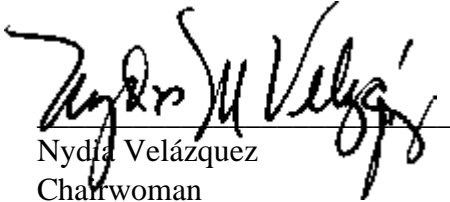
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