



**THE INTELLIGENCE COMMUNITY 51: HOW CIA CONTRACTORS
COLLUDED WITH THE BIDEN CAMPAIGN TO MISLEAD AMERICAN
VOTERS**

Second Interim Joint Staff Report of the

Committee on the Judiciary,
Select Subcommittee on the Weaponization
of the Federal Government, and
Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence

U.S. House of Representatives



June 25, 2024

Executive Summary

The Committee on the Judiciary, its Select Subcommittee on the Weaponization of the Federal Government, and the Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence have revealed how, in the final weeks before the 2020 presidential election, 51 former intelligence officials coordinated with the Biden campaign to discredit serious allegations about Biden family influence peddling.¹ In issuing a public statement using their official titles, these former intelligence officials sought to cast an explosive *New York Post* story and Hunter Biden’s abandoned laptop as “Russian disinformation.”² President Biden even cited to the statement in a televised debate with President Trump shortly before the election to accuse President Trump of leveling false accusations.³ As a result, the explosive allegations about Biden family misconduct were buried and millions of Americans cast their votes for president without a full set of facts.

The 51 former intelligence officials’ Hunter Biden statement was a blatant political operation from the start. It originated with a call from top Biden campaign official—and now Secretary of State—Antony Blinken to former Deputy Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) Director Michael Morell. The Committees’ investigation revealed that without this outreach from Blinken, Morell would not have written the statement.⁴ Indeed, Morell told the Committees that the Blinken phone call “triggered” his intent to write the statement.⁵ The statement’s drafters were open about the goal of the project: “[W]e think Trump will attack Biden on the issue at this week’s debate”⁶ and “we want to give the [Vice President] a talking point to use in response.”⁷

The details as revealed by the Committees to date are concerning enough, but as the Committees have continued to investigate the origins of the Hunter Biden statement, new information has come to light. Through newly obtained internal CIA emails and testimonial evidence, the Committees have uncovered more information on the extent to which the intelligence community was involved in the statement. Specifically, the evidence shows:

¹ STAFF OF H. COMM. ON THE JUDICIARY, ET AL., 118TH CONG., REP. ON THE HUNTER BIDEN STATEMENT: HOW SENIOR INTELLIGENCE COMMUNITY OFFICIALS AND THE BIDEN CAMPAIGN WORKED TO MISLEAD AMERICAN VOTERS (2023); see also Jim Clapper et al., *Public Statement on the Hunter Biden Emails* (Oct. 19, 2020).

² See Natasha Bertrand, *Hunter Biden story is Russian disinfo, dozens of former intel officials say*, POLITICO (Oct. 19, 2020).

³ COMM. ON PRESIDENTIAL DEBATES, Presidential Debate at Belmont University in Nashville, Tennessee, October 22, 2020, Participants: Former Vice President Joe Biden (D) and President Donald Trump (R), <https://www.debates.org/voter-education/debate-transcripts/october-22-2020-debate-transcript/> (“[T]here are 50 former national intelligence folks who said that what this, he’s accusing me of is a Russian plan. They have said this has all the characteristics—four- five former heads of the CIA, both parties, say what he’s saying is a bunch of garbage.”).

⁴ Transcribed Interview of Mr. Michael Morell at 21-22 (Apr. 4, 2023) (hereinafter “Morell Interview”).

⁵ *Id.*

⁶ Email from Kristin Wood to Unnamed Intelligence Officials (Oct. 19, 2020, 7:27 AM) (on file with the Committees).

⁷ Email from Michael Morell to Michael Morell, Marc Polymeropoulos, and Bcc’d Recipients (Oct. 18, 2020, 4:48 PM) (on file with the Committees).

- **High ranking CIA officials, up to and including then-CIA Director Gina Haspel, were made aware of the Hunter Biden statement prior to its approval and publication.**⁸ Because several former senior intelligence officials signed the statement, the PCRB sent the draft statement to the CIA’s then-Chief Operating Officer (COO) Andrew Makridis, who said he subsequently informed then-Director Haspel or then-Deputy Director Vaughn Frederick Bishop that the statement would be published soon.⁹ Senior CIA leadership had an opportunity at that time to slow down the CIA’s process for reviewing publication submissions and ensure that such an extraordinary statement was properly vetted.¹⁰
- **Some of the statement’s signatories, including Michael Morell, were on active contract with the CIA at the time of the Hunter Biden statement’s publication.**¹¹ Throughout the course of the Committees’ investigation, the signatories claimed to not have had access to any classified information when asserting that the allegations surrounding Hunter Biden’s laptop had “all the hallmarks” of Russian disinformation.¹² However, at the time of the statement’s publication, at least two signatories—Morell and former CIA Inspector General David Buckley—were on the CIA’s payroll as contractors. Due to purported operational concerns, the CIA declined to declassify the entire universe of signatories who were on active contract. In addition, some signatories to the Hunter Biden statement also had special “Green Card” access to the CIA at the time of the statement’s publication, allowing them to gain entry to secure CIA facilities.
- **After publication of the Hunter Biden statement, CIA employees internally expressed concern about the statement’s politicized content, acknowledging it was not “helpful to the Agency in the long run.”**¹³ At least one employee found it “[i]nteresting to see what was submitted and approved” when discussing media talking points that the statement’s co-author, former Senior Intelligence Service Officer Marc Polymeropoulos, submitted related to the statement.¹⁴ When discussing Polymeropoulos’s talking points, another CIA official stated, “It appears [Polymeropoulos] is actively involved in a pro-Biden campaign and may be disclosing classified information in his

⁸ See Transcribed Interview of Andrew Makridis at 13-16 (Apr. 10, 2024) (hereinafter “Makridis Interview”).

⁹ *Id.*

¹⁰ *Id.* at 14-15 (“It would come up to my office, at least initially, for a heads-up, a situational awareness kind of thing. . . . The general rule of thumb or the general procedure was anything written by a former senior, I would alert the director or the deputy director, depending on the day and who was available, and then the process would move forward. . . . I would have stepped across the hall and said, here’s an article. It’s come from the Prepublication Classification Review Board. They said there is no classified in it. It’s going to run.”).

¹¹ See Email from [Redacted] to [Redacted] (Oct. 20, 2020, 11:05 AM) (Bates CIA000157) (“I also love that at least a few of the random signatures belong to individuals currently working here on contracts. . .”).

¹² See Clapper, et al., *supra* note 1 (“We want to emphasize that we do not know if the emails . . . are genuine or not and that we do not have evidence of Russian involvement[.] . . . There are a number of factors that make us suspicious of Russian involvement.”).

¹³ See Email from [Redacted] to [Redacted] (Oct. 20, 2020, 11:05 AM) (Bates CIA000157) (on file with the Committees).

¹⁴ See Email from [Redacted], Branch Chief of Nontraditional Intelligence Threats, CIA to CIMC_RAD_NITB, CIA (Oct. 20, 2020, 10:11 AM) (Bates CIA-000232).

efforts.”¹⁵ The CIA’s internal review board, known as the Prepublication Classification Review Board (PCRB), determined that Polymeropoulos’s talking points contained classified information that had to be removed prior to publication.¹⁶

The new information included in this report, based on new testimony and declassified documents, shows the potential dangers of a politicized intelligence community. In the waning days before the 2020 presidential election, 51 intelligence community officials rushed to draft and release a statement using their official titles, presumably to convey access to specialized information unavailable to other Americans. The statement was conceived following a conversation with a senior Biden campaign official and designed explicitly to provide talking points to the Biden campaign to discredit politically damaging allegations. Some of the signatories of the statement were on the CIA payroll at the time as contractors and others had special access to CIA facilities. Even Michael Morell—before the Committees learned of his contract with the CIA—acknowledged, “It’s inappropriate for a currently serving staff officer or contractor to be involved in the political process.”¹⁷

The infamous Hunter Biden statement had all the hallmarks of an intelligence community influence operation. But rather than carrying it out against our adversaries on foreign soil, this operation was directed at the American people and our democratic processes. It is impossible to know for certain how events would have played out differently if these 51 intelligence community officials never sought to influence the 2020 election. All the Committees may do now is present the facts as known to inform legislative reforms to protect our democratic ideals and prevent future abuse of the intelligence community for partisan political benefit.

¹⁵ See Email from [Redacted] to [Redacted] (Oct. 20, 2020, 10:45 AM) (Bates CIA000178) (on file with the Committees).

¹⁶ See Email from [Redacted] to [Redacted] (Oct. 20, 2020, 9:49 AM) (Bates CIA-000233) (on file with the Committees) (“PCRB has determined the manuscript contains classified information, the removal of which would enable publication.”).

¹⁷ Morell Interview at 31.

Table of Contents

Executive Summary 1

Table of Contents 4

I. The CIA, at its highest levels, was aware of the Hunter Biden statement prior to its approval and publication. 5

 A. Then-CIA Director Haspel instituted a review process ensuring she would have seen the Hunter Biden statement prior to its approval. 5

 B. The CIA alerted the Office of the Director of National Intelligence about the draft of the Hunter Biden statement. 8

 C. The CIA’s Office of Chief Operating Officer informed the PCRB that it could approve the Hunter Biden statement. 10

II. Some of the signatories of the Hunter Biden statement were on active CIA contracts at the time of the statement. 14

 A. The signatories of the Hunter Biden statement claimed to not access classified information in the course of drafting the statement. 14

 B. Several signatories of the Hunter Biden statement had active contracts with the CIA on the statement’s publication date. 16

III. Officials inside the CIA recognized that the Hunter Biden statement was political. 21

Conclusion 30

I. The CIA, at its highest levels, was aware of the Hunter Biden statement prior to its approval and publication.

The drafters of the public statement about Hunter Biden’s laptop have long maintained that the CIA had no part in the approval of the statement beyond confirming that the statement contained no classified information.¹⁸ Evidence obtained by the Committees shows, however, that both then-Director Gina Haspel or then-Deputy Director Vaughn Frederick Bishop were made aware of the statement prior to its publication.¹⁹ Their awareness came via the PCRB, the internal CIA office responsible for reviewing and clearing publications by intelligence community officials.²⁰ Although the PCRB routinely reviews a manuscript without elevating it, in this case, the PCRB took the unique step of alerting the CIA’s Office of the Chief Operating Officer (COO) about the draft statement.²¹ The Office of the COO later directed the PCRB that it may “notify” Morell that the PCRB approved the statement.²²

A. Then-CIA Director Haspel instituted a review process ensuring she would have seen the Hunter Biden statement prior to its approval.

According to testimony from then-CIA COO Andrew Makridis, Director Haspel instituted a policy requiring the PCRB to flag for her review all submissions from current and former senior CIA officials prior to the PCRB’s final approval.²³ Director Haspel did so after several former intelligence officials penned publications that garnered significant news coverage without her awareness.²⁴ Under Director Haspel’s policy, Makridis explained, the PCRB would send documents submitted by current and former senior intelligence officers to the COO’s office and Makridis would personally bring the document to the Director or Deputy Director for review.²⁵ Consequently, when Morell submitted the draft of the Hunter Biden statement in the early hours of October 19, 2020, it followed this same track, albeit on an apparently expedited process. In his initial submission to the PCRB, Morell described the statement as a “rush job,” and the PCRB appeared to acquiesce to his sense of urgency.²⁶

¹⁸ See, e.g., Morell Interview at 28.

¹⁹ See Makridis Interview at 13-14 (“So the process that the Agency operated under, the director of CIA at the time, Gina Haspel, was concerned sometimes that things would appear in the press that she was not aware of. And so she asked for articles that went through the Prepublication Classification Review Board. . . . The general rule of thumb or the general procedure was anything written by a former senior, I would alert the director or the deputy director, depending on the day and who was available, and then the process would move forward.”).

²⁰ Makridis Interview at 12-14.

²¹ See Makridis Interview at 14 (“[B]ook manuscripts, things like that typically didn’t come up.”).

²² See Email from Executive Assistant, Office of the Chief Operating Officer, to [Redacted] DIR_COO_EAS; DDI-EA; DDI_ADO_EAs; DIR_OPA_FO; DDI3; [Redacted] (Oct. 19, 2020, 11:43 AM) (Bates CIA-000230) (on file with the Committees).

²³ Makridis Interview at 13-15.

²⁴ *Id.*

²⁵ *Id.*

²⁶ Email from Michael Morell to PCRB Staff (Oct. 19, 2020, 6:36 AM) (on file with the Committees).

From: Michael M
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: Marc Polymeropoulos
Subject: [AIN] Public Statement for Review - [Link to Attachment(s)]
Date: Monday, October 19, 2020 6:36:21 AM
Attachments: Public Statement converted.pdf
Public Statement converted.docx

CLASSIFICATION: UNCLASSIFIED

AIN EMAIL

This email originated on the AIN (U) and has been forwarded to the Agency Data Network (TS/SCI). *This is only a copy of the original message.* This email has been virus scanned, and the message body has been converted to text-only format. If the message is from someone unfamiliar to you (especially if it contains an attachment) do NOT open it; instead, contact your ISSM (<http://security.cia/infosec/programs/issm>). The original message in its original format can be viewed in your AIN email inbox. Questions can be emailed to GLIDE_HELP.

[ANTE Up Info](#) [GLIDE File Security](#)

Message ID: 667199641/glide-ain-ecds-ap01-low-ain-adn-anteup

Good morning. Hope everyone had a nice weekend. Attached is a statement that Marc and I drafted that many former senior and working-level officials from across the IC will sign and then be made public. We are 100 percent confident it does not contain classified information. Indeed, it specifically says we don't know what the IC or the FBI knows about this.

This is a rush job, as it needs to get out as soon as possible. Thank you very much.
Michael Morell

&* ORIGINAL EMAIL ATTACHMENTS HAVE BEEN QUARANTINED ***

The following original attachment(s) are awaiting your approval:

- Public Statement.docx

If you trust the sender, click the following to have your message and original attachments resent to you:

Quarantine link ---> <https://glide.cia/glide/Quarantine/Quarantine.html?id=913489705>

These attachment(s) will be available for retrieval for 14 days (Mon Nov 02 06:36:07 EST 2020). For additional information regarding the attachment removal (quarantine) function, please visit the following site: <https://confluence.devops.cia.ic.gov/display/ECDSUP/ANTE+Up+Overview>.

HJC_2-23 0001

This is a rush job, as it needs to get out as soon as possible.

The PCRB staff acknowledged receipt of the Hunter Biden statement in less than 40 minutes,²⁷ and at 8:01 AM, the PCRB sent the statement to the COO's office, marking the submission as of high importance.²⁸ After receiving the notification from the PCRB—and in accordance with Director Haspel's policy—Makridis walked the statement to the CIA Director's

²⁷ Email from PCRB Staff to Michael Morell (Oct. 19, 2020, 7:11 AM) (on file with the Committees).

²⁸ See Email from [Redacted] to DIR_COO_EAS, et al. (Oct. 19, 2020, 8:01 AM) (Bates CIA-000230 - CIA-000231) (on file with the Committees).

or Deputy Director's office to flag it for their awareness.²⁹ Makridis testified during his transcribed interview:

Q. So then after you determined that the article that you received was written by a former senior official, then you would alert either the director and deputy director. Is that correct?

A. Correct.

Q. And what did that process look like? Was that just, hey, heads-up, this is coming? Was there a conversation? How did that typically look?

A. So the typical process was . . . once I saw it and sort of saw that it was from a former senior, I would bring it to the attention of either the director or deputy director. It would depend on the day, who was available.

* * *

Q. And how did it work in this case with the statement?

A. You know, I don't recall exactly, but the process that I just described is probably . . . the way it worked. I would have stepped across the hall and said, here's an article. It's come up from the Prepublication Classification Review Board. They said there is no classified [information] in it. It's going to run. . . .

Q. And since this statement was being signed by Director Brennan, Director Clapper, Director Panetta, Director Morell, do you know if you flagged this for the awareness of the director or deputy director?

A. They would have seen—you know, if I provided them a copy, which is probably the—which is my normal process, they would have seen . . . who the authors were.³⁰

The Hunter Biden statement drew significant attention at the CIA senior staff level. Makridis, as COO, was the third highest-ranking official at the CIA, with over 37-years of

²⁹ Makridis Interview at 15.

³⁰ Makridis Interview at 15-16.

experience at the Agency.³¹ In his testimony before the Committees, Makridis stated that he had never seen a statement of this nature come across his desk before. Makridis testified:

Q. Have you seen anything like the public statement in all of your years of experience?

A. Like? You mean with that many . . .

Q. . . . [W]ith that many signatories, of that caliber, who had all held prestigious positions within the Intelligence Community, especially in the CIA, people you knew personally.

A. No, I had not seen anything of that nature.³²

Despite acknowledging the extraordinary nature of the Hunter Biden statement, none of the top three CIA officials paused the statement's review process within the CIA or seemed to raise any concerns about the statement or its effect on the Agency's credibility.

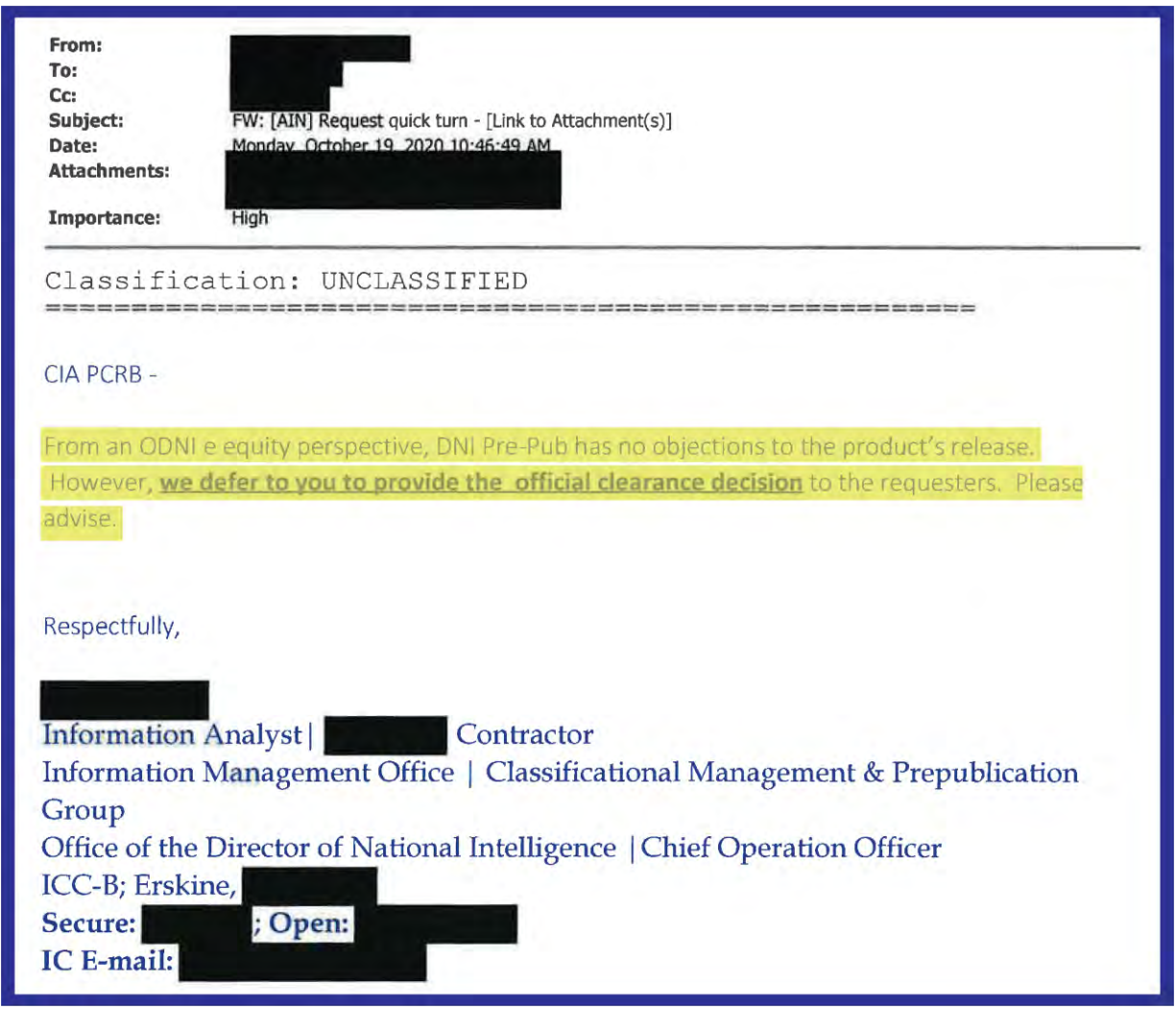
B. The CIA alerted the Office of the Director of National Intelligence about the draft of the Hunter Biden statement.

As CIA officials circulated the Hunter Biden statement to the highest levels of the Agency, the PCRB also felt compelled to share the statement with the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI), requesting a quick turn on ODNI's assessment. After exchanging emails, ODNI deferred to the CIA's judgement regarding the approval of the statement and stated it had no objections to the statement's release.³³

³¹ Andrew Makridis, Biography, Beacon Global Strategies, <https://bgsdc.com/team/andrew-makridis/> (last visited Jun. 12, 2024).

³² Makridis Interview at 35.

³³ See Email from the ODNI's Office of the Chief Operating Officer to PCRB Staff (Oct. 19, 2020, 10:46 AM) (Bates CIA000067) (on file with the Committee).



On the same day that ODNI cleared the Hunter Biden statement—which alleged that stories about Hunter Biden’s laptop had all the “hallmarks” of Russian disinformation—then-Director of National Intelligence John Ratcliffe issued an official statement that the laptop story was “not part of some Russian disinformation campaign . . . the intelligence community doesn’t believe that because there is no intelligence that supports that.”³⁴ Notably, as the senior most intelligence community official, Director Ratcliffe would have been the most informed individual on this subject and the best equipped to make any judgments about whether the Hunter Biden laptop was Russian disinformation.³⁵

It is unclear why the PCRB felt it was necessary to consult with ODNI regarding the Hunter Biden statement. Makridis testified that he had never reached out to his counterpart at ODNI about a submission from current or former senior staff.³⁶ Makridis could not explain why

³⁴ Brooke Singman, *Ratcliffe says Hunter Biden laptop, emails ‘not part of some Russian disinformation campaign,’* FOX NEWS (Oct. 19, 2020).

³⁵ Makridis Interview at 72 (“Someone who sits in the role of DNI has access to all the classified information the intelligence community has.”).

³⁶ *Id.* at 95.

the PCRB felt the statement merited this unusual interaction.³⁷ Simultaneously, Makridis also could not refute the possibility that the political nature of the statement spurred this outreach.³⁸ Makridis testified:

- Q. Have you ever interacted with any of your counterparts at ODNI regarding . . . these kinds of statements when you are . . . notifying for your director at the time. Did you also occasionally . . . reach over to ODNI, so to speak, to let them know that this was also coming down the pike?
- A. I don't recall reaching over to ODNI on—on any of these.
- Q. Do you think that the review of this submission rose to ODNI's COO's level due to the impact the statement could have had on the 2020 presidential election? Is that at all possible?
- A. I don't know the DNI process. They may have a similar process in place that we did. Anything written by a former senior would rise up to the chief operating officer to inform . . . their principals. So they may have had a similar process in place.³⁹

The Hunter Biden statement garnered enough interest within the CIA that it felt compelled to flag the statement for its counterparts at ODNI. This was a unique procedure that the third in command of the CIA had never followed. The decision to share the statement with ODNI widened the circle of impact the statement had on the U.S. intelligence community and therefore widened the circle of responsible individuals who could have—and should have—considered the effects of the politicized statement on the integrity of the intelligence community. In failing to do so, employees at both agencies put the American election system at risk.

C. The CIA's Office of Chief Operating Officer informed the PCRB that it could approve the Hunter Biden statement.

In his testimony before the Committees, Makridis repeatedly stated that the COO's office was not involved in the approval or disapproval of submissions to the PCRB.⁴⁰ Furthermore, he stated that the PCRB has no role beyond looking to see if submissions contained classified information.⁴¹ However, just hours after Morell submitted the draft Hunter Biden statement, Makridis's Executive Assistant sent an email to the PCRB stating that it "may notify Former DDCIA Morell."⁴²

³⁷ *Id.*

³⁸ *Id.*

³⁹ *Id.*

⁴⁰ *See generally* Makridis Interview.

⁴¹ *Id.* at 48.

⁴² *See* Email from Executive Assistant, Office of the Chief Operating Officer, to [Redacted]; DIR_COO_EAS, et al. (Oct. 19, 2020, 11:43 AM) (Bates CIA-000230) (on file with the Committees).

Monday, October 19, 2020 11:43:57 AM

From: [REDACTED]
To: [REDACTED] DIR COO EAS; DDI-EA; DDI ADO EAs; DIR OPA FO; DDI3; [REDACTED]
Cc: Michelle Y. Murphy-Bell; [REDACTED] PCRBS SENIOR STEERING GROUP
Subject: RE: Publications Alert 19 October
Date: Monday, October 19, 2020 11:43:57 AM

Classification: UNCLASSIFIED//FOUO
=====

[REDACTED],
You may notify Former DDCIA Morell.

Thank you,
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
Executive Assistant, Office of the Chief Operating Officer

[REDACTED] (s) [REDACTED] (u)
[REDACTED]

You may notify Former DDCIA Morell.

One hour later, the PCRBS notified Morell that he could publish the Hunter Biden statement.⁴³ The CIA and its PCRBS completed this entire process—which included notifying top CIA officials and coordinating with ODNI—in a mere six-hour time period.

⁴³ Email from PCRBS Staff to Michael Morell (Oct. 19, 2020, 12:44 PM) (on file with the Committees).

Monday, October 19, 2020 12:44:00 PM

From: [REDACTED]
To: "Michael M"
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: [AIN] PCRB Submission 999145/t21667 Determination - Approved
Date: Monday, October 19, 2020 12:44:00 PM

CLASSIFICATION: UNCLASSIFIED

AIN EMAIL

This email originated on the AIN (U) and has been forwarded to the **Agency Data Network** (TS/SCI). *This is only a copy of the original message.* This email has been virus scanned, and the message body has been converted to text-only format. If the message is from someone unfamiliar to you (especially if it contains an attachment) do NOT open it; instead, contact your ISSM (<http://security.cia/infosec/programs/issm>). The original message in its original format can be viewed in your AIN email inbox. Questions can be emailed to GLIDE_HELP.

[ANTE Up Info](#) [GLIDE File Security](#)

Message ID: 667403261/glide-ain-ecds-ap02-low-ain-adn-anteup

Dear Michael,

The Prepublication Classification Review Board completed its review of your article titled "Public Statement on the Hunter Biden Emails." The Board determined that it contains no classified information and can be published. Agency approval for publication of this material does not represent Agency endorsement or verification of this work.

If you add new material, please re-submit it before sharing, highlighting the new language to expedite our review. The PCRB appreciates your cooperation with prepublication review. You may reach out to us via PRB@ucia.gov with questions or concerns.

Kind regards,

PCRb Staff

Dear Michael,

The Prepublication Classification Review Board completed its review of your article titled "Public Statement on the Hunter Biden Emails." **The Board determined that it contains no classified information and can be published.** Agency approval for publication of this material does not represent Agency endorsement or verification of this work.

* * *

The documents and testimony available to the Committees suggest that the CIA treated the Hunter Biden statement specially. The communications among the PCRb, CIA leadership, and ODNI staff indicated that the statement's review required a quick response. The PCRb's own subject line demarcations displayed its compliance with Morell's request that the

statement’s review be a “rush job.”⁴⁴ The CIA’s COO alerted the CIA Director or the Deputy Director about the draft statement. The PCRB appeared to believe the unique nature of the statement merited raising the draft to ODNI for review, in a process unfamiliar to the third in command at the CIA.⁴⁵ The PCRB notified Morell that it had approved the statement for publication *only after* the CIA COO’s office greenlit the statement.

In the ODNI’s analytic standards for the intelligence community, it notes the importance of analytic objectivity and sound intelligence tradecraft.⁴⁶ Every individual who came in contact with the Hunter Biden statement—from the PCRB and ODNI staff all the way up to then-Director Gina Haspel—had the opportunity to raise a concern about how the politicized Hunter Biden statement would hurt the integrity and credibility of the U.S. intelligence community. What happened instead was the publication of a politicized statement about Hunter Biden’s laptop—signed by senior former officials using their official titles—that included assertions now known to be untrue. The draft Hunter Biden statement was reviewed and passed around the highest levels of the U.S. intelligence community and still allowed to influence the public discourse surrounding the 2020 presidential election.

⁴⁴ See Email from [Redacted] to DIR_COO_EAS, et al. (Oct. 19, 2020, 8:01 AM) (Bates CIA-000230 - CIA-000231) (on file with the Committees); *see also* Email from the ODNI’s Office of the Chief Operation Officer to PCRB Staff (Oct. 19, 2020, 10:46 AM) (Bates CIA000067) (on file with the Committee).

⁴⁵ Makridis Interview at 95.

⁴⁶ OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR OF NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE, OBJECTIVITY, <https://www.dni.gov/index.php/how-we-work/objectivity> (last visited Apr. 29, 2024).

II. Some of the signatories of the Hunter Biden statement were on active CIA contracts at the time of the statement.

Internal CIA documents show that several signatories of the Hunter Biden statement—including Michael Morell—were on active CIA contract at the time the statement was published. This evidence shows that these signatories were likely earning an income supported by American taxpayer dollars while politicizing intelligence in order to boost the Biden campaign’s race for the presidency.

A. The signatories of the Hunter Biden statement claimed to not access classified information in the course of drafting the statement.

The former intelligence officials interviewed by the Committees have repeatedly asserted that they were merely a group of private citizens exercising their First Amendment rights and speaking on a matter of public interest.⁴⁷ None had access to classified information—they claimed—and were therefore just providing an opinion on a matter of public significance based upon the experience of their careers. During his transcribed interview with the Committees, for example, Morell testified that he had no access to classified material or any other investigative material prior to writing the Hunter Biden statement.⁴⁸ Morell stated:

Q. Had you had any conversations with officials at the FBI?

A. No.

Q. Had you been privy to any classified briefings . . . about this?

A. No.⁴⁹

* * *

Q. . . . Mr. Morell, as part of the research that you did in between the contact with Mr. Blinken and the contact with Marc [Polymeropoulos], did you contact any individuals as a part of that research?

A. I did not.

Q. So the full sum of that research involved your internet searches?

A. Yes.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ See, e.g., Morell Interview at 77.

⁴⁸ Morell Interview at 17, 20.

⁴⁹ Morell Interview at 16-17.

⁵⁰ Morell Interview at 20.

The other primary drafter of the public statement, Marc Polymeropoulos, similarly testified that he had no access “to classified information regarding the contents of Hunter Biden’s laptop.”⁵¹ Former CIA Director John Brennan likewise asserted that he did not have access to classified information.⁵² In his transcribed interview with the Committees, former Director of National Intelligence, James Clapper, stated that he did not seek to access any classified information when he signed the public statement.⁵³ Director Clapper stated:

Q. Well, you’re the former Director of National Intelligence, who’s about to make a very public statement about a very specific thing that you were claiming is likely Russian disinformation, you had the clearance.

You could have requested a briefing on it. Why did you not even consider doing that?

A. I didn’t do it because I didn’t think it was appropriate.

Q. Why?

A. Because I didn’t want to be tainted by . . . access to classified information.

Q. But why would it be tainted to try to find the truth before you signed—

A. Bad choice of words. . . . I wanted only to go on what I had seen publicly. That’s all. I didn’t want any connection with classified information . . . in any way.

Q. Well, it confuses me why you would be willing to sign a letter like this, and you had access to agencies who could have clarified it, and you didn’t consider even nor make an effort to find out if what you were about to say was true or not.

A. I thought it was proper and appropriate to sound a warning that the Russians could be involved. That’s all.⁵⁴

⁵¹ Transcribed Interview of Marc Polymeropoulos at 35 (Apr. 17, 2023).

⁵² Transcribed Interview of Mr. John Brennan at 78 (May 11, 2023).

⁵³ Transcribed Interview of Mr. James Clapper at 42 (May 17, 2023).

⁵⁴ *Id.*

Each signatory interviewed sought to assure the Committees that they had no access to classified information about the *New York Post* story or the contents of Hunter Biden’s laptop.⁵⁵ Even still, the use of their official titles and security credentials could be read to suggest access to classified information unavailable to everyday Americans. In his interview before the Committees, Makridis testified that the Hunter Biden statement’s claims could appear more legitimate to the average American because the signatories used their former intelligence titles.⁵⁶ Makridis testified:

Q. And at the end of this statement, the 51 former intelligence officials all used their former titles in their signature blocks and . . . many of these titles include . . . former Director of National Intelligence, former [D]irector of the Central Intelligence Agency. If you were an average citizen reading this statement, do you think that the titles of their former office could have boosted the legitimacy of their claim that the Russians were trying to influence how Americans vote in this election? Do you think that that would appear more legitimate because of their former titles that they have attached to the statement?

A. I think it’s possible.⁵⁷

Makridis confirmed that in applying their former intelligence titles to the Hunter Biden statement, the signatories could have leveraged their power and access to persuade Americans to believe, wrongly, that the Hunter Biden laptop was somehow the product of Russian disinformation. That alone is concerning. Further investigation has revealed, however, that these former intelligence officials actually could have had access to this type of specialized material.

B. Several signatories of the Hunter Biden statement had active contracts with the CIA on the statement’s publication date.

Despite repeated assertions that the Hunter Biden statement’s signatories were former intelligence officials with no access to classified information related to the *New York Post* story about Hunter Biden’s laptop, internal CIA staff emails reveal that at least some of the signatories were on active contract with the CIA at the time of its drafting, review, and publication.⁵⁸ In particular, in an internal email from October 20, 2020, a CIA employee wrote to a colleague: “I

⁵⁵ See, e.g., Transcribed Interview of Mr. Nicholas Rasmussen at 11-12 (May 15, 2023) (“[T]he most important thing from my perspective was to focus on the caveating language, because I knew – at least based on what I knew, that there was not certainty about the provenance of the laptop issue. And so I focused in on the paragraph in particular that stated quite clearly that we did not know if the emails are genuine or not and that we did not have evidence of Russian Government involvement, just that this confluence events makes us deeply suspicious.”).

⁵⁶ Makridis Interview at 70.

⁵⁷ *Id.*

⁵⁸ See Email from [Redacted] to [Redacted] (Oct. 20, 2020, 11:05 AM) (Bates CIA000157) (on file with the Committees).

also love that at least a few of the random signatories belong to individuals currently working here on contracts.”⁵⁹

I also love that at least a few of the random signatures belong to individuals currently working here on contracts...

From: [REDACTED]
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: RE: letter from former IC officers
Date: Tuesday, October 20, 2020 11:05:02 AM

Classification: UNCLASSIFIED

I also love that at least a few of the random signatures belong to individuals currently working here on contracts...

-----Original Message-----

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, October 20, 2020 10:13 AM
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: FW: letter from former IC officers

Classification: UNCLASSIFIED

This frustrates me. I don't think it is helpful to the Agency in the long run. Sigh.

<https://www.politico.com/f/?id=00000175-4393-d7aa-af77-579f9b330000>

This frustrates me. I don't think it is helpful to the Agency in the long run. Sigh.

Following the Committees' review of this document, the Committees requested the identities of CIA contractors who signed the Hunter Biden statement. While the CIA has not declassified the complete list of individuals who were on contract with the Agency at that time due to purported operational security, it has disclosed that at least two signatories—Michael Morell and former CIA Inspector General David Buckley—were on active contract on the day of the Hunter Biden statement was published.⁶⁰ This disclosure means, in essence, that Morell and Buckley were likely earning taxpayer dollars from their work with the intelligence community—

⁵⁹ *Id.*

⁶⁰ See Letter from Robert F. Dugas, Deputy General Counsel for Litigation and Investigations, Central Intelligence Agency, to Rep. Jim Jordan, Chairman, H. Comm. on the Judiciary & Rep. Michael Turner, Chairman, H. Permanent Select Comm. on Intelligence (Apr. 25, 2024) (Bates CIA-000236) (on file with Committees); see also Email from [Redacted] to [Redacted] (Oct. 20, 2020, 11:05 AM) (Bates CIA000157) (on file with the Committees).

headed, ultimately, by President Donald Trump—while simultaneously working with the presidential campaign of Vice President Joe Biden to influence the outcome of the 2020 American presidential election.⁶¹

UNCLASSIFIED

Name	Contract with CIA (directly or through a company) on October 19, 2020?
John Brennan	No
Michael Morell	Yes
Marc Polymeropoulos	No
David Buckley	Yes
Nick Rasmussen	No

Beyond the potential access to classified information or the use of their positions to influence the approval of the statement, it is concerning that those on contract at the CIA would even be involved in the crafting and promotion of what amounted to a campaign press release. Even Morell, the architect of the Hunter Biden statement and an individual on active contract with the CIA, acknowledged in his transcribed interview—before the Committees learned about his contract—that it is “inappropriate for a currently serving staff officer or contractor to be involved in the political process.”⁶²

Makridis agreed with Morell’s statement that is inappropriate for a CIA contractor to be engaged in the political process. In his transcribed interview with the Committees, he testified:

Q. Mr. Morell testified before Congress on April 4th, 2023, that it would be inappropriate for a currently serving staff officer or a contractor to be involved in the political process. Do you agree with Mr. Morell’s statement?

A. I think that’s generally understood.⁶³

It appears that CIA leadership never expressed any concern about the fact that individuals on active contract with the CIA signed the Hunter Biden statement. According to Makridis, if individuals were on active contract with the CIA, “[t]he PCRB review process would have looked at—at that. So they would have handled that issue if it were a problem.”⁶⁴ Yet there is no indication in any of the evidence or documents produced to the Committees showing that the PCRB stopped or slowed the review of the statement to “look[] at” the participation of

⁶¹ *Id.*

⁶² Morell Interview at 31.

⁶³ Makridis Interview at 92.

⁶⁴ *Id.* at 91.

signatories on contract. Instead, the documents show that the PCRB approved the release of the statement within six hours of it being submitted.

Although Hatch Act political restrictions do not apply to federal contractors in the same way they do to CIA employees,⁶⁵ Makridis stated that he would have examined the relevant ethical circumstances in more detail before signing off on the Hunter Biden statement. He explained that if he were CIA director at the time, he “would [have made] a call to the office of general counsel and [had] that person come in, and we would have [had] that discussion.”⁶⁶ Those who were in charge at the time, however, apparently did not have such discussions, and the PCRB greenlit the statement submitted by a former official with an active CIA contract.

The CIA also produced documents shedding light on the conflicts of interest this contractor status created. Internal CIA documents that were recently produced to the Committees indicate that former CIA Inspector General David Buckley, like Morell, was on active contract with the CIA.⁶⁷ Buckley, however, also held a green badge—which gives cardholders access to secure CIA facilities—at the time of the Hunter Biden statement’s publication.⁶⁸ According to the CIA, Buckley remained either on active contract or with green badge access to all CIA facilities until April 2022.⁶⁹ Historically, green badge access has been given to individuals regularly employed by or permanently assigned to the Agency, allowing them access to all of its facilities.⁷⁰ In Buckley’s case, this would mean he retained unfettered access to all CIA facilities through April 2022. Morell was also hired back as a contractor in May 2021, after the publication of the statement.⁷¹

⁶⁵ JUSTICE MANAGEMENT DIVISION, U.S. DEP’T OF JUSTICE, POLITICAL ACTIVITIES, <https://www.justice.gov/jmd/political-activities> (last visited Apr. 24, 2024).

⁶⁶ Makridis Interview at 92.

⁶⁷ See Letter from Robert F. Dugas, Deputy General Counsel for Litigation and Investigations, Central Intelligence Agency, to Rep. Jim Jordan, Chairman, H. Comm. on the Judiciary & Rep. Michael Turner, Chairman, H. Permanent Select Comm. on Intelligence (Apr. 25, 2024) (Bates CIA-000236) (on file with Committees)

⁶⁸ See Letter from Robert F. Dugas, Deputy General Counsel for Litigation and Investigations, Central Intelligence Agency, to Rep. Jim Jordan, Chairman, H. Comm. on the Judiciary & Rep. Michael Turner, Chairman, H. Permanent Select Comm. on Intelligence (May 20, 2024) (Bates CIA-000237).

⁶⁹ See Letter from Robert F. Dugas, Deputy Gen. Counsel for Litigation and Investigations, Office of Gen. Counsel, Central Intelligence Agency, to Rep. Jim Jordan, Chairman, H. Comm. on the Judiciary & Rep. Michael Turner, Chairman, H. Permanent Select Comm. on Intelligence. (Feb. 14, 2024) (Bates CIA-000235) (on file with Committees).

⁷⁰ Security Regulations for the Central Intelligence Group (Aug. 15, 1947) (approved for release Mar. 2, 2001).

⁷¹ See Letter from Robert F. Dugas, Deputy Gen. Counsel for Litigation and Investigations, Office of Gen. Counsel, Central Intelligence Agency, to Rep. Jim Jordan, Chairman, H. Comm. on the Judiciary & Rep. Michael Turner, Chairman, H. Permanent Select Comm. on Intelligence. (Feb. 14, 2024) (Bates CIA-000235) (on file with Committees).

MICHAEL MORELL	Independent contractor, no fee senior advisory services	Independent Contractor	5/1/21-10/8/21	YES	TS/SCI
----------------	---	------------------------	----------------	-----	--------

NAME	NATURE OF CONTRACT	CONTRACTOR COMPANY	DATE(S) IDENTIFIED AS A CONTRACTOR/GREEN BADGE	INDIVIDUAL HELD AGENCY CLEARANCE ON 10/19/2020	HIGHEST LEVEL OF CLEARANCE CARRIED AT TIME STMT WAS ISSUED
JEREMY BASH	Independent contractor, no fee senior advisory services	Independent Contractor	4/2/19-4/1/22 and 8/22/22-Present Expires 8/21/24	YES	TS/SCI
RODNEY SNYDER	Industrial contractor	Guidehouse Inc.	7/26/16-9/30/20 and 7/20/21-7/14/23	YES	TS/SCI
DAVID BUCKLEY	Industrial contractor	KPMG LLP	5/3/17-4/25/22	YES	TS/SCI
RICHARD H. LEDGETT JR.	Independent contractor, no fee senior advisory services	Independent Contractor	4/22/19-4/21/21	YES	TS/SCI
MICHAEL MORELL	Independent contractor, no fee senior advisory services	Independent Contractor	5/1/21-10/8/21	YES	TS/SCI
DOUC WISE	Independent contractor, no fee senior advisory services	Independent Contractor	1/17/24-Present Expires 1/16/25	NO	N/A

DAVID BUCKLEY	Industrial contractor	KPMG LLP	5/3/17-4/25/22	YES	TS/SCI
---------------	-----------------------	----------	----------------	-----	--------

It is extremely concerning that signatories of the Hunter Biden statement were on contract with the CIA at the time of the statement's drafting, review, and publication. This revelation shows that Morell, Buckley, and likely other signatories were receiving U.S. taxpayer funds while engaged in a politicized project to mislead American voters on behalf of the Biden campaign. Such an overtly political action would be illegal under the Hatch Act for a permanent CIA employee. Congress ought to consider whether to extend this important prohibition to CIA contractors as well.

III. Officials inside the CIA recognized that the Hunter Biden statement was political.

Morell and Polymeropoulos drafted the Hunter Biden statement with the explicit goal of assisting then-candidate Biden in his race to become president. As Morell testified to the Committees: “There were two intents. One intent was to share our concern with the American people that the Russians were playing on this issue; and two, it was to help Vice President Biden.”⁷² Moreover, Morell and Polymeropoulos informed prospective signatories of the intent of the statement prior to its publication, writing that the statement was meant to insulate Vice President Biden from serious electoral vulnerabilities created by his family’s influence peddling activities. Given the fact that some of the signatories were on active contract with the CIA—an organization that is explicitly prohibited from operating domestically⁷³—their effort to score political points for then Vice President Biden undermined the integrity of the Agency.

⁷² Morell Interview at 11.

⁷³ Makridis Interview at 89.

From: Michael M <Michael Morell >
Sent: Sunday, October 18, 2020 7:47 PM
To: James Clapper < >
Subject: Re: Request to Sign On to Statement

Jim,

Thanks.

And, your editorial suggestion has been made. It was a good one.

Michael

On Sun, Oct 18, 2020 at 6:10 PM James Clapper < > wrote:

Michael:

I'll gladly sign on; I said as much on CNN Friday evening.

I have one editorial suggestion for the letter: I think it would strengthen the verbiage if you say this has all the classic earmarks of a Soviet/Russian information operation rather than the "feel" of a Russian operation.

Jim

On Oct 18, 2020, at 5:25 PM, Michael <Michael Morell > wrote:

Sir,

Please see attached. Would love to have you sign. Trying to get Dan Coats to join us.

Thanks.

Begin forwarded message:

From: Michael M <Michael Morell >
Date: October 18, 2020 at 4:48:43 PM EDT
To: Michael M <Michael Morell >
Cc: Marc Polymeropoulos < >
Subject: Request to Sign On to Statement

Marc and I drafted the attached because we believe the Russians were involved in some way in the Hunter Biden email issue and because **we think Trump will attack Biden on the issue at this week's debate and we want to give the VP a talking point to use in response.**

We would be honored if each of you would be willing to join us in signing the letter.

If you do agree to sign, please let me know how you would like your affiliation to read. For those CIA officers on the bcc line, I would like to find a way to highlight your Russia work, if appropriate. For example, Marc's citation will read:

Marc P...
Former Senior CIA Operations Officer
Former Acting Chief of Operations for Europe and Eurasia

If you want to agree to sign but make that "conditional" on seeing who else is willing to sign, I'm happy to send you the final list, probably tomorrow, before obtaining your final approval.

I will clear the statement with the Publication Review Board at CIA tomorrow.

Let us know. Thanks.

Michael and Marc

<Hunter Biden Statement.docx>

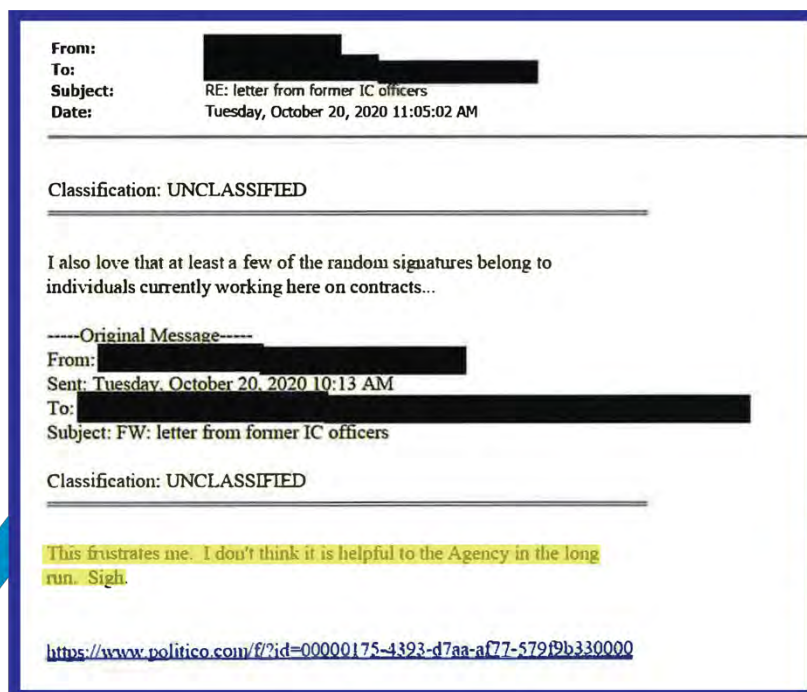
we think Trump will attack Biden on the issue at this week's debate and we want to give the VP a talking point to use in response.

On October 18, 2020, Morell—the key orchestrator behind the Hunter Biden statement, who was receiving taxpayer dollars through his CIA contract at the same time—and Polymeropoulos drafted an email that they sent to a group of former intelligence officials, asking them to sign the statement.⁷⁴ The message outlined the politicized motivations behind the statement. Morell and Polymeropoulos wrote:

Marc and I drafted the attached because we believe the Russians were involved in some way in the Hunter Biden email issue and because we think Trump will attack Biden on the issue at this week’s debate and we want to give the VP a talking point to use in response.

We would be honored if each of you would be willing to join us in signing the letter.⁷⁵

Shortly after the Hunter Biden statement’s publication, individuals inside the CIA noted their concerns with the statement. In one internal CIA email sent on October 20, 2020, staff lamented that the statement would hurt the CIA, “[t]his frustrates me. I don’t think it is helpful to the Agency in the long run.”⁷⁶



This frustrates me. I don't think it is helpful to the Agency in the long run. Sigh.

⁷⁴ Email from Michael Morell to Michael Morell, Marc Polymeropoulos, and Bcc'd Recipients (Oct. 18, 2020, 4:48 PM) (on file with the Committees).

⁷⁵ Email from Michael Morell to Michael Morell, Marc Polymeropoulos, and Bcc'd Recipients (Oct. 18, 2020, 4:48 PM) (on file with the Committees).

⁷⁶ See Email from [Redacted] to [Redacted] (Oct. 20, 2020, 10:13 AM) (Bates CIA000157) (on file with the Committees).

In his transcribed interview with the Committees, Makridis testified that he agreed that the Hunter Biden statement damaged the integrity of the CIA and garnered unhelpful attention for the CIA. During his testimony before the Committees, he stated that it is best for the CIA to not be splashed on the news and that the Agency had an important duty best done without publicity.⁷⁷ Makridis testified:

Q. . . . [C]ould you please read the contents of that bottom email to me?

A. “This frustrates me. I don’t think it is helpful to the Agency in the long run. Sigh.”

Q. And it includes a URL link to the Politico article, which does link to the October 19th statement on the Hunter Biden email story signed by 51 former intelligence officials. Why do you think this individual was frustrated by the publication of the statement?

* * *

A. I don’t recall this email. But why was the person frustrated? I don’t know. I guess it’s an interesting question to ask the person. Again, I don’t recall this email.

Q. Do you have any personal frustrations with the October 19th statement?

A. You know, I think the Agency’s work is best done when it . . . doesn’t sort of splash across the press in any way, but that’s a general statement, and I think most CIA officers would sort of say the same.⁷⁸

Makridis testified that he viewed the Hunter Biden statement as a political document that influenced the presidential race between President Trump and Vice President Biden.⁷⁹ Makridis testified:

Q. So I think you were asked at the last hour in minority questioning, did you—is it your opinion this statement of the 51 former intelligence officials was a political statement . . . because of the congressional investigation that followed? Was that your testimony? Or was it inherently political?

⁷⁷ Makridis Interview at 29-30.

⁷⁸ *Id.*

⁷⁹ *Id.* at 97.

A. Well, I said I wouldn't be involved in politics, right? So that's what you're, sort of, getting at. . . . I mean, it's talking about President Trump, Vice President Biden. I mean . . . you can't read that and say there isn't politics involved of some nature.⁸⁰

Unlike other intelligence officers, Makridis said that he took issue with the nature of the Hunter Biden statement. Makridis stated that he would not have signed onto the publication if asked because he isolates his professional life from political matters. Makridis confirmed:

Q. . . . [W]ould you have signed this statement?

A. As I said earlier, I've stayed out of politics and things that could be politicized, so . . . for that reason, I would not have signed the statement.⁸¹

On October 20, 2020, Polymeropoulos sent to the PCRБ for review a set of talking points that he had drafted related to the Hunter Biden statement. These talking points—which the PCRБ ultimately approved for publication—raised concerns for Agency employees, according to documents produced to the Committees.⁸²

⁸⁰ *Id.*

⁸¹ *Id.* at 44.

⁸² CIA produced versions of the relevant documents with differing redactions. The Committees were able to confirm the documents concerned the same matter based on a comparison of the documents. The below graphic includes two email chains in which the subject lines and time stamps for the first three emails in each chain are identical. The bodies of these initial three emails in each chain appear identical, but the unredacted version references a manuscript submitted by Polymeropoulos regarding the Hunter Biden laptop story. The highlighted and connected portions of the graphic demonstrate that these two email chains were identical until they verged into separate conversations. Based on a side-by-side comparison, the Committees were able to confirm that these chains both reference Polymeropoulos's talking points. During his transcribed interview, Mr. Makridis confirmed the Committees' comparison. *See* Makridis Interview at 85 (“Q: [B]ut we can at least establish that they are both in response to an email chain referencing Marc Polymeropoulos' manuscript talking points. A: It appears that way.”).


One CIA employee wrote an internal email noting that it was “interesting” that the PCRB approved the talking points for publication in the first place.⁸³

From: [REDACTED]
To: CIMC_RAD_NITB
Subject: FW: PCRB Item of Interest 20 October (Two of two)
Date: Tuesday, October 20, 2020 10:11:54 AM
Attachments: [image001.jpg](#)
[image002.png](#)
[image003.jpg](#)
[REDACTED]

Classification: UNCLASSIFIED//FOUO
=====

Interesting to see what was submitted and approved by PCRB. Please do not forward.

[REDACTED]
Branch Chief, Nontraditional Intelligence Threats Branch (NITB)
Counterintelligence Mission Center/Research & Analysis Department (CIMC/R&AD)
[REDACTED] | [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]



⁸³ See Email from the Branch Chief of Nontraditional Intelligence Threats, CIA to CIMC_RAD_NITB, CIA (Oct. 20, 2020, 10:11 AM) (Bates CIA-000232) (on file with the Committees).

In another email on the same topic, a CIA staff member described Polymeropoulos as engaging in a “pro-Biden campaign and may be disclosing classified information in his efforts.”⁸⁴

From: [Redacted]
To: [Redacted]
Subject: FW: PCRB Item of Interest 20 October (Two of two)
Date: Tuesday, October 20, 2020 10:45:50 AM
Attachments: [image001.jpg](#)
[image002.png](#)
[Redacted]

Classification: UNCLASSIFIED//~~FOUO~~

=====

Good Morning, [Redacted] and [Redacted]

It appears [Redacted] is actively involved in a pro-Biden campaign and may be disclosing classified information in his efforts. It is difficult to believe that the timing of the attached [Redacted] and the [Redacted] are coincidental. [Redacted]

Thanks,

[Redacted]

Included in his talking points submitted to the PCRB and aimed at discrediting the Hunter Biden laptop as a Russian plant, Polymeropoulos made broad and unsupported—and, as it turns out, wrong—political assertions about so-called Russian disinformation. He wrote:

From Fox News—the lead dissemination mechanism inside the US, to Senator Johnson of Wisconsin, there is no shortage of individuals in the GOP orbit who will lap up anything that the Russians throw their way.⁸⁵

⁸⁴ See Email from [Redacted] to [Redacted] (Oct. 20, 2020, 10:45 AM) (Bates CIA000178 - CIA000180) (on file with the Committees).

⁸⁵ See Letter from Robert F. Dugas, Deputy General Counsel for Litigation and Investigations, Central Intelligence Agency, to Rep. Jim Jordan, Chairman, H. Comm. on the Judiciary & Rep. Michael Turner, Chairman, H. Permanent Select Comm. on Intelligence (May 20, 2024) (Bates CIA-000239) (on file with Committees).

It is concerning enough that Polymeropoulos's talking points sought to discredit the Hunter Biden laptop in an effort to boost then-candidate Biden in the 2020 presidential election. Polymeropoulos had decades of experience in the CIA and should have known the proper protocols surrounding the use of classified information. In his testimony before the Committees, Makridis outlined the broad mandate every CIA staff member operates under, stating:

- Q. Okay. Now, someone trying to assist a presidential campaign using classified information—potentially using classified information from the CIA, fair to say even bigger no-no, if I may?
- A. Use of classified information, regardless of the purpose, is a no-no.
- Q. Right.
- A. Whether that's for personal gain, political gain, or just a mistake. That's a no-no.⁸⁶

Makridis stated what every individual entrusted with a government clearance understands, that the unauthorized exposure of classified information is unacceptable under any circumstances. Despite this, Polymeropoulos—either knowingly or negligently—leveraged classified information to help the Biden campaign. Ultimately, the PCRB prevented Polymeropoulos from disseminating classified information in his talking points, but CIA staff still expressed concerns that his talking points were approved at all.⁸⁷ However, the CIA lacked any safeguards to prevent this classified information from being shared publicly before the PCRB stepped in.

⁸⁶ Makridis Interview at 88.

⁸⁷ Email from [Redacted], Branch Chief of Nontraditional Intelligence Threats, CIA to CIMC_RAD_NITB, CIA (Oct. 20, 2020, 10:11 AM) (Bates CIA-000232).

Conclusion

The October 19, 2020, statement on Hunter Biden’s laptop signed by 51 former senior intelligence community officials served to interfere in the American electoral system in the final weeks before the 2020 presidential election. The highest officials within the CIA were aware of the statement prior to its publication. Signatories of the statement—including lead architect, former Acting CIA Director Michael Morell, and former CIA Inspector General David Buckley—were on active contract with the CIA at the time the statement was drafted, reviewed, and ultimately published. This revelation raises the concern that these officials abused the access of their positions to curate, promote, and receive expedited approval of the statement. Indeed, the PCRB continuously requested quick decisions from officials within the CIA and partners at ODNI about the status of publication of the statement. This occurred after Morell specifically requested an expedited review process and during a time when he had contracting status and was under consideration to be named President Biden’s CIA Director.

The signatories’ choice to leverage the authority of their former intelligence community titles to peddle a narrative about foreign election interference inappropriately embroiled the Agency in the domestic political process. The poor judgment displayed by the signatories and the CIA’s executive suite—those who could have prevented the Agency from being entangled in a false and domestically politicized narrative of Russian interference—is as relevant today as it was four years ago. To date, there are no clear or transparent rules to prevent intelligence contractors from leveraging their access to the CIA for political purposes.

Seasoned CIA officials like Morell and Polymeropoulos were able to subvert the process to spread disinformation in the weeks leading up to the 2020 presidential election because the CIA lacked meaningful safeguards to prevent this from happening. Unless and until the CIA makes substantial reforms to its own oversight processes surrounding public statements and contractor behavior, these problems could persist.

Without rigorous oversight of the intelligence community—and without proper safeguards to prevent the weaponization of privileged access within the intelligence community—rogue actors like Morell and Polymeropoulos are likely to continue engaging in political work under the guise of responsible action. As a result, the Committees will continue oversight to prevent individuals from using the authority of the federal government for their own partisan desires.