

COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY,  
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,  
WASHINGTON, D.C.

INTERVIEW OF: MICHAEL MORELL

Tuesday, April 4, 2023

Washington, D.C.

The interview in the above matter was held in 2237 Rayburn House Office Building, commencing at 10:01 a.m.

Present: Representatives Jordan and Gaetz.

Appearances:

For the COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY:

[REDACTED] GENERAL COUNSEL  
[REDACTED] LAW CLERK  
[REDACTED] DEPUTY GENERAL COUNSEL  
[REDACTED] INTERN  
[REDACTED] CHIEF COUNSEL FOR OVERSIGHT  
[REDACTED] SPECIAL COUNSEL  
[REDACTED] SENIOR SPECIAL COUNSEL  
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[REDACTED] MINORITY CHIEF OVERSIGHT COUNSEL  
[REDACTED] MINORITY OVERSIGHT COUNSEL  
[REDACTED] MINORITY INTERN  
[REDACTED] MINORITY COUNSEL

FOR THE CONSTITUTION SUBCOMMITTEE

[REDACTED] MINORITY INTERN  
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FOR THE PERMANENT SELECT COMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE

[REDACTED] DEPUTY GENERAL COUNSEL  
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For MICHAEL MORELL:

PAUL NATHANSON

CHARLES KLUG

CLAIRE CREIGHTON

Davis Polk

901 15th Street, NW

Washington, D.C. 20005

██████████ We can go on the record. Good morning. This is a transcribed interview of Mr. Michael Morell. Chairman Jordan and Turner have requested this interview. Would the witness please state your name for the record.

Mr. Morell. Michael Joseph Morell.

██████████ Could counsel please state your name for the record.

Mr. Nathanson. Sure. Paul Nathanson from Davis Polk for Mr. Morell.

Mr. Klug. Charles Klug from Davis Polk for Mr. Morell.

Ms. Creighton. Claire Creighton from Davis Polk for Mr. Morell.

██████████ The Committee on the Judiciary and the Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence of the House of Representatives are conducting oversight of Federal law enforcement in intelligence matters within our respective jurisdictions. This investigation serves to inform potential legislative reforms within the jurisdictions of the committee.

For example, the committees may consider legislative reforms, such as revolving door legislation, for Federal employees with security clearances. These reforms might include allowing Federal employees with security clearances to retain their clearances after employment with the government but limiting their ability to receive access to classified information for some duration after their government employment.

The committees may also consider legislative proposals that would ban or restrict intelligence agencies from engaging in, coordinating, or promoting any political activity related to Federal elections, including candidates for Federal office.

The House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence staff will be constrained to issues relating to the letter signed by the 51 former intelligence officials. On behalf of the committees, I want to thank you for appearing here today to answer our questions.

The chairmen also appreciate your willingness to appear voluntarily.

My name is [REDACTED] and I am with Chairman Jordan's staff.

I will now have everyone else from the committees who are here at the table introduce themselves as well.

[REDACTED] [REDACTED] House Intelligence.

[REDACTED] [REDACTED] with the House Judiciary Committee.

Chairman Jordan. Chairman Jordan.

Mr. Gaetz. Matt Gaetz, majority member of the House Judiciary Committee.

[REDACTED] [REDACTED] chief oversight counsel for the House Judiciary

Committee Democrat staff.

[REDACTED] [REDACTED] minority counsel.

[REDACTED] [REDACTED] counsel for the minority.

[REDACTED] [REDACTED] with the House Judiciary Committee minority staff.

[REDACTED] I am [REDACTED] with the House Judiciary.

[REDACTED] [REDACTED] with the Judiciary minority.

[REDACTED] [REDACTED] with the Judiciary minority.

[REDACTED] [REDACTED] with the Judiciary minority.

[REDACTED] [REDACTED] with the House Judiciary Committee.

[REDACTED] [REDACTED] House Judiciary --

[REDACTED] [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] [REDACTED] House Intel Deputy General Counsel for the

majority.

[REDACTED] [REDACTED] House Judiciary majority.

[REDACTED] Thank you. I'd like to now go over the ground rules and guidelines

that we will follow during today's interview. Our questioning will proceed in rounds.

The majority will ask questions first for 1 hour, and then the minority will have an

opportunity to ask questions for an equal period of time if they choose. We will alternate back and forth until there are no more questions, and the interview is over. Typically, we take a short break at the end of each hour, but if you would like to take a break apart from that, please just let us know.

As you can see, there is an official court reporter taking down everything we say to make a written record. So we ask that you give verbal responses to all questions. Do you understand that?

Mr. Morell. Yes, I do.

██████████ So the court reporter can take down a clear record, we will do our best to limit the number of people directing questions at you during any given hour to just those people on the staff whose turn it is. Please try and speak clearly so the court reporter can understand and so the folks down on the end of the table can hear you as well. It is important that we don't talk over one another or interrupt each other, if we can help it, and that goes for everybody present at today's interview.

We want you to answer our questions in the most complete and truthful manner as possible. So we will take our time. If you have any questions or if do not understand one of our questions, please just let us know.

Our questions will cover a wide range of topics. So, if you need clarification at any point, just say so. If you honestly don't know the answer to a question or do not remember, it is best not to guess. Please give your best recollection, and it is okay to tell us if you learned information from someone else. Just indicate how you came to know the information. If there are things you don't know or can't remember, just say so and please inform us who, to the best of your knowledge, might be able to provide a complete answer to the question.

You should also understand that, although this interview is not under oath that by

law you are required to answer questions from Congress truthfully. Do you understand that?

Mr. Morell. Yes, I do.

██████████ This also applies to questions posed by congressional staff in an interview. Do you understand that?

Mr. Morell. Yes, I do.

██████████ Witnesses that knowingly provide false testimony could be subject to criminal prosecution for perjury or for making false payments under 18 U.S.C., section 2001. Do you understand this?

Mr. Morell. I do.

██████████ Is there any reason you are unable to provide truthful answers to today's questions?

Mr. Morell. No.

██████████ Finally, I would like make not that the content of what we discussed here today is confidential. We ask that you not speak about what we discussed in this interview to any outside individuals to preserve the integrity of our investigation.

For the same reason, the marked exhibits that we will use today will remain with the court reporter so that they can go in the official transcript, and any copies of those exhibits will be returned to us when we wrap up. All right. That is the end of my preamble. Is there anything that my colleagues from the minority would like to add?

██████████ We don't have anything to add. Thank you.

██████████ The clock now reads 10:06 a.m. We will start our first hour of questioning.

EXAMINATION

BY ██████████



Q Mr. Morell, thank you for being here.

A You're welcome. It's good to be here.

Q Could you please tell us a bit about your professional background?

A I grew up in Ohio. When I graduated from college, I got a job at the Central Intelligence Agency. I spent my entire career there. I ended my career as the Deputy Director. Twice during that period, I was Acting Director. I retired in 2013. I have done a number of things since I retired.

Q Well, what do you do now?

A I do a number of things. I work at a consulting firm called Beacon Global Strategies. I used to work at CBS News. I am no longer there. I'm on a couple of boards. I'm on the board of Fortress Investment Group. I'm on the board of a company called Orbis Operations. I do a lot of my own private consulting. I work for Cerberus Capital Management. I work for another private equity firm called iSquared Capital. So that's not the totality of what I do, but that's the biggest chunk of time I just described for you.

Q And, when you retired from the CIA, that was in 2013 you said?

A In September of 2013, yes.

Q You were Deputy Director at the time?

A Yes.

Q And acknowledging that we're in an unclassified setting, can you briefly describe your role and responsibilities as Deputy Director?

A As Deputy Director of CIA, I was responsible for overseeing all of CIA's activities, including analysis and operations, covert action. I was responsible for the health and well-being of the organization and the people who worked there. I was responsible for representing the Agency at the White House, here on the Hill, and with

foreign leaders and the leader of foreign intelligence services.

Q And you were twice Acting Director?

A Yes.

Q Thank you. You were one of 51 former intelligence officials who signed a public statement regarding Hunter Biden's emails, correct?

A Yes.

██████████ I would like to now enter a document dated October 19, 2020, titled "Public Statement on the Hunter Biden Emails" into the record as exhibit No. 1.

[Morell Exhibit No. 1.

Was marked for identification.]

██████████ I would also like to enter the Politico article that featured the public statement, dated October 19, 2020, titled "Hunter Biden story is Russian disinfo, dozens of former intel officials say" into the record as exhibit No. 2.

How would you characterize the public statement?

Mr. Morell. I'm not sure what you mean.

██████████ How would you describe it? What --

██████████ Politico article.

██████████ Oh, we're going to strike that from the record. Just one fewer exhibit were going to introduce because that's the statement itself, if that's all right.

██████████ My apologies.

██████████ That's okay.

BY ██████████

A What does it say?

Q Yes. Describe -- what does the statement say?

A The statement says that we are concerned that suspicious -- I think it says

"deeply suspicious" that the Russians played some role in the emergence of these emails at a critical time during the election period.

Q What was the intent of the statement?

A 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.

Q Let me touch on that help President Biden part in a second. In 2020, was the name of one of your Gmail accounts, Michael Gmail New?

A I don't know.

Q Okay.

A I don't know.

Q What was your role in the creation of this statement --

A I think Michael Gmail New is MJM 941958, I think.

Q Okay. That's what I wanted to make sure of --

A -- yeah, I think so. I'm not sure.

Q Okay. What was your role in the creation of the statement?

A I organized it.


Q So you drafted that?

A I did not do the first draft.

Q Okay.

A Marc Polymeropoulos did the first draft. Then I redrafted it. Yeah, I'm the organizer, and I played a major role in drafting it.

Q Okay.

 I would now like to enter a draft of the statement Michael Morell and Mark Polymeropoulos sent to potential signatories, including a request to sign

dated October 19, 2020, at 1:38 a.m., into the record as exhibit No. 2.

[Morell Exhibit No. 2.

Was marked for identification.]

BY [REDACTED]

Q That was an email sent from you, correct?

A Yes.

Q Michael Gmail New is --

A Yes, and Michael Gmail New is MJM 941958.

Q Perfect. I just want to make sure it's redacted on one of the copies we have.

A Yep.

Q Now, I would just like to read: Marc, and I drafted the attached because we believed 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 Vice President, VP, a talking point to use in response.

You said Marc Polymeropoulos held you draft the statement?

BY [REDACTED]

A He did a first draft.

Q Correct. And we also have texts between you and Mr. Polymeropoulos that I'll enter into the exhibit. You asked him to create some background points for you, I believe?

A Yeah, that's what I saw as the first draft.

Q As the first draft?

A Yes.

Q Okay.

██████████ I will enter that into the exhibit as exhibit No. 3.

[Morell Exhibit No. 3.

Was marked for identification.]

BY ██████████

Q And, in these texts, you said -- I believe you're in gray, correct?

A Yes.

Q You said: Just wondering if you think the Russians played in the Hunter Biden email thing.

And he said: Hey, there.

And you said: It kind of feels that way to me.

And he says: It does to me, too. There was a previous Burisma hack. Plus Ruby and the orbit he plays is all dirty.

Then you responded: But a strange way to get the material into the public domain?

Mark responded: They will always look for a dissem mechanism, third party. Yes, this is odd. A blind computer. But I think of it as throwing crap on a wall. Whatever sticks.

And then you say: I'm thinking of writing something that says the FBI is investigating whether there is Russia involvement in this thing, and that makes sense because it has the feel of a Russian op.

It goes on, and you ask if you want to write it together, and then just send you a list of what you see as the hallmarks.

When you said "but the strange way to get the material into the public domain," did you have any doubt about the veracity of the laptop and what was being reported about it and --

A No, I just meant what I said, right? It's a strange way for the Russians to put this information into the public domain. And I wanted to give Marc an out, right? Because I start by saying kind of feels that way to me. I didn't want to leave the witness. So I wanted to give him an opportunity to say, you know, maybe this isn't what we're saying it is. This was somebody who was subordinate to me at the Agency, and I didn't want right my seniority to drive him to a conclusion.

Q And what did Mr. Polymeropoulos come back and tell you?

A He came back and, you know -- he clearly came back and said, he thinks, you know, he shared my suspicions.

Q Did you have a specific strategy in your outreach efforts to the former officials that you were soliciting?

A The strategy was to get people who had served on administrations -- you know, multiple administrations, Republican and Democrat, that was the goal.

Q Yes.

██████████ I will enter into the record an email that you sent. I would like to enter into the record an email that you sent from Michael Morell to Nick Shapiro, dated October 19th, 2020, at 6:36 a.m., into the record as exhibit No. 4.

[Morell Exhibit No. 4.

Was marked for identification.]

BY ██████████

Q I will explain tomorrow on the phone how this came to be. I have sent a draft to David Kris and Lisa Monaco but have not yet heard back. They should sign. I'm looking for two things: Pairs of seniors who served in the same position from different administrations -- Hayden and Panetta, Jeh Johnson and Mike Chertoff, Lisa and Ken Wainstein, Clapper and Coats, et cetera, and then a slew of former IC and national

security who worked Russia. Should have something to give to the media through you tomorrow afternoon.

So it looks like there were particular officials that you were hopeful to recruit. And some, such as Lisa Monaco and David Kris, did not sign.

A Correct.

Q What reason did they give you for not signing?

A So, of the people who didn't sign -- and I have to say, I don't know of all of these people who we sent a request to. I don't know if all of these people received a request or not.

Q Okay.

A I don't know that. What I was doing here was just giving examples of pairs.

Q Okay.

A For the people who did not sign, a handful of them said: We're not intelligence officers. We think it's better if this letter come from intelligence officers.

Other people said: I work for a company, and I'm not on the allowed so sign such letters.

Nobody, nobody in making a decision not to sign questioned the judgment --

Q All right.

A -- we were making.

Q Did you task other former officials with roles to promote statement?

A Definition of "promote"?

Q To disseminate it for other signatories to work for the press.

A So, breaking into two pieces here, the first piece is that three of us took responsibility for sending it out to officials to try to get signatories. Myself, Marc Polymeropoulos, and a woman named Kristin Wood. Kristin worked for me at the

Agency. She worked directly for me at the Agency as my aide. We were very close friends. I asked her to do that. She agreed. And then, in terms of getting it to the media, that was entirely Nick Shapiro's responsibility here. So he took that responsibility on.

Q Okay. What --

A I had no interaction with the media.

Q What role did John Brennan play, if any?

A A signatory.

Q A signatory. What about Clapper?

A Signatory. And he asked for a -- he asked for a change. I don't know what change it was, but I know he asked for a change.

Q He made an edit, correct?

A Yes.

Q Going back to this text exchange between you and Marc Polymeropoulos, I read that you said: I'm thinking of writing something that says the FBI is investigating whether there is Russia involvement in this thing, and that makes sense because it has the feel of a Russia op.

Why did you think or how do you know the FBI was already investigating it?

A Because there was the USA Today article saying that the FBI was looking at the very thing that we were suspicious about.

Q The --

A I didn't know that for a fact, right, and we actually said that in a statement. But, you know, that got my attention.

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

A No.



Q Had you been privy to any classified briefings --

A No.

Q -- about this?

A No.

Q We know that the statement that's published is different from the draft that was originally circulated. In particular, the last two paragraphs referencing Vice President Joe Biden taking a private and public stand against the then prosecutor general of Ukraine Viktor Shokin were taken out for being what you described as too political. Why?

A Somebody asked that it come out. I don't know who. And that was the point that that person made. I really don't know who asked. And, you know, I didn't necessarily see it as too political. You know, the whole statement is political at the end of the day. But I didn't see it as too political. But the person who asked that it come out did, so we took it out. It's actually an important paragraph for me. But it came out nonetheless.

Q Why was that an important paragraph for you?

A Because the fundamental charge against the Vice President was that he had conducted U.S. policy toward Ukraine, not with the best interest of the United States of America in mind but with the interest of his son in mind. And I thought and I still believe that that to be an inaccurate charge. At this time, you know, there were several investigations, none of which got to that fundamental charge, none of which proved that fundamental charge. And, as somebody who worked at the most senior levels of the Obama administration, I knew that it was an impossibility for the Vice President to conduct foreign policy on his own. So I knew that charge to be false. It was a charge that continued to be made against the Vice President by President Trump, and that is one

of the reasons why this letter was important to me: to give the Vice President something to push back on that charge.

Q In an email to Nick Shapiro, you said that you would, quote, explain tomorrow on the phone how this came to be, meaning this public statement.

And I will enter in that email into the record so that you can get a copy of it. We have entered this one into the record. That was the previous one. Can you tell us what you said to Mr. Shapiro during that call? How did it --

A Sure. I told him that I had received a call from Tony Blinken, then a senior official on the Biden campaign, asking me if I had seen The New York Post story. If my memory serves then -- you know, I don't know exactly how you want to do this -- but my memory is sketchy, right? This is a long time ago. I believe I said I had not seen it. I believe he summarized it for me, and he asked me if I thought the Russians may have been involved in any way in the emergence of these emails.

Q So that was -- now --

A I should also say I don't know whether he called me or whether he sent me an email.

Q Okay.

A Just to be clear.

Q In the production the committee received, we did not get an email from him --

A Correct.

Q -- initiating that call except -- but for a USA Today article that he forwarded --

A Yes.

Q -- to you? So he had called you before sending you the USA Today article?

A Sure. He either called me or he emailed me.

Q Okay.

A Right. At this time, I was regularly deleting my emails because of something that happened to Director Brennan in late 2015. So all of the emails that I received and sent as part of this, right, some of those emails had been deleted. So it's possible he sent me an email. It's possible he just called me.

Chairman Jordan. There were two separate communications. There was the first call or email, and then there was the subsequent email with the USA Today article?

Mr. Morell. Yes, sir. Yes, sir.

Chairman Jordan. What was the time of the email?

Mr. Morell. So I don't know for sure, Congressman, but I believe he called to ask the question first and then followed up with the email.

Chairman Jordan. Close together?

Mr. Morell. I think -- you know, given the timestamps on here, I feel that, you know, when I say -- Congressman, I say: Just wondering if you guys, if you think the Russians played in the Hunter Biden thing.

That was at 2:16 p.m. on the 17th. He sends me the USA Today article later that night.

Chairman Jordan. Right.

Mr. Morell. Right. I think he called me or sent me an email prior 2:16 p.m. So there's some gap there I think between the first contact and the second.

Chairman Jordan. Okay. That's what I assumed. When you got the USA Today article -- and I believe it was at 10:53 that evening -- was that the first time you had seen USA article.

Mr. Morell. So I referenced the FBI investigation in the early afternoon of the 17th in my conversation with Marc Polymeropoulos. I don't remember whether I saw it.

The first thing I did when Mr. Blinken called me is I did some research. I had not read The New York Post article. I went and read it. I did some internet searches. I did a little bit of research here before I reached out to Marc. It's possible I found it then. It's also possible that, when Mr. Blinken called me, he mentioned it to me. I just don't remember.

Chairman Jordan. In that timeframe, then, you would have got the call from Mr. Blinken prior to 2:16.

Mr. Morell. I believe so, sir.

Mr. Gaetz. Excuse me, Mr. Morell, as part of the research that you did in between the contact with Mr. Blinken and the contact with Marc, did you contact any individuals as a part of that research?

Mr. Morell. I did not.

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

Mr. Morell. Yes.

Mr. Gaetz. Thank you.

[REDACTED] I would like to enter into the record an email sent that now Secretary Blinken sent to Michael Morell featuring the USA Today article just to make sure we got a fulsome record.

[Morell Exhibit No. 5.

Was marked for identification.]

BY [REDACTED]

Q Thank you. And you said now Secretary Blinken was employed by the Biden campaign at the time he sent this email, correct?

A It's my understanding is that he was employed.

Q When he called you, did he direct, suggest, or insinuate in any way that you

should write a letter or statement on this topic?

A My memory is that he did not, right. My memory is that he asked me what I thought.

Q Okay. It wasn't: The campaign could use some help on this; could you --

A He did not say that.

Q -- cook up something that we could use?

A It's not my memory that he said that.

Q Okay. Why do you believe he called you then and asked for your opinion on this?

A You know, Tony and I were fairly close. I mean, I wouldn't say we were close friends, but Tony and I were fairly close. During our time in government when he was the Vice President's National Security Advisor and then when he was President Obama's Deputy National Security Advisor, I would be the person that he would reach out to with those kind of questions. When we saw each other post the Obama administration, we would have conversations about what was going on in the world; he would ask me questions. So it was in part natural, you know, for him to do that. But, you know, he asked me a specific question here. You know, he'll have to tell you what his intent was, right, in asking me. You know, my thinking was that, if I agreed, right, that the Russians were somehow involved, my guess was that he would want that out, but that is a guess, right. I do not know his intent.

Q But, prior to his call, you -- you did not have any intent to write this statement?

A I did not.

Q Okay. So his call triggered --

A It did, yes.

Q -- that intent in you?

A Yes. Absolutely.

Q Okay. And then, in the exhibit I just handed out to you, I see that the email from Secretary Blinken was originally sent to him by Andrew Bates, then director of rapid response from the Biden campaign and current White House deputy, Press Secretary.

Do you know or have any reason to believe Secretary Blinken was directed by the Biden campaign to enlist you to write this statement?

A I don't know that.

Q Did he mention communication with Andrew Bates --

A He did not.

Q -- on the phone with you? Do you believe you were enlisted by the Biden campaign to write this statement?

A I don't -- I can't guess their intent.

Mr. Gaetz. Mr. Morell, are you aware of any other individuals that Mr. Blinken contacted during this time period?

Mr. Morell. I am not. I'm not aware.

Mr. Gaetz. Thank you.

BY [REDACTED]

Q Do you have any reason to believe the Biden campaign planted the USA Today story titled "A tabloid got a trove of data on Hunter Biden from Rudy Giuliani. Now, the FBI is probing a possible disinformation campaign"? The same article that they sent you?

A I don't -- I don't -- I don't believe they did.

Q Do you know whether Secretary Blinken or Andrew Bates had any contact with USA Today or USA Today journalist Caren Bohan, Kevin Johnson, Matthew Brown, or

Jeff Neiburg?

A So it seems, right, it seems -- it seems that the campaign was asked questions about this by USA Today and provided quite a bit of material. Because you just -- you know, you read it and you see it.

Q Right.

A So I'm sure they did. There's a hundred percent certainty on that.

Q Did the Biden campaign direct your strategy with reporters on the statement?

A So there is an email, which we'll get to, I assume, where I am telling Nick Shapiro that the campaign would like Shane Harris of The Washington Post to be the one to, you know, write a story about this statement.

Q Correct. Let me go ahead and enter that into the record.

A Yeah, go ahead.

██████████ I would like to now enter an email sent from Michael Morell to Nick Shapiro on October 19th, 2020, at 8:21 p.m., into the record as exhibit No. 6.

[Morell Exhibit No. 6.

Was marked for identification.]

BY ██████████

Q You write: Between us, the campaign would like Shane Harris to go first. Please share with the campaign when you share with Shane, but by all means, give it to the reporters as well. Why did the Biden campaign ask for Shane Harris to go first?

A So I do not remember a communication with a campaign -- where the campaign said to me they would like Shane Harris to go first. I just don't recall that at all. Really, sorry. I just don't. You know, there's a number of possibilities here, but I don't remember that clearly. I told Nick that. It's right here in front of us.

Q So --

Mr. Gaetz. Mr. Morell, can you list the people in the campaign that you were in contact with during that time period?

Mr. Morell. Mr. Blinken. That's it.

Mr. Gaetz. No one else?

Mr. Morell. No one else, sir.

BY [REDACTED]

Q And, to be clear, you don't recall Mr. Blinken asking if Shane would go first?

A I don't.

Q Okay.

A I don't.

Q Why did you instruct Mr. Shapiro to share with the campaign when you share with Shane?

A Because I thought it important for them to know what we did. They had not seen it. All right. We didn't coordinate with this with them.

Q So the Biden campaign did not request that you share after it had been sent to the journalist?

A So I don't know again, right --

Q Okay.

A -- because I don't remember that conversation with Tony or with anybody else. But it doesn't sound right from this. It doesn't sound like they had asked, right? This is me saying. Because I thought they should see it.

Q And it is your testimony today that this was not a coordinated effort with the Biden campaign?

A Not beyond the initial phone call that triggered it as you pointed out earlier.



Q Okay. And Nick Shapiro did, in fact, share a copy of the emails he was sending to journalists to the Biden campaign, correct?

A I believe so, but you need to ask him that.

Q Yes. We will. We will enter that into the record as exhibit No. 7, an email sent from Nick Shapiro to Andrew Bates, director of Rapid Response on the Biden campaign on October 19th, 2020, at 11:22 p.m.

[Morell Exhibit No. 7.

Was marked for identification.]

██████████ And he says: This is what I gave them.

Mr. Morell. Uh-huh.

██████████ I would like to enter a series of emails Nick Shapiro sent to journalist Julie Pace of the Associated Press, Shane Harris of The Washington Post, and Natasha Bertrand of Politico October 19th, 2020. And, for the record, this is exhibit No. 8.

[Morell Exhibit No. 8.

Was marked for identification.]

BY ██████████

Q Was the idea to send to Julie Pace of the Associated Press, Natasha Bertrand of Politico, and Shane Harris at The Washington Post yours? How did y'all come up with that?

A Nick came up with -- Nick made the decision about who to reach out to, you know, with the exception of Shane Harris, which was clearly my instruction to him.

Q Okay. So he came up with that universe of journalists?

A Yes.

Q And that email also shows you giving Mr. Shapiro a different instruction on

what to say to those journalists on the record, off the record, on background. Why did you advise Mr. Shapiro on differentiation?

A I'm sorry, I am not following.

Q On exhibit No?

A I'm sorry. I am not numbering them here. I should be.

Q Oh, sorry. Let me make sure you have got this one.

A So these are the same?

Q Yes.

A Okay. Got it. Go ahead. Sorry.

Q Why did you advise Mr. Shapiro to say different things to the press on record?

A Oh, I see what you're saying.

Q On the record --

A So we're looking at this one.

Q -- on background, yes.

A Yes.

Q This is what Mr. Shapiro sent to the reporters. We have another email from you advising --

A Yeah, so I didn't play any role in what Nick said besides the instruction I gave him. Right? In terms of -- in terms of the on the record and off the record, you know, the on the record is clear, right? I wanted people to know that. The off the record in retrospect doesn't make any sense to me. You know, it was really important to me that people not misread what we were saying. And, you know, as you know, the statement clearly says that we're not saying this is disinformation. The statement clearly says we don't know if these emails are real or not. And that was really important to me that that

be said. I don't know why I said off the record. I should have said on the record.

Q And you say: If asked on background from you, why Michael, in talking to people outside of government who he worked with and who know Russia. He was struck by the fact that all of them thought Russia was involved here. Michael thought people should know that. So why Michael is then referring to you --

A Yes.

Q -- having drafted it --

A Yes.

Q -- and put it together?

A Yes. Can I add something here, is that okay?

Q Yes, please.

A So that's actually a very important paragraph, No. 4. It was very important to me that the people who knew Russia best, and Marc was one of those, but a number of the other signatories were as well. Deep Russia experts, Marc was in part a Russia expert, but some of the other people were deep Russia experts. They had worked on the Soviet Union and Russia their entire careers. It was very important to me that they agreed with what we were saying here. And if any of them had raised their hand and said, "Hey, I think this is wrong," this never would have happened. So that paragraph was very important to me.

Q Are you familiar with the CIA Prepublication Classification Review Board, PCRB?

A Yes, I sure am.

██████████ In your productions to the committee, we have seen that you provided an email that you had sent to the PCRB, which I would now like to enter it into the record as exhibit No. 9.

[Morell Exhibit No. 9.

Was marked for identification.]

BY [REDACTED]

Q And this is just a matter of CIA policy, correct?

A It's a matter of a secrecy agreement I signed when I when I first started working for CIA in 1980. It's a lifetime requirement.

Q And, in this, you described -- you described it as a rush job to the officials at the CIA. Why? Were you trying to get it out?

A We were trying to get it out before the debate, yes.

Q Before the debate?

A Yes, ma'am.

Q Okay. And the debate was on October 22nd, correct? This was dated October --

A Yeah, I don't know the date of the debate.

Q Okay.

A But it was close.

Q And was the email the only communication you had with the CIA?

A Yes.

Q You did not speak to any of the officials on the phone?

A I did not. I did not.

Q Okay. Did any -- are you aware of whether any of the officials at the CIA PCRB had any comments or suggestions about the statement?

A They did not. They approved it as written.

Chairman Jordan. How does that typically work? You said you mentioned rush job in the emails. So tell me how -- I assume you've written a lot of things --

Mr. Morell. Yes, sir.

Chairman Jordan. -- you've had to go through that board numerous times.

Mr. Morell. Yes, sir.

Chairman Jordan. So who is on the record? What's the typical timeframe?  
How does the process work.

Mr. Morell. It is a number of staff officers, not contractors, staff officers who work on this board. This is what they do all day long. When they get something, if it's straightforward, they can do the approval themselves. If it's not straightforward, they will send it to the relevant part of the Agency for comment.

Chairman Jordan. So, on previous things you submitted, what was the turnaround time?

Mr. Morell. So, for op-eds, very fast. Within hours.

Chairman Jordan. Okay.

Mr. Morell. Within hours. For my book, it took them longer to review it than it took me to write it. So I've had experiences at both ends of the spectrum.

Chairman Jordan. Is there a number of people on the board? If it's four people, five people?

Mr. Morell. I don't know. It's a small number, yes, sir.

Chairman Jordan. Okay.

BY [REDACTED]

Q Mr. Morell, are you aware that CIA staff at the PCRB reportedly promoted the letter by asking former CIA officials to sign onto the letter?

A Excuse me?

Q Are you aware that CIA staff at the PCRB reportedly promoted the letter by asking former CIA officials to sign onto the letter?

A I am not aware of that.

██████████ I would now like to enter a statement David Cariens provided to the committee in an email dated March 5th, 2023, into the record as exhibit No. 10.

[Morell Exhibit No. 10.

Was marked for identification.]

BY ██████████

Q Mr. Cariens told me, quote: When the person in charge of reviewing the book called to say it was approved with no changes, I was told about the draft letter. The person asked me if I would be willing to sign. I do not recall the person's name or the exact date of the phone call. After hearing the letter's content and the qualifiers and such as we want to emphasize that we do not know if the emails provided to The New York Post by President Trump's personal attorney Rudy Giuliani are genuine or not and that we do not have evidence of Russian involvement, I agreed to sign. Until now you had --

A I did not know this until this moment.

Q Were you aware of whether any of your fellow signatories would have reached out to the CIA and asked them to --

A I am not aware.

Q -- solicit?

A No, I am not aware.

Q Okay. Does what I just read to you sound like a quid pro quo to you where Mr. Cariens could have been under the impression that, in order to get his book approved by the CIA, he should sign onto the statement?

A I didn't read it that way. I read it in a completely different way. I didn't read that into it.

Q So your testimony today is that you did not coordinate with the CIA --

A I did not coordinate with the CIA. I would have -- had I known this, I would have reacted very negatively to this. This might -- you know, had I known at the time this might have been in the letter, then I certainly would have reported this to then the Director of the Agency.

Mr. Gaetz. And why would you have done this?

Mr. Morell. Because this is inappropriate.

Mr. Gaetz. And why is it inappropriate?

Mr. Morell. It's inappropriate for a currently serving staff officer or contractor to be involved in the political process.

Mr. Gaetz. Do you know the people who were engaged in this review for the CIA?

Mr. Morell. I do not.

Mr. Gaetz. You don't know any of the people who work in that process.

Mr. Morell. I do not, sir.

██████████ And it's --

Chairman Jordan. How did you get the okay from the letter? Was it a phone call or an email.

Mr. Morell. Email back to me, yes.

Chairman Jordan. Was there a person who you remember?

Mr. Morell. So sometimes -- yeah, so, you know, you usually get the first name. So, if you look at -- what exhibit number is this?

██████████ This is --

Mr. Morell. Looking at the PCRB response.

██████████ Nine.

Mr. Morell. Nine. So you'll often know the first name of the person, which in this case is James, because you don't know his last name because of the way they do emails with the Agency. Sometimes the person at the bottom of the note will say -- will put their name. Sometimes not.

BY [REDACTED]

Q And it is also your testimony that you are not aware whether any of your fellow signatories coordinated with the CIA in promoting lettering?

A I am not aware. And, as I said earlier, I would have reacted very negatively to that.

Q Okay.

Chairman Jordan. One of the documents produced to us from Mr. -- I think from Russ Travers. Oh, no, it's from you, Mr. Morell. That's fine. From Russ Travers back to you responded to you. He says: Hey, Michael, great initiative, happy to sign. Is anyone submitting to ODNI prepub?

Is that the same thing we're referring to here, or is there a different publication?

Mr. Morell. Yeah, so, depending on where you work, right, you have different responsibilities. So, if you worked only at the ODNI, then you need to submit it to that organization, or if you worked at DOD, to that organization, or, you know, at NSA, to that organization?

Chairman Jordan. But this statement, the one signed off 51 was only sent to the prepublication, the CIA board, not to this board?

Mr. Morell. Correct.

Chairman Jordan. Okay.

Mr. Morell. I don't know -- let me be clear, Congressman. I don't know whether individuals who worked for other organizations sent it for review to their



organization or not. Right? It's possible that, when I told Russ Travers no, do not send it to ODNI, that he did on his own. I just don't know.

Chairman Jordan. But you wouldn't need -- even though -- I guess, I'm assuming Mr. Travers worked for ODNI?

Mr. Morell. He worked at NTCT, yes.

Chairman Jordan. Okay. You wouldn't need all -- you wouldn't need approval from all these reviews boards, only the CIA?

Mr. Morell. So the responsibility is an individual one, right? The responsibility is not with regard to a document. The responsibility is an individual one. And so, it's really --

Chairman Jordan. Your responsibility there was the CIA?

Mr. Morell. Yes. My responsibility was the CIA.

Chairman Jordan. But other members -- for all we know Mr. Travers did the same thing. I just wanted to understand.

Mr. Gaetz. I have two questions for you. So you said that -- you testified that what triggered this letter was Mr. Blinken's contact to you --

Mr. Morell. Yes, sir.

Mr. Gaetz. -- regarding the Biden campaign's desire to have it?

Mr. Morell. Yes, sir.

Mr. Gaetz. Okay. And then the goal of the letter was to help Joe Biden, right?

Mr. Morell. Let me just say one thing in response. He asked me if I thought the Russians could be involved in this. As far as I remember, he did not ask me to put out a statement. So, yes, he triggered the statement; he did not ask for it, as far as my memory goes.

Mr. Gaetz. And the goal was to help Joe Biden win the Presidential election.

Mr. Morell. One of two goals, yes, sir.

Mr. Gaetz. And the mechanism that you specifically contemplated with a letter useful in winning that election was the upcoming Presidential debate, right.

Mr. Morell. Yes, sir.

Mr. Gaetz. So how did you decide who to solicit?

Mr. Morell. We wanted -- you know, I'd say three things. Number one -- and I think I mentioned these before. One is we wanted some senior officials. Two is we wanted some balance across the administrations. And three is we wanted some Russia experts. So that's who we targeted.

Mr. Gaetz. Did you target anyone who had not held a security clearance at some point?

Mr. Morell. I don't know. I don't know.

Mr. Gaetz. Is that one of the gating philosophies.

Mr. Morell. No, sir.

Mr. Gaetz. Do you know whether or not any of the people that you solicited didn't at some point have a security clearance?

Mr. Morell. I would have to look at a list and go through it one by one with you.

Mr. Gaetz. You don't have a security clearance now, right?

Mr. Morell. Yes, I do.

Mr. Gaetz. And did all of the people who signed the letter, do they still have them?

Mr. Morell. I don't know sure, sir. Most of them probably do not.

Mr. Gaetz. In this entire process of creating the letter, soliciting signatories to the letter, and then distributing the letter to these media outlets, at any point did you talk to any current government officials --

Mr. Morell. I did not, sir.

Mr. Gaetz. -- other than this prepublication?

Mr. Morell. Yes, other than the prepublication review, which I did not talk to them; it was an email exchange.

Mr. Gaetz. And your method of solicitation, would that be principally through phone calls or emails.

Mr. Morell. It was all through email, sir.

Mr. Gaetz. So did any of those emails germinate in phone conversations that you have with any of those people?

Mr. Morell. I don't believe so.

Mr. Gaetz. Were there text messages?

Mr. Morell. I don't believe so. It might have been text messages between me and Jeremy Bash, but I don't remember that. What I remember are emails.

Mr. Gaetz. Are all of the bases that you have to believe that Russians were involved articulated in the drafts of these letters?

Mr. Morell. I don't know. I can tell you what my concerns were. I'm happy to do that. I think so. But I'd have to go through each of the reasons I was concerned.

Mr. Gaetz. I guess, could you just tell me if there are any reasons, if there were any basis you had for the particulations set forth in the letter that are not in the letter, I would like you to list those.

Mr. Morell. Okay. Let me just list them all because I -- otherwise I would have to read the letter here to remind myself. So one was my knowledge of Russian intelligence capabilities. They are very good. Two was their massive involvement in the 2016 election. Particularly with regard to hacking and dumping of emails and the use of social media to promote discord in the United States of America. Three was the

fact that the U.S. intelligence community had, I believe, in August of 2020 said that the Russians the Chinese and the Iranians were interfering in the election. Four was that I believe --

Chairman Jordan. Excuse me, Mr. Morell. Is that last one what you I cited in your counsel's letter to us August 7, 2020, the Office of the Director of Intelligence --

Mr. Morell. Yes.

Chairman Jordan. -- led by Mr. Ratcliffe. This is a press release stating.

Mr. Morell. Yes, sir. Next was the fact that I think it was in September -- I'm not a hundred percent sure -- and these were the things where I found, right, after Mr. Blinken had called me and I started doing internet searches. These are all the things that started coming to me or I found. And this next one is one of the ones I found. So, in September, the Department of Treasury sanctioned a Ukrainian Parliamentarian for interference in the U.S. election. Mr. Mnuchin put out a press release praising the sanction. Secretary Pompeo did exactly the same thing. This person was identified -- this is Mr. Derkach -- this person was identified by the U.S. government as an agent of Russia. And part of his interference in the election I learned when I did my research was that he was -- he was saying an awful lot about Hunter Biden. One of the things I found that he said was that Hunter Biden had stolen millions of dollars from the Ukrainian people and diverted that money into Biden family accounts.

Mr. Gaetz. Were you able to assess whether that was a true or false statement?

Mr. Morell. I have no idea whether it was true or false, but it was certainly, in this case, a Russian agent interfering in our election. And so, you know, I don't know if that's in here. I don't think it is. But that was concerning to me. And then the fact that, you know, two individuals close to President Trump, the fact that they had played a role in these emails getting from the computer repair shop to The New York Post was also

suspicious to me.

Mr. Gaetz. Mr. Morell, all that is circumstantial evidence, isn't it?

Mr. Morell. Intelligence analysts deal with circumstantial evidence every day, sir.

Mr. Gaetz. I'm sure they do, but everything you just described is circumstantial evidence, isn't it?

Mr. Morell. Yes.

Mr. Gaetz. So you had no direct evidence that Russia was involved in this matter at all, did you.

Mr. Morell. I did not.

Mr. Gaetz. And --

Chairman Jordan. So did the statement put out by the Director of National Intelligence that day or earlier that morning, did that have any influence on your decision with the letter, specifically, what Mr. Ratcliffe said?

Mr. Morell. No.

Chairman Jordan. Even though he said this was not -- the emails were not part of some Russian disinformation operation.

Mr. Morell. It did not because, as a former intelligence officer with much more experience than Mr. Ratcliffe, I don't know how he could have come to that conclusion. How could he know what -- how could he know it wasn't part of Russian disinformation?

Chairman Jordan. And he was good enough to quote in your response to us from August, but 2 months later, when he says he is the guy in government, he is head of ODNI, that had no impact on your decision?

Mr. Morell. Yes, sir. What was in my attorney statement to you was not written by Mr. Ratcliffe; it was written by Mr. Evanina, who was the senior official following --

Chairman Jordan. Indeed, on August 7, 2020, the Office of Director of National Intelligence, led by John Ratcliffe, issued a press release stating in part, and then you quote --

Mr. Morell. Right.

Chairman Jordan. -- from ODNI?

Mr. Morell. But the letter was written by another senior individual.

Chairman Jordan. I'm just asking the statement he put out the morning that you actually put the letter out later, the statement out later that day where he says this is not --

Mr. Morell. Right.

Chairman Jordan. -- what you say it is in the statement had no bearing.

Mr. Morell. No.

Chairman Jordan. You just thought he is wrong?

Mr. Morell. So the first statement was 100 percent the first statement from August?

Chairman Jordan. No, I know he is right in August, but he is wrong in October?

Mr. Morell. One hundred percent consistent with what I know they did 2016 and what I had already heard, right, by reading the media what they were already doing in 2020. So it's fully consistent with that. The statement -- the morning that we put this together -- I know it was the morning, or it was different morning, but --

Chairman Jordan. 8:57 a.m. of October 19th, 2020.

Mr. Morell. Okay. I just could not see how he could come to that conclusion; how you could come to a conclusion that the Russians were not involved in this so quickly. It just did not make any sense to me.

Chairman Jordan. You just thought he was wrong?

Mr. Morell. I don't know if he was wrong or right. I don't know how --

Chairman Jordan. He was obviously right. You thought he was wrong on that day.

Mr. Morell. I didn't know if he was right or wrong. I just thought that was way too quick a judgment to make.

Chairman Jordan. So you were obviously aware of Mr. Ratcliffe's statement that morning before you sent the letter out?

Mr. Morell. Yes.

Mr. Gaetz. And, as you sit here today, do you believe the Russians were involved in the Hunter Biden laptop matter?

Mr. Morell. I don't know. I mean, I still have suspicions, Congressman.

Mr. Gaetz. Would you organize such a letter today knowing what you know now?

Mr. Morell. I would have to write it differently because we now know the emails are authentic, right? So you couldn't say anymore we don't know whether it's information or disinformation. But I still have suspicions about a Russian role in these emails getting to The New York Post.

Mr. Gaetz. Well, it seems Mr. Shapiro made a call on that very matter that you would have to be -- that you would have to have a different approach on the day when deciphering which information to Andrew Bates would be on the record and off the record, right?

Mr. Morell. I'm not tracking you, sir.

Mr. Gaetz. The exhibit that is the Shapiro to Bates letter, it indicates what would be on the record and what would be off the record and what would be on background?

Mr. Morell. Yes, sir.

Mr. Gaetz. Were you involved in deciding what buckets of material were falling into those categories? What would be on the record, what would be off the record, what would be on background?

Mr. Morell. So, yes, to the extent that what Mr. Shapiro did is consistent with the email that I sent him at 8:21 p.m., on October 19th.

Mr. Gaetz. So why did you decide that this matter that we've been discussing for the last several minutes, regarding the authenticity of the material, would be off the record?

Mr. Morell. I don't know. I really don't know.

Mr. Gaetz. So it wasn't a political call you made.

Mr. Morell. No, it was -- there's a somewhere in my review of the materials is an email from me to somebody saying that I'm deeply concerned that people are going to misinterpret this.

Mr. Gaetz. Mr. Morell, doesn't the fact that you're leaving that element off the record making misinterpretation more likely?

Mr. Morell. I don't know what was -- Congressman, I really don't know what was going through my head when I said off the record.

Mr. Gaetz. Mr. Morell, are you really testifying that this email triggered by Mr. Blinken, written for the purpose of helping Joe Biden --

Mr. Morell. This statement.

Mr. Gaetz. I'll take that back. So it's your testimony that this statement, triggered by Mr. Blinken for the purpose of Joe Biden winning the election, for him to use in the debate to get distributed through your hand-selected media, contained an off-the-record element of the communication that signals that you really don't know whether or not the material is authentic, and that's not a political calculus?



Mr. Morell. The statement itself said, the statement itself said we don't know whether the information is accurate or not. It made that perfectly clear in the statement.

[10:59 a.m.]

Mr. Gaetz. So why delineate it separately off the record here?

Mr. Morell. I don't know.

Mr. Gaetz. Was that done at the direction of Mr. Blinken?

Mr. Morell. It was not, sir. For some reason, I did that, and I can't tell you why.

But it is -- but the statement --

Mr. Gaetz. But you can tell me it's certainly not a political calculus?

Mr. Morell. It was not a political calculus, because we put it in the statement.

The statement is caveated to the ends of the Earth.

Mr. Gaetz. Well, its utilization in the debate certainly makes it caveated. Was it?

Mr. Morell. It was not, sir.

Mr. Gaetz. And the purpose of the letter was to be a tool to use in the debate.

Mr. Morell. Yes, sir.

Mr. Gaetz. I want to travel back. What is your work at Beacon?

Mr. Morell. I am -- my titles are senior counselor -- that's more of a title than a job responsibility -- and I am -- my other title is the global chairman for geopolitical risk.

One hundred percent of what I do for Beacon is brief corporate leadership teams and corporate boards on what is going on in the world and why it matters to them.

Mr. Gaetz. And what's your compensation there?

Mr. Morell. My compensation there is \$400,000 a year.

Mr. Gaetz. And is Beacon your largest source of compensation?

Mr. Morell. It is not.

Mr. Gaetz. What is?

Mr. Morell. Cerberus Capital Management.

Mr. Gaetz. And what work do you do for them?

Mr. Morell. The managing partner of Cerberus Capital Management, Steve Feinberg, who was President Trump's head of the President's Intelligence Advisory Board, is the most patriotic person I know in America, and he wants to make investments in firms that make a difference to U.S. national security, and I help him decide what those firms are.

Mr. Gaetz. And what's your compensation there?

Mr. Morell. It varies because I get paid by the day, but it's upwards of \$700,000 a year.

Mr. Gaetz. Can you list for me all email addresses that you used in calendar year 2020?

Mr. Morell. Probably not.

Mr. Gaetz. Okay. If we ask your counsel to provide that list, is that something you're willing to provide to augment your testimony?

Mr. Morell. I think -- sure.

Mr. Gaetz. And can you similarly provide us all of the telephone numbers that you would've used in calendar year 2020?

Mr. Morell. Yes. That's easy.

Mr. Gaetz. And who was your cell phone provider?

Mr. Morell. I was using a Beacon cell phone.

Mr. Gaetz. Is part of the mission or function at Beacon to provide a place for people to work in between times in which they're working for the government?

Mr. Morell. No. No. In fact, I don't know of any -- I can't think of any -- let me put it this way -- I can't think of anybody who's left Beacon to go back into the administration. But I don't know that it hasn't happened. But it's certainly not a large

number. If anybody has, it's a very small number.

Mr. Gaetz. But it's not the organizing principle of the entity?

Mr. Morell. It is not the organizing principle. The organizing principle is to make money, like any business.

Mr. Gaetz. Mr. Jordan, did you have another question?

Chairman Jordan. When 51 former intel officials push out a statement, caveated or not, it creates an impression or it creates a belief out there. Would you agree?

Mr. Morell. I think it adds -- I would agree that it adds credibility to the statement, yes, sir.

Chairman Jordan. I mean, that's why you did it, right?

Mr. Morell. Yes.

Chairman Jordan. Yeah.

And, again, you did that in spite of the one individual who does have access to data that you don't, being that he is in government and you're not, to put out a statement that directly contradicted the impression that you provided to the country. Is --

Mr. Morell. Yes.

Chairman Jordan. -- that fair?

Mr. Morell. Yes, it is, sir.

Chairman Jordan. Okay.

Mr. Gaetz. I think we're nearing the end of our hour.

██████████ We're prepared to go off the record. Thank you.

[Recess.]

██████████ It is 11:16, and we can go back on the record.

Good morning again, Mr. Morell.

Mr. Morell. Good morning.

██████████ My name is ██████████ I'm the chief oversight counsel of the Democratic staff on the House Judicial Committee. And thank you again for joining us.

Mr. Morell. You're welcome.

#### EXAMINATION

BY ██████████

Q I want to turn back to something that came up in the earlier hour. You were talking about -- you were asked about Mr. Ratcliffe's statement.

In your experience -- well, first of all, were you referring to his determination that it was not a disinformation campaign or that there was no Russian involvement when you said that there was no -- when you were describing his findings?

A Yeah, I should've mentioned this.

So my understanding of what Mr. Ratcliffe said was that the intelligence community, you know, determined that this was not disinformation. He did not say that the Russians were not involved in this in any way. He did not say that. So there's a big difference there, in my mind.

Q And what is that difference?

A You know, we -- the only thing that would've -- had I accepted what the DNI said, what we would've changed in the letter was, you know, to take out the disinformation. But the letter would've still stood in terms of our suspicions about Russian involvement in this in some way.

Q And how long would it ordinarily take for the CIA or for other intelligence agencies to determine if there was Russian involvement in something?

A So, you know, my main reason for questioning the DNI's statement is that it's really tough to prove a negative, really tough to prove a negative, I learned over a very long career, and it can take a very long time to learn about the covert operations of

another country.

You know, one of the best examples that I know of is, in 1972 -- and I know I'm going -- you know, I'm going way back here, and I apologize for that. But in 1972 the left-leaning German Chancellor, Willy Brandt, was up for a no-confidence vote, and the numbers suggested that he should've lost that vote and should have been replaced by a conservative, but he survived. He survived the no-confidence vote in 1972.

And it was not until sometime after 2015, so nearly 50 years later, or 50 years later, that we learned that the Soviet Union had asked the East German intelligence service to bribe German parliamentarians to vote in favor of Mr. Brandt.

So 50 years it took to discover Soviet and East German involvement in the outcome of a no-confidence vote in West Germany. So it can take a very long time.

Q So, in this instance, the laptop was first revealed in, say, early October, and Mr. Ratcliffe's statement came out on October 17th or October 18th, maybe October 19th. That's a matter of a couple weeks. Would it be possible to determine in that period of time if there was Russian involvement?

A I don't believe so.

Q Okay.

And so your statement was not, in your mind, actually inconsistent with Mr. Ratcliffe's statement, because you didn't think that he was -- that he should've --

A So I'd say two things. One, it was not inconsistent in terms of the Russians playing some role here --

Q Right.

A -- because he didn't speak to that. And I thought it was too quick a judgment to make on whether this was disinformation or not.

Q Okay. And just to home in on this, there is no way to prove a negative, in

other words, that it was not a Russian disinformation campaign, in a matter of weeks like that?

A No, not in a matter of weeks.

Q Okay.

I want to turn to the conversation about Mr. Cariens. And we were discussing earlier -- it's marked as exhibit No. 10.

A Uh-huh.

Q Do you know Mr. Cariens?

A You know, I know of him. Maybe he briefed me from time to time. But I did not know him well. I did not know him well.

Q Okay.

And the exhibit 10 that we've been looking at, this is an email dated March 5, 2023, 3:02 p.m., correct?

A Yes, it is.

Q And so that's -- and it's addressed from Mr. Cariens to [REDACTED]

A Yes.

Q And [REDACTED] is the counsel sitting down there.

A Yes.

Q So this is -- March 5, 2023, is about 3, 2-1/2 years after the email -- I'm sorry, the public statement was released, correct?

A Yes.

Q Okay. And this is just an email; it's not a sworn statement, correct?

A Correct.

Q Okay.

In this, Mr. --

A But I would hope -- I would hope that, you know, in a letter to this committee that people would be honest. I'm sure you'll agree.

Q But it's not been subject to cross-examination, in other words?

A No.

Q Okay.

In the email, Mr. Cariens says that he retired in 1997.

A Yes.

Q Do you know about how old Mr. Cariens is?

A I do not. I'm sorry.

Q Okay.

He continues on -- so you have no idea if anything in this is accurate. The first time --

A I don't.

Q -- you saw this was today.

A I don't.

Q Okay. And you haven't spoken to Mr. Cariens about his statement.

A No. No.

Q Okay. So you don't know, for example, if he's remembering things correctly. You have no idea.

A I don't. I don't. You're absolutely correct.

Q Okay.

He says in paragraph 1, partway, about three-quarters of the way down, "I agreed to sign," and then his wife agreed to sign as well. He says that the PRB described the letter to him and then he'd agreed to sign.

Are you reading that as he told the PRB individual that he would agree to sign?



A Let me read it, please.

Q Uh-huh.

A So the way I'm reading it is that the person in the PRB explained the letter to him --

Q Okay.

A -- and it was at that moment that he, in his mind at least, agreed to sign.

That's the way I'm reading this.

Q So, if there had been -- and your only communication with the PRB was the email we went through in which you asked for clearance and then they came back and said that you were cleared, correct?

A Yes.

Q You never received any communication from the PRB saying that Mr. Cariens and his wife want to join the letter.

A No.

Q To your knowledge, did anybody else who was organizing the letter receive such a contact?

A Not that I know of.

Q Okay.

Do you recall how Mr. Cariens agreed to sign? Do you recall getting an email from him?

A I don't.

Q Okay.

So everything that we know about Mr. Cariens's comments are in the four corners of this letter --

A As far as I know, yes.

Q -- and you have no other information about it?

A As far as I know, yes --

Q Okay.

A No. No, I do not.

Q Okay.

And you produced to the committee any relevant communications that --

A Yes, ma'am.

Q -- you'd had with the PRB? Okay. And, to your knowledge, nobody else had any communications with the PRB?

A To my knowledge, no.

Q Okay.

I want to get back just quickly -- you said earlier that it was your testimony that there was no coordination with the campaign beyond that one email from Mr. Blinken in which he asked if you were aware of this.

A Besides the initial --

Q Right.

A -- contact, right, whether email or phone call --

Q Right.

A -- and then the second email, which was the USA Today article.

Q Okay. And that's based on your -- only with respect to your own personal knowledge, correct?

A Yes, ma'am.

Q Okay.

All right. I'm going to move on. We talked at the very beginning briefly about your background --

A Uh-huh.

Q -- and I want to go into that in a little more detail. And I'm also going to ask you about the background of some of the people that you worked with.

So when did you join the CIA?

A 1980. November of 1980.

Q Okay. And when did you retire?

A September of 2013.

Q So you spent --

A Thirty-three years.

Q Okay. And you said that was your entire career until you retired?

A Yes.

Q Okay. So you would've worked under both Republican and Democratic --

A Yes, ma'am.

Q -- administrations.

A Three of each.

Q Okay. Great. Sorry, let me finish my questions so we can get a clean --

A Oh, sorry.

Q No, you're fine.

A I'm sorry. Sorry.

Q Did you consider yourself a career official?

A Yes.

Q Could you walk me through your early career experience?

A So I started out working on international energy issues. It was the second -- it was the Iran-Iraq War. Oil prices had skyrocketed. It was a big issue.

The Soviet Union was offering to build two natural gas pipelines to Western

Europe. President Reagan was deeply concerned about that. A lot of research and analysis around natural gas demand and supply and how dependent Western Europe would be on Soviet gas. That was the first 3 years or so.

And then I moved to work on East Asia. And I worked on East Asia for the next -- as an analyst and as a manager for the next 13 years or so, working on Southeast Asia, Japan, some China, a lot of North Korea.

Q And at some point you became the head of the team responsible for the President's daily brief, right?

A Right. So my next job after that was the head of that team, yes.

Q Okay. And can you describe the duties of that position?

A So we would get drafts from the offices of pieces that people thought that the President should see, and it was our responsibility to make sure they met the standards that the leadership or the Agency demanded for those pieces.

So we would work with the analysts to make sure that they met those standards, and we would make kind of a first-cut judgment at what should be in the book the next day and present that to the senior leadership for their decision.

Q Okay. And how did it come about that you were named to that position?

A I had worked on East Asia a long time and it was time to do something else, and this was an opportunity that came up. You know, it was seen as an important job. It was something I was interested in. It would broaden my exposure to, you know, not only East Asia but to the entire world. So it was something that was offered to me, and I said yes.

Q And who were the Presidents when you were managing the President's daily briefing?

A President Clinton.

Q Okay. And did you continue on through when President Bush was elected?

A So, no. So I went from being involved in the PDB process to being George Tenet's executive assistant for 2 years -- 1998, 1999. After those 2 years, I went to run the office of East Asia and Latin American analysis.

And at the beginning of President Bush's term, I was asked if I'd be willing to be President Bush's first daily intelligence briefer, which, next to being the head of analysis at CIA, is the best job an analyst could have. So of course I said yes.

Q And in 2006 you became the CIA's Associate Deputy Director, right?

A Yes. Yes.

Q Who selected you for that position?

A Mike Hayden.

Q Okay. And can you broadly describe your duties there?

A So that position has changed names many, many times. It is the number-three in the Agency. The responsibilities are not substantive, they're not analytic, they're not operational; they are running the business of the Agency.

Q Okay.

A So HR, IT, security, those sorts of issues.

Q Uh-huh.

And then in 2008 you were named the Director of Intelligence, correct?

A Yes.

Q And what are the duties of that position?

A You are in charge of all the analysis and all the analysts at CIA.

Q Okay. Who selected you for that position?

A Mike Hayden.

Q Okay.

And you twice served as the Acting -- I'm sorry. In 2010, you became Deputy Director of the CIA?

A Yes.

Q And who selected you for that?

A Leon Panetta.

Q Okay. And can you describe your duties in that role?

A As I explained earlier, I was responsible for everything that the CIA did. My focus was on analysis and operations and, you know, making sure we were doing the best we could do to serve our customers, get the intelligence we need, and get the analysis right.

And I had a significant outside-the-building responsibility in terms of representing the Agency at the White House at Deputies Committee meetings and on the Hill at the two Intelligence Committees and then with a large number of countries overseas, with the leaders of those countries and the heads of the intelligence services of those countries.

Q And then we talked -- you were twice -- sorry, you twice served as Acting Director at CIA?

A Yes.

Q So is it fair to say that during your 33 years with the CIA and these positions of increasing leadership responsibilities you developed extensive experience in assessing and analyzing foreign influence operations?

A Yes.

Q Is it fair to say that you developed extensive experience with Russian influence operations in particular?

A Actually, I wouldn't say that.

Q Okay.

A I'd say, because the Russians -- you know, the Russians, you know, messed around in our elections on the margins until 2016, when they did so on a massive effort. So I was, you know, familiar with it, but I wouldn't call myself a deep, deep expert.

Q Were you familiar with people who were deep, deep experts?

A Yes.

Q Okay. And we'll get back to that in a minute.

Did you receive any awards during your time at the CIA?

A Yes.

Q What were those awards?

A This is embarrassing. Seriously.

I received the Distinguished Career Intelligence Medal when I retired for everything I had done throughout my career.

I received the Distinguished Intelligence Medal, which is one of the highest awards a CIA officer can get, for my role in the Bin Laden operation.

I received a large number of what are called Director Awards. Directors, you know, have this award that's called the Director's Award. They can hand it out on their own -- you know, on their own decision. And I received, you know, at least 10 of those from many different Directors, including, you know, somewhat surprisingly, after I left, Mike Pompeo gave me one.

Q Okay. When was that?

A I received it at my home the day he was sworn in as Secretary of State.

Q And what was the purpose for that award?

A I have spent a lot of time since I left CIA providing advice to Directors and Deputy Directors, and I've done so with every single one. And I spent some time with

Director Pompeo when he was Director, and I take it he was appreciative of that time, and he gave me that award.

Q Okay.

So I want to turn to some of the people that you worked with on this letter. And I think you mentioned the names earlier that I'm going to go through.

Are you familiar with an individual named Marc Poly--

A Yes.

Q --meropoulos? Let me finish my question.

A Oh, yes. Yes.

Q How do you know him?

A I first met Marc when his wife was my executive assistant when I was Deputy Director, and our families became friends. And so I've known him -- actually, let me correct that.

I first met Marc when I was head of analysis and I was on a trip to Amman, Jordan, and he was the deputy chief of station. So that's the first time I met him.

I got to know him when my his wife worked for me on my staff, and we became friends. And I've known him since then.

Q Okay. And what's your understanding of his background?

A So he's worked on many different things in his career, a lot of the Middle East.

The reason I reached out to him in this case is, his last two jobs at the Agency were the deputy chief of operations for the region that covers Russia and then the acting chief of operations for the part of the world that covers Russia, and during that time he lived through the 2016 Russian interference in our election.

Q And why was that important?



A Because he had a -- you know, he had a very good understanding of what the Russians did in 2016, probably the best understanding of anybody that I knew.

Q Okay. Do you consider him an expert in --

A Yes.

Q -- in Russian disinformation?

A Yes.

Q Okay.

According to the biography on his website, Mr. Polymeropoulos is one of the intelligence community's, quote, "most highly decorated field officers."

Do you believe that's an accurate --

A Yes.

Q -- statement? Okay.

Are you familiar with an individual named Nick Shapiro?

A Yes.

Q How do you know him?

A I first met Nick when he worked for John Brennan when John Brennan was at the White House. He was an aide to John Brennan when John was the homeland security advisor to President Obama.

When John Brennan was made Director of CIA, John brought Nick to the Agency with him to be his deputy chief of staff. I got to know Nick during that period of time. We became friends. We stayed friends.

And Nick has been my media advisor pretty much since the time that he left government.

Q Do you consider him honest and trustworthy?

A Yes.

Q Do you believe that he exercises good judgment?

A Yes.

Q Okay.

You mentioned an individual earlier, Kristin Wood?

A Yes.

Q How do you know Ms. Wood?

A Kristin was one of my executive assistants when I was the number-three on the analytic side of the Agency. And then I've kept up with her, you know, ever since. I've been a mentor to her.

When I was Deputy Director, I asked her to take on an extremely difficult job of helping to prepare materials for the Director and Deputy Director for their use at meetings -- talking points, for example.

Q Uh-huh.

A It was a very difficult job because the Director and Deputy Director are never happy with what they get. But she did that job, and she did it extremely well. And I've stayed in touch with her ever since.

Q Okay. And I think you described her earlier -- and I don't have the exact quote, but -- as being extremely reliable?

A Yes.

Q Is that a fair description?

A Yes.

Q And do you believe she is honest and trustworthy?

A Yes.

Q Do you believe that she exercises good judgment?

A Yes.

Q Okay.

So, in the previous hour, we talked about the October 19th letter --

A Yes.

Q -- fairly extensively. I want to walk through it even more closely, if we can.

And I think it was introduced as exhibit 1.

So, as written -- putting aside your motivations, but, as written, the letter doesn't actually endorse any particular political candidate, right?

A It does not.

Q Was that an intentional choice?

A Yeah. It was a -- yes. It was important for me to write this letter as if an intelligence officer was writing it.

Q And why was that?

A Because that's what we were, right?

Q Right.

A That's what we were. And we were making an argument about what we saw and what we believed and what I still believe may be true today, that the Russians played some role here.

Q Okay.

The very first sentence of the second paragraph of this letter reads, "We are all also individuals who see Russia as one of our nation's primary adversaries."

Was this an accurate statement at the time that it was written?

A It was an accurate statement at the time it was written, and it's been an accurate statement ever since --

Q Okay.

A -- the Soviet Union ended and Russia began.

Q And do you see Russia as a primary adversary of the United --

A Yes.

Q -- States today, then? Okay. And could you explain that?

A One of Russia's primary objectives is to weaken the United States of America. One of their primary objectives is to weaken the international system that we built so that they can do things on their periphery without the world interfering with them, as we see today in Ukraine.

Q Okay.

And you said that one of Russia's primary roles is to weaken the United States. So, for example, Russia interfered in the 2016 election.

A Massively.

Q Okay. And you think part of their goal in doing that was to weaken the United States?

A Absolutely.

Q Okay.

Are you familiar with reports from summer 2020 that Russian intelligence hacked -- I'm sorry, that a Russian military intelligence unit secretly offered bounties to Taliban-linked militants who killed coalition forces in Afghanistan, including American troops?

A I was aware of that reporting, yes.

Q Do you think that is an example of an action that Russia could take that would make it an adversary of the United States?

A Absolutely.

Q Okay.

A I don't know if that information is true or not. I'd put that caveat out there.

I didn't have access to the intelligence reporting, but --

Q Right.

A -- I certainly was aware. And if it's true, it is absolutely an example of Russia being an adversary, yes.

Q Okay. And I believe that was actually in a June 26, 2020, New York Times article. So that was public information.

Are you familiar with reports from December 2020 that Russian intelligence hacked the SolarWinds software --

A Yes.

Q -- infiltrating the State Department, Department of Homeland Security, and the Pentagon, among other agencies?

A Yes.

Q And do you believe that that's an example of an action that would make Russia an adversary of the United States?

A I think there's -- you know, I think there's norms around intelligence collection, right? We collect intelligence on them; they collect intelligence on us. So I think I've gotta be a little bit careful here.

I think it's their actions that are designed to weaken us that we need to focus on, in terms of them being our adversary.

Q Okay.

And do you think, in 2020, was there widespread agreement among United States intelligence and national security experts that Russia was an adversary of the United States?

A Yes.

Q And do you think that's still true today?

A Yes.

Q Okay.

The final sentence of the October 19th letter reads, "It is high time that Russia stops interfering in our democracy."

Do you remember writing that?

A Yes.

Q And can you explain why you wrote that?

A You know, I don't think there's anybody in this room who would disagree with the idea that Americans should determine the outcome of elections, not foreign countries. I think since the founding of the Republic there has been a belief, a widespread belief, in this country that foreign countries should not interfere in our elections, should not have a say in our elections.

And the Russians had tried to play such a role in 2016, and it was absolutely clear that they were trying again in 2020.

Q Okay. And the goal of that -- would you say the goal of that was to weaken the United States?

A Yes.

Q Okay.

Can you explain how exposing Russian influence operations helps to counter those operations?

A If the American people know what the Russians are doing, then it makes what the Russians are trying to do less effective.

Q How so?

A If you know -- for example, in 2016, one of the issues that the Russians conducted significant information operations on was the division in the country over race.

And if you know, right -- if you're just seeing social media out of nowhere, you know, trying to divide us on that issue, it's one thing if you know the Russians are behind a big chunk of it. It makes it less credible and, therefore, less divisive, in my view.

Q And we've used a couple different terms here today. We've used "disinformation," "misinformation," and then "information" --

A Right.

Q -- operations. Can you explain the difference between a disinformation operation and an information operation?

A Disinformation is when an intelligence service uses false information, and information is when they use accurate information, is the way I think about it.

Q And how do those play out in practice?

A Well, if you're going to use disinformation, you have to come up, right, you have to create it, and then you have to get it into the public domain.

Information operations are actually easier, because the information is usually already in the public domain and you're amplifying it, you're targeting it at specific groups or even specific individuals, as the Russians did in 2016.

So that's how I think about it.

Q So information operations, in other words, could use true information or accurate information --

A It would. That's the definition.

Q Okay.

Do you believe that Russian information, as opposed to disinformation, operations pose a threat to American democracy?

A Yes. Yes.

Q And how is that?

A Because it is a foreign country amplifying, targeting information with political intent, with the intent on influencing the election. And, therefore, you know, it creates a possibility that they could determine the outcome of an election, which is obviously something that nobody wants.

Q So, in other words, the Russians -- or others, I guess -- could use an information operation in order to help elect a particular candidate?

A Try to help elect, yes.

Q Okay.

There are some people who say that both disinformation and information operations are simply foreign individuals exercising their free-speech rights. What do you think about that statement?

A Foreign governments do not have First Amendment rights in the United States.

Q And information operations involve a government hiding its hand or kind of hiding behind plausible deniability, correct?

A So both of them do, right? Both information and disinformation operations, you would want to hide your hand, right? Because if your hand is seen, it's less effective.

Q And how would you hide your hand?

A You know, for example, in 2016 and again in 2020, the Russians used bots on social media to push out both any disinformation they were using and the information they were trying to highlight and target at specific individuals and groups.

Q So I want to introduce as exhibit 11 the indictment --

A Can I just add one thing here? Is --

Q Absolutely.



A -- that okay?

Q Absolutely.

A I just want to say that, you know, I followed closely media reporting on Russian involvement in the 2016 election, but what I considered to be the most exhaustive report written on it was the bipartisan report of the Senate Intelligence Committee, which I read cover to cover.

Q And why do you consider that to be the most --

A Because they did a thorough investigation of every aspect of what the Russians have done, and they did, in my view, a more thorough investigation than anybody else.

Q And I believe that's a thousand pages or thereabouts long. Is that --

A There were five pieces to the report. I don't know their total length.

Q And you consider that, based on your experience, your 33 years of intel, of working for the CIA experience --

A Yes.

Q -- you consider that to be a reliable report --

A Yes, I do. I sure do.

Q -- and assessment of the 2016 --

A Yes.

Q Okay.

I want to introduce as exhibit No. 11 the indictment in United States v. Internet Research Agency et al.

[Morell Exhibit No. 11.

Was marked for identification.]

BY [REDACTED]

Q And this is getting back to what we were talking about, Russian influence -- information, as opposed to disinformation, operations.

A Yup.

Q Are you familiar with this indictment?

A Peripherally. I mean, I read about it in the media.

Q Okay. Are you familiar with Yevgeny Prigozhin?

A Describe, please.

Q He's the founder of the Wagner Group --

A Yes, that's how I know the name. Yes.

Q Okay. And are you familiar with the Internet Research Agency?

A Yes.

Q Okay. And I believe that was actually mentioned in the --

A Yes.

Q -- Senate report.

A Senate report, yes.

Q So, on paragraph 4 of this -- it's on page 3. It's paragraph 4 of the indictment. It describes the Russian defendants in this case posing as U.S. persons, creating false U.S. personas, operating social media pages and groups designed to attract U.S. audiences.

These groups -- and I'm not reading this precisely, but -- these groups and pages, which addressed divisive U.S. political and social issues, falsely claimed to be controlled by U.S. activists when, in fact, they were controlled by defendants, "defendants" being the Internet Research Agency here.

Defendants also used the stolen identities of real U.S. persons to post on organization-controlled social media accounts. "Organization" refers to the Internet

Research Agency.

Over time, these social media accounts became defendants' means to reach significant numbers of Americans for purposes of interfering with the U.S. political system, including the Presidential election of 2016.

And then much later on, in paragraph 33, the indictment notes that the Internet Research Agency employees, known as "specialists," were, quote, "instructed to write about topics germane to the United States such as U.S. foreign policy and U.S. economic issues. Specialists were directed to create 'political intensity through supporting radical groups, users dissatisfied with [the] social and economic situation and oppositional social movements.'"

I know I just read a long block of text, but, based on your experience, is this consistent with how and why Russia would work to amplify --

A Yes.

Q -- information online?

A Yes.

Q So they do use persons purportedly in the United States or U.S. persons to amplify --

A I mean, one of the things that -- one of the things I noted when I first read it -- I can't tell you when -- was that they actually put people on the ground here to discover what the divisive issues were.

Q Okay. So that --

A That was -- it shows how good they are.

Q And that's a known Russian tactic?

A Yes.

Q Okay.

Turning back to the emails that were the actual subject of the October 19 --

A Yes.

Q -- 2020, letter, putting aside the origin of the emails -- and I think you said earlier that you believe that they are authentic based on subsequent reporting -- would Russia have had incentive to amplify them online?

A Yes.

Q Can you explain that?

A The U.S. intelligence community had made clear in August 2020 that Russia preferred President Trump over Vice President Biden.

The whole Hunter Biden-Vice President Biden issue, you know, was part of the public discussion, perhaps as it should've been -- as it should've been. But the one issue that I focused on was -- as we talked about earlier, the one issue I focused on was the allegation that Vice President Biden, you know, essentially sold his country down the road in his dealings with the Ukrainians, which I did not believe, which I didn't think there was any proof of, and my experience in the Obama administration suggested was not even possible. That had a lot of traction.

And the Russians would absolutely have incentive to amplify that allegation.

Q And can you talk more about the Russian incentive? What was their goal in amplifying, do you believe?

A To get people to believe that the Vice President had made a decision on behalf of his son rather than on behalf of the country, which is where his duty lied.

Q And would the goal of the Russians have been to influence the outcome of the election?

A Yes.

Q Do you believe that they were working to -- that they amplified these emails

in order to support one candidate over another?

A Yes.

But I've got to make something clear here. I don't know that they did that --

Q Right.

A -- right?

Q Right.

A I don't know that they amplified this message --

Q Absolutely.

A -- right? It's certainly possible, likely, but I don't know that.

Q Right. Agreed. And I'm just asking based on your experience --

A I understand.

Q -- and based on your --

A I just want to be clear.

Q I understand.

And Russia also could've amplified them, though, just based on your experience, in order to sow chaos, right?

A In this case, right. I mean, amplifying racial differences, economic differences in the United States, that's more to create -- to undermine our system and, you know, create chaos.

This would be, you know, with a particular political outcome in mind.

Q Okay.

A In my view. In my view.

Q So, in your view, this was --

A If this happened.

Q -- if this was a Russian information, as opposed to disinformation, a Russian

information operation, the goal of it would've been to promote one candidate over another?

A Right.

Q And was that candidate President Trump?

A Yes.

Q Again, in your experience -- and you said earlier, I think we referenced the letter saying that "the Russians need to stop interfering in our elections," is a quote from your letter, or roughly -- is this type of Russian interference -- in other words, a Russian information operation -- equally as concerning as the actual, for example, hacking and leaking of materials or the creation and dissemination of false materials?

A Yes.

Q Why is that?

A Because it's actually more subtle. When you hack John Podesta's emails and you put them in the public domain, everybody kind of knows where it came from, right? So I think it devalues it a little bit, politically.

What you don't see, right, particularly on social media, in terms of amplification and targeting, that's a lot harder to see and, therefore, potentially more effective in affecting people's thinking.

Q In that situation where it's more effective, is it even more useful to bring attention to the fact of what the Russians may be doing?

A I'm sorry?

Q In other words, in a situation -- you said part of the reason that it's more effective, an information operation can be more effective, is because the Russians or anybody who is conducting it can kind of hide what they're doing and give it some additional authenticity or --

A Yeah, what I would say -- what I would say is, based on my experience -- based on my experience watching this, I think that information operations are often more effective than disinformation operations because it's easier to sustain the truth than it is to sustain a falsehood, and it's easier -- because, as I said earlier, to the extent the information is true, it's already out there, usually, and you're simply amplifying and directing. So it's often more effective than disinformation.

Q And can it be an effective tactic to counter that spread of accurate information but for a, you know, purpose of interfering --

A Absolutely.

Q -- can it be a good countermeasure to call attention to it, in other words, to publicly point out, "This is what the Russians are doing," so that Americans understand what is happening?

A Yes.

Q Why is that?

A Again, for the same reasons we talked about, right? To the extent that there is a narrative in the public domain that's not accurate, to the extent that their operations support that narrative, right, it's more difficult --

Q Uh-huh.

A -- it's more difficult for our political system, you know, to get to the truth, right, which is ultimately what we're trying to do here.

Q Okay.

Are you familiar with the declassified version of the 2017 intelligence community assessment --

A Yes.

Q -- that concluded that Russia interfered --

A Yes.

Q -- in the 2016 election? Okay.

We're going to introduce this as exhibit 12.

[Morell Exhibit No. 12.

Was marked for identification.]

BY [REDACTED]

Q And you said you're familiar with it --

A Yes, I read it.

Q -- but I can give you a minute to look through it.

A No, I read it.

Q Okay.

A It was a long time ago, but I read it.

Q Were you familiar with this warning when it was issued?

I'm sorry, but I'm also going to introduce as exhibit 13 a joint statement from the Department of Homeland Security and the Office of the Director of National Intelligence on election security, warning about influence operations.

A Yes.

[Morell Exhibit No. 13.

Was marked for identification.]

BY [REDACTED]

Q Are you familiar with this?

A What's the date on it?

Q October 7, 2016.

A Yes.

Q Were you familiar with this warning when it was issued?



A Yes. I'm sure I was.

Q Okay.

A I don't remember exactly.

Q Were you familiar with the warning when you were drafting the letter in 2020?

A When I was -- no, I didn't think about this --

Q Okay.

A -- when I drafted the letter in 2020. What I was thinking about related to 2016 was just what the Russians had done in general in 2016.

Q Okay.

Based on your recollection, do you think that the 2017 assessment has a clearer description of Russian interference than the 2016 warning?

A A clearer?

Q Clearer.

A Yes. Yes.

Q It's -- I think, for one thing, it's --

A Yes.

Q -- many pages longer, right?

A Yes.

Q The warning is only three paragraphs.

A Yes.

I would say that the Senate report -- I would say that, based on the Senate report, even in January of 2017, we did not fully understand the extent of Russian information operations, and it took some time to understand the totality of it.

Which is why I put higher value on the Senate Intelligence Committee report than

I put on this. I'm not saying this is wrong; I'm just saying that's more complete.

Q But to the extent that the October 7, 2016, warning was what was publicly released to Americans to warn them about Russian influence operations or Russian disinformation operations, that pre-election warning was much less thorough and provided much less information than the information that came out after the election?

A Yes.

Q Okay.

You've previously called the response to Russian interference in the 2016 an intelligence failure. Do you recall saying that?

A Uh-huh.

Q Is part of that intelligence failure a failure of the national security community, including the intelligence community, to provide a clear warning of Russian interference in advance -- to provide a clear warning of the Russian interference in advance of the election?

A I'd say two things.

Part of this is on me, right? I was Deputy Director at the time.

The Russians conceived of the 2016 operation back in 2013; actually began it in 2014 --

Q Uh-huh.

A -- the information, you know, piece of it, not the hack-and-dump and not the hacking of our election infrastructure. But it went way back, and the intelligence community did not see it at the time.

So I'd say two things. One was to identify in real-time what the Russians were planning and doing and to warn about it in a way that would've made it easier for policymakers to take action that might have made the operations less effective.

Q Is it important for intelligence analysts to be free from political interference --

A Yes.

Q -- or political pressure?

A Yes.

Q Why is that?

A Because when you put analysis on the table in the Situation Room or in a hearing room up here, right, you don't want anybody to think that you have a political objective or even a policy objective, right, that you are on umpire, you are calling balls and strikes, you are calling it like you see it.

That is beat in to all intelligence officers on day one and then throughout your career. Because you can't be effective if people doubt what you're telling them.

Q In the, kind of, late winter of 2020, were you aware that President Trump was displeased with the intelligence briefings that were being given to Congress about election interference?

A I read that in the media. I don't know if it was true, but I read it in the media.

Q Did that contribute at all to your decision to work with Mr. Polymeropoulos to draft the letter?

A Not really.

Q Okay.

In the spring of 2020, were you aware of allegations that intelligence officials in the Trump administration were putting limitations on what could be said by analysts about Russian election interference?

A Again, I had read that, and, again, I didn't know if it was true.

Q Okay.

A And I wasn't talking to anybody on the inside. But I was aware of it based on the media reports, yes.

Q Did that contribute to your decision to work on the letter?

A Not really.

Q Okay.

And in the summer of 2020, were you aware of allegations that intelligence officials in the Trump administration were putting out statements that drew kind of a false equivalency between Russia, China, and Iran?

A That was a critique that I was aware of from reading the media, and it was my own critique of some of the early statements from the DNI and the DNI staff about interference in the election.

Q Did that contribute to your decision to write the letter at all?

A No, because I was concerned -- I was concerned about not only what the Russians were doing but what the Chinese were doing and what the Iranians were doing as well. What the report from the DNI did not make clear was that Russian involvement was at a scale much, much larger than Chinese involvement or Iranian involvement.

Q And why was that concerning to you?

A It was just something that should have been mentioned, I thought, in the DNI public statement to size these things for the American people.

Q Why would it have mattered for the American people to know that?

A Because the different countries had different outcomes that they were pursuing.

Q Uh-huh.

A The Iranians did not want President Trump to be reelected. The Iranians

wanted Vice President Biden to be elected.

The Chinese -- quite frankly, I was never clear exactly what the Chinese wanted, and they ultimately stood down on their involvement. I think the Chinese were torn, is my own personal view.

But the Russians, you know, it was absolutely clear what the Russian preference was. And because the scale of their activities was so much larger, I just thought that was important to know, given that they had different preferred outcomes.

Q Okay.

Let me move on a little bit right now. We discussed the timing of the letter earlier, and it was noted that the letter was released in advance of the second Presidential debate.

You were a private citizen when the letter was made public on October 19, 2020, correct?

A Yes.

Q And all of the other signatories were as well?

A As far as I know.

Q Okay. And would you agree that as a private citizen you have the right to engage in the political process?

A Yes. Not only the right but, I think, the responsibility.

Q Why do you say the responsibility?

A Because I think, as American citizens, we all have a responsibility to make sure this democracy continues.

Q Okay. And did you feel a particular responsibility because you had 33 years of intelligence experience?

A Yes.

Q And we went through this a little bit earlier, but the letter doesn't actually endorse a political candidate on its face?

A It does not.

Q Okay. And, in fact, the closing line is, "It is high time that Russia stops interfering in our democracy."

A Correct.

Q So is it fair to say that the text of the letter makes it clear that the focus is actually on Russian interference, not on the political candidates?

A It's correct. I would just repeat what I said earlier just to be, you know, totally clear, that there were two intentions here, right? One was to make clear to the American people that the Russians were interfering in the election, and the other was to help Vice President Biden in the debate.

Q So I want to introduce into the record two documents.

The first -- and I'm going to mark it as exhibit 14 -- is a FOX News article dated September 14, 2020, entitled "235 Former Military Leaders Support Trump, Warn 'Our Historic Way of Life is At Stake.'"

[Morell Exhibit No. 14.

Was marked for identification.]

BY [REDACTED]

Q The second I'll mark as exhibit 15. And it's a letter from 235 former military leaders entitled "Open Letter from Senior Military Leaders."

[Morell Exhibit No. 15.

Was marked for identification.]

BY [REDACTED]

Q The letter isn't dated, but the FOX News article indicates it was released on

or about September 14, 2020.

A Yes. I remember seeing it.

Q You do remember --

A Yes.

Q -- seeing the letter, or the FOX News article, or both?

A I remember hearing about the endorsement.

Q So have you read this letter, though, before today?

A I have not. I have not read it yet.

Q So I'll give you a second to review it, if you'd like. And the letter is the one actually marked exhibit 15.

A Okay.

Q Okay. So the letter, briefly summarizing it, states that the 2020 election could be the most important election since our country was founded. It argues that the Democrats' opposition to border security, their pledge to return to the disastrous Iran nuclear deal, their antagonism toward the police, and planned cuts to military spending will leave the United States more vulnerable to foreign enemies.

And then it says -- it urges Americans to, quote, "support Donald Trump's reelection."

It's then signed by 235 retired military officials, including, you know, generals and admirals --

A Uh-huh.

Q -- and vice admirals, lieutenant generals, et cetera.

A Uh-huh.

Q Is that a fair description of the letter?

A Yes.

Q And regardless of whether you agree with what the letter says, do you believe these signatories are expressing their First Amendment right?

A Yes. And I believe they're also -- they are not only expressing their right to be involved in the political process but also their responsibility.

Q Okay. And do you agree that, again, regardless of whether you or anyone else agrees with what the letter says, these individuals who signed this letter have the right to exercise their First Amendment right and to participate in the political process?

A I sure do.

Q Okay.

So I also want to introduce as exhibit 16 an excerpt from the first Presidential debate, in 2020, which took place on September 29, 2020.

[Morell Exhibit No. 16.

Was marked for identification.]

BY [REDACTED]

Q And this isn't the full transcript, because the full transcript was 100-and-some-pages long, but we're -- it's a cover page and then an excerpt from the middle of the debate.

Did you watch the debate?

A Uh-huh.

Q So I'll give you a minute to review this. But --

A I watched the debate, but I don't --

Q Yep.

A -- I don't have a crystal-clear memory.



[12:09 p.m.]

BY [REDACTED]

Q And I'm going to ask you about the bottom of that page.

A This one?

Q Yes.

A Should I stop reading the rest of it?

Q Whenever you're ready. Sorry. I didn't mean to --

A Okay. Go ahead.

Q So, at the bottom, it's President Donald J. Trump at 28:45 in that block of text.

It reads: As far as the church is concerned and as far as the generals are concerned, we just got the support of 250 military leaders and generals, total support. Law enforcement, almost every law enforcement group in the United States. I have Florida. I have Texas. I have Ohio. I have every -- excuse me, Portland, the sheriff just came out today, and he said, "I support President Trump."

Based on what I just read to you and the review of the letter from the 235 former military leaders, is it accurate to say that senior military leaders' letter in support of Trump was released in advance of the first Presidential debate?

A What was the timing?

Q So it would have been September 14, 2020.

A And the debate was?

Q September 29, 2020.

A Likely.

Q Okay. And is it accurate to say that it played a role in that debate?

A Yes.

Q That it was brought up by President Trump in that debate?

A Yes.

Q Okay. So -- and you agree that these senior military leaders -- they were admirals, generals, lieutenant generals; they're all retired -- they have the right to participate in the political process?

A Yes.

Q And, in fact, their decision to participate did play a role in the political process?

A Yes.

██████████ Okay. I have about 5 minutes left.

We have about 5 minutes left. I'm going to keep going unless you all -- okay.

BY ██████████

Q You were asked earlier about an email exchange with Mr. Blinken?

A Yes.

Q And I don't actually remember, I think it was exhibit 5, but we're not going to return to the exhibit.

A Okay.

Q The email was dated October 17, 2020. Correct?

A The email from --

Q From Mr. Blinken to you.

A Yes, yes.

Q And, on October 17, 2020, Mr. Blinken was a private citizen. Correct?

A Yes.

Q You were also a private citizen?

A Yes.

Q And all the other letter signatories were private citizens?

A As far as I know, yes.

Q So this was essentially -- the interaction between you and Mr. Blinken were two private citizens engaged in the political process?

A I didn't see it that way.

Q How did you see it?

A I mean, I saw it as an interaction between me and a senior member of the Biden campaign.

Q But, even as a member of the campaign, he was a private --

A Yes.

Q -- citizen?

A Yes.

Q Okay. And so, to the extent that there has been some suggestion that, you know, your -- that you should not have written this letter or that there was something wrong with you writing the letter, do you agree that that could amount to telling you you should not have participated in the political process?

A Rephrase that again.

Q To the extent there has been the suggestion made either today or in public reporting that you should not have sent that letter --

A Yes.

Q -- that you shouldn't have submitted the public letter, would you agree that that would have the effect of -- if you had not -- that if you had -- that it could have a chilling effect on others' willingness to participate in the political process in the future?

A Yes.

Q And would that be problematic?

A Yes.

Q Why?

A Because you want as much involvement in the political process as possible by American citizens. And it's chilled me, to be honest with you.

Q How so?

A You know, I'm not likely to participate publicly in the political process again.

Q Do you think that's possibly true for the other people who signed this letter?

A I don't know. You would have to ask them.

██████████ I think we're at a stopping point. So we can break for now.

██████████ Mr. Morell, would you like a break?

Mr. Morell. Yeah, yeah.

██████████ How long would you like?

Mr. Morell. Ten minutes?

██████████ All right. Thank you.

Mr. Morell. Great.

[Recess.]

██████████ The time is now 12:25, and we can go back on the record.

BY ██████████

Q Our committees are deeply troubled by the CIA's engagement and what it's -- my understanding you have testified here today is describing its political activity.

██████████ earlier noted that the statement that Mr. Cariens provided me was not under oath. I did just want to say for the record that we have requested Mr. Cariens to appear for a transcribed interview and are currently working with him and counsel to provide that.

Are you aware whether the statement was sent to any of the other intelligence

agencies? I know you said you weren't sure --

A I don't know.

Q -- if it went to the ODNI?

A I don't know.

Q Okay. And did you speak to any other offices or staff outside of the PCRB at the CIA?

A No.

Q In an email you sent to signatories thanking them for signing on, you described this as, quote, the most important election since 1860 and 1864 when the very existence of the country was on the ballot.

██████████ And I can enter that into the record, that email, so that we have it for you as exhibit No. 15 -- I believe -- 17.

[Morell Exhibit No. 17.

Was marked for identification.]

[Discussion off the record.]

██████████ That's all right.

BY ██████████

Q Do you remember sending an email to that effect?

A Yes.

Q Why did you believe that this was the most important election since 1860 and 1864?

A You know, it's funny, reading the letter from the generals supporting President Trump, I agree with a number of the points that they make. I'm as concerned about the defense budget. I'm a pretty conservative guy when it comes to national security. But I have to tell you that, you know, spending 33 years at CIA and watching

literally hundreds of world leaders during that time, President Trump's personality traits deeply concerned me, what I believed to be deep narcissism, what I believed to be deep paranoia, what I believe to be a type of sadism where you -- not sexually, of course, but a type of sadism where you, you know, are happy when your opponents have been injured in some way -- I'm talking politically -- that those were all traits that I saw in foreign leaders who did significant damage to their country and significant damage to the democracies of their country. I'm thinking -- you know, I'm thinking of Mugabe in Zimbabwe. I'm thinking of Chavez in Venezuela. I'm thinking of Putin in Russia.

So I was deeply concerned about the potential impact of President Trump on our democracy. And, you know, my fear, in my view, was borne out by his failure to act on January 6, 2021.

So that's what I meant when I wrote that. That's what I was thinking.

Q The public statement --

Chairman Jordan. You couldn't have been thinking about January 6, 2021, because --

Mr. Morell. No. I wasn't thinking about January 6th. I was thinking about everything I said up to that point, sir. You're correct.

BY [REDACTED]

Q The public statement published in Politico reads in part: If we are right, this is Russia trying to influence how Americans vote in this election, and we believe strongly that Americans need to be aware of this.

I'm sure you also appreciate the weight that your name carries with Americans, what Brennan's name carries with Americans, Clapper's name carries with Americans, Hayden's name carries with Americans, your extensive background, the fact that you have had security clearances, continue to have a security clearance, it's my understanding.

Do you appreciate the fact that it was you and your fellow signatories who, in fact, were the ones that influenced how Americans may have voted in the 2020 Presidential election with this statement?

A You know, the nature of politics, right, is people put their ideas into the public domain. And those that do so with political intent, which is what exactly -- which is what I did -- I can't speak for everybody else here -- what is clearly what I did was designed to have an effect.

I don't know how much effect it had at the end of the day. You know, all of those names you just read, by the time this letter came out, you know, most of America was broken into two camps, as you know. And I think, you know, one camp would see the group of people that you just mentioned as people they admire, and the other camp feels just the opposite about them. So, you know, I have no idea, at the end of the day, how much we influenced anybody.

Q Now that you know that some of the materials on the laptop have been verified, have you considered retracting the statement or issuing an apology or anything like that?

A No, I have not. I have not because I still believe that it is possible that the Russians played some role in the information getting to the New York Post. You know, I told the story about the West German elections earlier. You know, we may never know, but it is still possible.

So, if I was going to rewrite it today, I would say the information is accurate but still raise the possibility that the Russians played some role in it ending up in the New York Post.

Mr. Gaetz. Do you have any evidence to suggest that the Russians played a role in this?

Mr. Morell. No, sir, I do not beyond the list that I gave you earlier, which you correctly pointed out was circumstantial evidence.

Mr. Gaetz. Are you aware circumstantially of any other interactions between Russians and the New York Post?

Mr. Morell. I'm not. I'm not, and I'm not saying there were direct interactions between the Russians and the New York Post here. I'm not saying that at all.

Mr. Gaetz. So, if you were going to write the letter today, would you express that you believe that the Russians may have been involved in getting it to the New York Post?

Mr. Morell. Yes, it's possible, absolutely.

Mr. Gaetz. Do you regret publishing this letter?

Mr. Morell. I do not.

Mr. Gaetz. Even though it lacks the obvious caveat that the information is authentic?

Mr. Morell. We didn't know that at the time.

Mr. Gaetz. You just used your experience to surmise it?

Mr. Morell. No. We said we didn't know, sir. The letter is crystal clear in that we don't know.

Mr. Gaetz. Do you regret that those caveats that you seem to be relying on heavily today weren't really part of the public discourse and the political discourse around this letter?

Mr. Morell. I knew they wouldn't be. I knew they wouldn't be, as much as we tried, right? As you guys know better than anybody, right, politics is hyperbole and particularly debates. There's a lot of hyperbole around, a lot of people taking things and taking them a little bit further, right? You know that better than I do.



So I wasn't surprised at all that -- you know, when President Biden -- when Vice President Biden talked about this at the debate that he didn't say, "Hey, I have to put some caveats on this." That's not what happens at debates.

Mr. Gaetz. So you knew when you put this product out with caveats --

Mr. Morell. I was hoping --

Mr. Gaetz. Sorry. Let me finish.

Mr. Morell. Yes, sir, yes, sir.

Mr. Gaetz. The court reporter --

Mr. Morell. Absolutely. My fault.

Mr. Gaetz. So you knew when you put this product out with caveats that its utilization politically likely wouldn't include those caveats?

Mr. Morell. I guessed that politicians would not use the caveats. I was hoping that fact-checkers and I was hoping the media -- disappointed in that regard -- would pay more attention to them.

Mr. Gaetz. But you testified earlier that you were accelerating -- you were requesting an acceleration of the review of this material so it could be used in a debate, right?

Mr. Morell. Yes, sir.

Mr. Gaetz. And you knew in that debate those caveats wouldn't really be referenced?

Mr. Morell. I was hoping that the Vice President, you know, would not say that this was disinformation. All right. I was hoping he was going to say possible Russian role in these emails coming to light, right? That's what I was hoping.

Mr. Gaetz. Would it be fair to characterize the letter that you put out as disinformation?

Mr. Morell. It would not.

Mr. Gaetz. When is the last time you spoke to Tony Blinken?

Mr. Morell. I have not spoken to Tony Blinken in a very long time. I can't remember the last time I spoke to Tony Blinken.

Chairman Jordan. We covered this a little bit in the first hour. Is there a reason that the main caveat, to use the term we've been using, is there a reason why that main caveat was to be presented to the press off the record? Because that's the fundamental issue that you've referred back to several times, and that's the one you wanted presented off the record.

Mr. Morell. Sir, as I said earlier, I do not remember why I said off the record versus on the record versus background. It was in the letter. My intent was not to hide it. I don't know why I said that.

Mr. Gaetz. I want to go back to your communications with Mr. Blinken.

Mr. Morell. Yes, sir.

Mr. Gaetz. So can we drill down on when you recall your last correspondence or communication with him?

Mr. Morell. This may have been it. This may have been it.

Mr. Gaetz. The phone call --

Mr. Morell. The phone call and the email, yes.

Mr. Gaetz. So at no point after the letter's publishing can you recall any correspondence with the Biden --

Mr. Morell. Oh, no. I'm sorry. I'm sorry. Let me correct that.

I did have communication with Mr. Blinken during the transition. I did have communication with him during the transition. I called him to tell him that I was no longer interested in being the Director of CIA.

Mr. Gaetz. Had you previously expressed an interest in that position?

Mr. Morell. Not publicly and not even privately to the campaign, but I knew I was being talked about. I had actually prior -- prior to the campaign, prior to the 2020 campaign, I had actually went to see Tony at WestExec Partners where he worked. And we talked about the election, and I told him I was not interested in being the Director of CIA, but I knew I was being discussed. I was interested, but I remember, you know, losing interest fast as the Democrats came out against me. And I remember calling him and telling him that, hey --

Chairman Jordan. Wait, wait. So when were you -- you said it both ways. When were you interested that you expressed that to him?

Mr. Morell. So I didn't express it to anybody. It was -- it was discussed. I expressed it to people like John Brennan who weren't part of the transition. People would call me up and say, "Hey, are you interested?" But nobody in the transition reached out to me ever to discuss a job.

But, when I was tired of the false allegations being made against me by some Democrats and unable to defend myself against those allegations, I said I'm not interested anymore. I want to end this. And I called Tony --

Chairman Jordan. -- let's go back to you were interested. You were interested. I mean, your background and the awards you've won, I can understand why.

Mr. Morell. Yes, sir.

Chairman Jordan. We appreciate your service, but you were interested back in the summer; is it fair to say?

Mr. Morell. Yes, sir, yes, sir.

Chairman Jordan. Okay.

Mr. Gaetz. Are you aware of any of the other signatories to this letter having any

interest in positions in the Biden administration?

Mr. Morell. Not that I know of.

Mr. Gaetz. No other person on -- who was a signatory contacted you to express any interest?

Mr. Morell. No.

Mr. Gaetz. And you didn't have any other general awareness of that?

Mr. Morell. No. No, I did not, sir.

Mr. Gaetz. Can you make a list of the places where you bank?

Mr. Morell. Where I bank?

Mr. Gaetz. Yeah.

Mr. Morell. Really?

Mr. Nathanson. That seems awfully far afield from the subject matter of the request.

Mr. Gaetz. Well, you heard in the preamble that the committee has an interest in potentially exploring revolving door legislation, and so we may be interested in financial records. It's entirely within the scope of our legislative purpose. If you want to object to it now, we can review a subpoena down the road. It's your call.

Mr. Nathanson. Yeah. Look, respectfully, I'm not quarrelling with the legitimacy of the request. I'm just making clear that Mr. Morell is here voluntarily to answer questions specifically related to the letter. He's indulged a number of questions related to his current employment which is, I think, you know, beyond the scope of what he had agreed to. But I think at this time, you know, we're going to refrain from answering any questions on bank accounts.

Mr. Gaetz. Okay. Yeah, I would state for the record that inherent in our interest in the letter are the positions that the signatories have held in the government,

then their work outside the government for the sake of politics, and what might inform on that work. Someone's financial records would be relevant to that.

You're correct, you're here voluntarily, so you can choose to voluntarily -- you can choose to refuse any question that we ask, but then we, of course, have the tools of compulsory process.

Mr. Morell. And my highest income comes from an individual who was a major financier for President Trump.

Mr. Gaetz. I just asked you to make a list of where you banked.

BY [REDACTED]

Q You testified that you never had access to classified information regarding the contents of Hunter Biden's laptop. Correct?

A Correct.

Q Okay. Are you aware of whether any of your fellow signatories have had access to classified information regarding the contents on Hunter Biden's laptop?

A I am not.

Q Okay. Did you not knowingly insinuate to the American public that, given you and your fellow signatories' previous access to classified information, you might continue to have special knowledge about the contents on Hunter Biden's laptop?

A I don't -- I didn't think about that, number one. Number two, as I think about it now, I think the answer is no. You know, most of the individuals here I don't believe had clearances. And, quite frankly, the American people don't know who does and who doesn't have a clearance.

Q Now that the contents of Hunter Biden's laptop have been authenticated, including documentation of shady business dealings with Chinese and Ukrainian foreign nationals, do you believe Hunter Biden is a threat to national security?

A I'm not in a position to judge that at this time. I don't have enough information.

Q Who was in charge of compiling and tracking all of the signatories?

A Oh, it was a group effort between myself, Marc, and Kristin.

Q Okay. Thank you.

A As people said yes to one of the three of us, you know, somebody I think would let -- somebody had a master list. Right? I don't know which one of us did. But as individuals said yes, then we would let each other know, and the name would get added.

██████████ That's all of my questions.

Chairman Jordan. Mr. Morell, Mr. Ratcliffe said on the morning of the 19th -- and I'm going from a news article here -- the laptop, quote, is not part of some Russian disinformation campaign.

At the start of the minority's hour last hour, you were making a distinction there. Can you just refresh me what --

Mr. Morell. Sure.

Chairman Jordan. Because you said you agreed with -- you said something about you agreed with Mr. Ratcliffe, but then I don't -- I don't square with that based on what he said and what you guys ended up doing later.

Mr. Morell. Yeah. So he said -- if you want to read it back to me one more time.

Chairman Jordan. The Biden laptop story is not, quote, is not part of some Russian disinformation campaign. He said this on FOX News that morning, and then this is in a --

Mr. Morell. Yeah.

Chairman Jordan. -- print story later that morning.

Mr. Morell. Yeah, yes, sir.

So I would say two things. One is he made no judgment, right, as to Russian involvement in the information getting from one place to another. He didn't make any judgment about that at all.

Chairman Jordan. So how do you read that phrase, "is not part of some Russian disinformation"?

Mr. Morell. And then, when you look at that phrase, right, I read it as what he said, right, that, in his judgment, it wasn't Russian disinformation.

I think -- if I were the DNI and I was going to speak about that, I'd say we don't have any evidence that it's part of Russian disinformation -- part of a Russian disinformation campaign.

Chairman Jordan. Well, he said that. He said: Let me be clear. The intelligence community doesn't believe that because there's no intelligence that supports that.

He said that as well?

Mr. Morell. Right. But that's different than making a judgment that it's not, period, because there may be information that you don't have. That's why I'm so -- that's why I leaned against, you know, putting a lot of weight in what he said because I don't know how you -- how you know what you don't know. This is something that intelligence officers deal with all the time.

Chairman Jordan. That's why you said earlier, I think when I asked you that, you just felt he was wrong to say those things?

Mr. Morell. Yes, sir, yes, sir.

Chairman Jordan. Okay. So there was no real agreement when -- you made

some distinction between disinformation, misinformation, information. That wasn't -- that's not part of it. You just think he's wrong?

Mr. Morell. Yeah. I think there was a much better way for him to say what he believed.

Chairman Jordan. Okay, okay. What is malinformation?

Mr. Morell. What is what?

Chairman Jordan. Malinformation.

Mr. Morell. I've never heard the term, sir.

Chairman Jordan. Okay. DHS and everyone else is using the term. I just wondered if you knew.

Mr. Morell. Yeah, I don't know.

Chairman Jordan. Okay. Let me -- do you know a guy, Mr. Ricchetti? Do you know him?

Mr. Morell. Ricchetti.

Chairman Jordan. Ricchetti, excuse me.

How do you know him?

Mr. Morell. Well, I first got to know him when he was my son's basketball coach?

Chairman Jordan. Okay.

Mr. Morell. And then I didn't see him for a long time. And then I would run into him occasionally on West Executive Avenue when he was working for the Vice President and I was attending deputies' meetings. And, because he was my son's basketball coach, we would stop and chat with each other.

That's the extent of the relationship.

Chairman Jordan. Did you talk to him at all regarding the statement that you



helped organize and put out?

Mr. Morell. Yes, sir.

Chairman Jordan. When did you talk with him?

Mr. Morell. After the debate -- I think it was after the debate -- in fact, I'm pretty sure it was after the debate -- I got a phone call from Jeremy Bash, who I work with at Beacon and who is active politically. And Jeremy said: Do you have a minute to talk to Steve Ricchetti?

I said: Of course.

He was the head of the Biden campaign at the time. And Jeremy got him on the line, and Steve thanked me for putting the statement out. And that was the extent of the conversation.

Chairman Jordan. Okay. Let me just walk through the dates and the storyline as I see it, and you tell me if we're wrong.

Mr. Morell. Yes, sir.

Chairman Jordan. On the 14th, the New York Post story comes out. Approximately 3 days later, sometime on the 17th, you got a call or an email from Mr. Blinken.

Mr. Morell. So I would say on or before the 17th.

Chairman Jordan. On or before the 17th --

Mr. Morell. Yes, sir.

Chairman Jordan. -- you got a call or an email from Mr. Blinken?

Mr. Morell. Yes, sir.

Chairman Jordan. That day you start this process and put this letter together. You and Mr. Polymeropoulos start to put this statement together. Is that accurate?

Mr. Morell. Sir, the first thing I would say is I get the email or call -- probably a

call. I get the email or call. I do a little bit of my own research, and then I reach out to Mr. Polymeropoulos to say: Hey, what do you think?

Yes, sir.

Chairman Jordan. So it's starting to go?

Mr. Morell. Yes.

Chairman Jordan. Later that day you get -- on the 17th, if I remember, 10:53 p.m., Mr. Blinken sends you the USA Today story?

Mr. Morell. Yes, sir.

Chairman Jordan. And Mr. Bates from the Biden campaign, head of rapid response, had sent it to Mr. Blinken.

Mr. Morell. Yes, sir.

Chairman Jordan. Okay. 18th and 19th, you actually do put it all together. You get the 51 folks to sign it.

Mr. Morell. Yes, sir.

Chairman Jordan. And, on the 19th, you get the okay from the CIA Publication Review Board?

Mr. Morell. Yes, sir.

Chairman Jordan. The 19th, later the statement is published, and you then tell Mr. Shapiro who the Biden campaign wants to get the scoop; i.e. the Harris or --

Mr. Morell. Shane Harris, yes, sir.

Chairman Jordan. The Harris from The Washington Post. And then, sometime after that, the head of the Biden campaign calls to say thank you.

Mr. Morell. Yes, sir.

Chairman Jordan. Was that -- do you know the date of that again?

Mr. Morell. I think it was the following Monday, I think.

Chairman Jordan. The following Monday being what date?

Let me ask you this. Was it before the debate or after the debate?

Mr. Morell. After the debate.

Chairman Jordan. So that was after the debate. I had it before.

So, on the 22nd, Mr. Biden, in fact, uses your statement -- the statement in the debate?

Mr. Morell. Yes, sir.

Chairman Jordan. And then after the debate is when Mr. Ricchetti calls you.

Mr. Morell. That's my memory, sir. That's my memory.

Chairman Jordan. And then we also have a number of emails that have been produced to the committee where the people on -- a number of the people who signed it were sort of congratulating each other for the fact that it was, in fact, used in the debate.

Mr. Morell. Yes, sir.

Chairman Jordan. Okay. And then the one other fact that I think is important that [REDACTED] asked about earlier is one of the individuals who signed it, when he happened to be -- because he had publication from the CRB, Publication Review Board, he was asked by someone in the government to sign on as well?

Mr. Morell. Sounds that way to me. At least that's what the piece of paper we just saw said.

Chairman Jordan. Okay. Okay.

[REDACTED] Can I just say something?

Chairman Jordan. Sure.

BY [REDACTED]

Q Did you get any other signatories via that process?

A Of them --

Q So you reached out to a bunch of people?

A Yeah, yeah.

Q More than 51?

A Yeah, yeah, yes.

Q Tray Johnson said no?

A Yes, yes. Some people didn't respond. Right? Some people just didn't respond.

Q Did you pick up any other signatories, you know, that you didn't have on your list?

A So there's -- at the bottom of the letter, I believe it says that there were a number of people who agreed with the letter but could not sign it, but they wanted it noted that, if they could have signed, they would have.

Q Was Cariens on your list?

A I don't remember. Is he?

Q He signed it.

A He signed the letter.

Q His wife signed it. But you don't remember whether he was on your list?

A I don't.

Q Or whether he came to the letter?

A I think we have that information here, right, who I sent a request to sign the letter.

Q Okay.

A But I don't remember.

██████████ Okay.

BY ██████████

Q Would Kristin Wood be someone we should talk about as to how Mr. Cariens came to be on the list?

Mr. Morell. Yeah, I think -- you know, I'm happy to look at the list I sent out and see if he's on my list. Right? But either -- he was either on my list or Marc's or Kristin's, or he reached out to one of us, right, heard about it and reached out to one of us. I think there's a lot of possibilities here, and, you know, I don't want to speculate as to which one it was.

Chairman Jordan. Tell me your definitions again. I think in the last hour you talked about misinformation versus disinformation.

Mr. Morell. Yes.

Chairman Jordan. Tell me the distinction.

Mr. Morell. Oh, I don't make a distinction between misinformation and disinformation.

Chairman Jordan. Okay.

Mr. Morell. They're the same to me; inaccurate, false.

Chairman Jordan. False information versus -- oh, so then what you would define as information is true information?

Mr. Morell. Yes, sir.

Chairman Jordan. Okay. That's what so many people today define as malinformation, true information but somehow true information that they say presented in some context leads to a bad outcome, or whatever, which I think is particularly scary.

What if Americans say something that is true information, maybe has some bad outcome, you would say that that in no way should be censored or limited, if Americans are engaged in speech --

Mr. Morell. Absolutely not.

Chairman Jordan. And so is it fair to say you -- because I know earlier you said you did it to help Biden in the debate.

Mr. Morell. Yes, sir.

Chairman Jordan. I think you had three reasons. You said: We believe Russians were involved -- which wasn't -- is now not accurate I think -- we think Trump will attack Biden on information which is fake, and we want to give the VP a talking point in response.

So those are the three motivations driving the --

Mr. Morell. I think of it as two. I think of it as two motivations. You know, one, let the American people know about what we saw as a deep suspicion of Russian involvement; and then, two, helping the Vice President.

Chairman Jordan. You wanted to help the Vice President why?

Mr. Morell. Because I wanted him to win the election.

Chairman Jordan. You wanted him to win; that's why?

Mr. Morell. Yes, sir.

Chairman Jordan. All right.

Okay. I think I'm fine.

BY [REDACTED]

Q Now that the story has come out about the origins of the laptop, do you have any different views on it; the fact that it was just a careless act, that it was left, it was abandoned at this Delaware --

A You know, I'm still suspicious about how it got from the repair shop to the New York Post.

Q I mean, there has been some reporting -- I don't know if you're aware of it -- that this individual in Delaware, after some point in time -- and it was back in 2019 --

A Yeah.

Q -- had the laptop and was doing outreach to various parties seeking -- you know, sort of seeking a place to put this information.

Are you aware of that?

A No.

Q Okay.

A No. You know, I've seen this individual interviewed on "60 Minutes," and a lot of questions he doesn't answer very well. Look, and I'm not saying that he knew about Russian involvement. We talked earlier with the minority about the Russians putting people here in 2016, right, as part of their information campaign.

You know, my -- one of my theories about possible Russian involvement here when I signed my name on this letter and when I organized it was that the Russians knew what was on Hunter Biden's laptop, what was in his emails because either they hacked it or they learned it from their Burisma hack or, you know, that they were aware in some way and that, based on their hacking of Hunter Biden's phone or laptop, that they knew where the laptop was and, you know, various possible ways, direct and indirect, for them to suggest that you might want to get this laptop to the right people, and there might be some money in it for you.

And then you add, you know, Rudy Giuliani's involvement here and his interaction with a known Russian agent in Ukraine and Steve Bannon, and it gets suspicious. That's what I was thinking.

Chairman Jordan. Okay.

BY [REDACTED]

Q Getting back to Shane Harris --

A Yes.

Q -- was that name suggested by --

A So this is -- I talked about this earlier. You know, I had -- when you guys first reached out, right, I started thinking about what's my memory here. Right? And I thought there were only two points of contact with the campaign: The first phone call, you know, or email from Tony and then the call from Steve Ricchetti. I thought those were the only two.

Since then, I've learned, right, that Tony sent me the USA Today thing. I didn't remember that when I first started thinking about this. And I learned that there's this email that I sent to Nick saying, "Hey, the campaign wants Shane Harris to be the guy." I have no memory of that, right? I have no memory of the campaign, having a conversation with the campaign about that.

I can think of possible ways that it could have happened, but I really have no memory. I wish I did. I wish I could tell you.

Q As the laptop story was suppressed by Facebook and --

A So I understand, yes.

Q Did you have any idea going into this that potentially your letter led to that type of -- just a blockade of information?

A Yeah. So I certainly didn't think of that going in, and I don't think our letter had that effect. I believe that the suppression started before our letter came out.

Q Okay. Your letter is certainly a data point that goes into --

A So you would need to talk to Facebook and Twitter, which I'm sure you're going to do, about why they made this decision. I have no insight at all, right, no contact with any of the social media companies over this. Nobody called me and said: Hey, do you really believe this?

Q Okay.



A Right? Never happened.

Q But you're a prestigious person, okay?

A Some don't believe that.

Q You know, these 51 officials, a good chunk of them are well-known people?

A Uh-huh.

Q And so signing the letter with the caveats, without the caveats certainly gives this story a stamp of legitimacy?

A Correct. I don't know -- I have no idea as to why they made the decision they made. Right? I have no idea. I don't know if our letter was part of their decisionmaking or not. I just don't know.

Q I mean, you've testified today that it's important to participate in the political process and people who want to influence the outcome as Americans have a right to engage in that and get their information to the people. Correct?

A Yep.

Q But what happened with the Hunter Biden laptop story was quite the opposite; it was a suppression of information. So a good chunk of, you know, the American people didn't get to consider that as they were deciding who they were going to vote for in the 2020 election. Isn't that true?

A I don't know to what extent it was suppressed, right --

Q Well, you know that --

A -- as part of the story. What we did was put a point of view into the political process, right? Our statement did not result in people stopping the discussion about Hunter Biden and the relationship with his father and decisions his father made as Vice President. This didn't end that, right --

Q I mean, Facebook --

A -- by any stretch of the imagination. Right?

And, again, I have no idea why Facebook and Twitter made those decisions.

Q But Facebook and Twitter basically shut this story down, and anybody that posted about the story was -- I mean, the story was wiped away, and people were kicked off platforms. I mean, it was quite extraordinary. Wouldn't you agree?

A I would agree it's extraordinary, and I agree that you guys are going to talk to them about it, right, and have a conversation with them, just like we're having with me, and I think that conversation is perfectly appropriate. I think the American people deserve insight into why they did what they did.

Q Do you think that the information on the laptop, you know, contains, you know, relevant data points for people as they're considering who they're going to elect President?

A Yes.

Q And so an exploration of what's on the laptop -- and I'm talking about certainly the business dealings going on in Ukraine and China, not some of the other items.

A Yeah. I think that's all appropriate to be in the political process for an election.

Q But that part of the dialogue was shut down and wiped out heading into the 2020 election?

A Yeah. And I would say much, much, much less by our letter and possibly more by, you know -- but I'm not a political scientist to sit here and tell you, you know, the degree of suppression.

██████████ Right.

Chairman Jordan. Okay.

██████████ Okay.

██████████ Mr. Morell, we have no further questions.

Mr. Morell. Thank you.

██████████ And we appreciate you coming in voluntarily today.

Mr. Morell. You're welcome. I thought it was important that I come in today.

██████████ We do have some questions.

██████████ Well, we defer to the minority for their time.

Mr. Morell. Okay.

██████████ We'll go off the record for a minute.

[Discussion off the record.]

██████████ We can go back on the record.

BY ██████████

Q All right. Thank you again. I know this has been a long day, and I think we are close to the finish line --

A You're welcome.

Q -- for what it's worth.

A You're welcome.

You know, just like I said earlier, I think it's important for the American people to know why the social media companies did what they did. I think it's important for the American people to know why I did what I did.

Q Getting back quickly to the timeline that we were just talking through and the supposed suppression, what's been described as the suppression of the story, are you aware that the New York Post article came out on October 14, 2020?

A I think that's the date, yes.

Q Okay. And Twitter stopped distributing it on the 15th, the day after?

A That was my understanding, yes. That's what I meant earlier, yes.

Q And then, within 24 hours, it was unreleased. So, in other words, on the 16th it was no longer --

A Actually, I didn't know that.

Q So your letter actually came out after that. Right?

A Yes.

Q So the timeline would be, the 14th, the story came out; the 15th, Twitter paused the distribution; the 16th, it was unpaused; and 4 or 5 days later, your letter came out?

A I didn't know that they had unpaused the pause.

Q And you said pretty clearly you never had conversations with Twitter?

A I never had conversations with Twitter or Google or Facebook or anybody.

Q Any social media company?

A No.

Q Okay. And did you have any conversations with anybody about social media companies? In other words, did you have any conversations with the Biden campaign about social media companies?

A No, no.

Q Okay. All right.

Okay. There was some comments, discussion earlier about on the record versus off the record. And I wanted to take a look at what the letter expressly said --

A Yep.

Q -- and kind of go through that in detail.

A The statement, our statement?

Q Sorry. The public statement, yeah. It's exhibit 1 here.

So just to make the record clean here, you didn't have any access to any of the supposed emails or to what's been described as the Hunter Biden laptop. Correct?

A Correct.

Q And you didn't have access to any intelligence products or other documents analyzing the laptop or other emails?

A Correct.

Q And you made this clear in the letter. Right?

A Yes.

Q And so you didn't try to suggest that you had access to nonpublic information?

A We did not.

Q Okay. In fact, the fifth paragraph of the letter reads: We want to emphasize that we do not know if the emails provided to the New York Post by President Trump's personal attorney Rudy Giuliani are genuine or not and that we do not have evidence of Russian involvement.

A That's correct.

Q Okay. Did you consider it, when you were writing this, important to plainly state that you didn't know if the emails were genuine?

A Yes.

Q And why is that?

A Because I was trained to say what you know and what you don't know. And, you know, I carry that through everything I do in my life, including writing this letter.

Q And, likewise, did you consider it important to establish plainly on the very first page of the letter that you didn't have direct evidence of Russian involvement?

A Yes.

Q And you did so.

In the second to the last paragraph of the letter, you describe press reports about the FBI opening an investigation into Russian involvement, and then you say: We do not know whether these press reports are accurate.

Do you recall writing that?

A I sure do.

Q So you said earlier -- and just, again, to make the record perfectly clear -- you didn't have any personal interactions with anyone at the FBI --

A I did not.

Q -- regarding reports or investigation?

A I did not.

Q Okay. To your knowledge, did any of the other signatories have conversations with anybody at the FBI?

A Not to my knowledge.

Q Okay. And so you made that clear in the letter?

A Yes.

Q And then the email from you to the PRB, which has been introduced already as exhibit 9, the subject line is: Public Statement for Review.

In the email, you say: We are 100 percent confident in it -- meaning that the letter does not contain classified information. Indeed, it specifically says that we don't know whether the IC or the FBI knows about this.

A Correct.

Q Was that a true and accurate statement?

A Yes.

Q And would that have potentially -- in your view, could that have increased

the speed at which the PRB could process this type of request?

A Yeah. It was designed to let them know that we didn't have any inside information, right? And it was important for them to know that. But, believe me, they wouldn't take our word for it.

Q That they would go through it?

A Yes.

Q But it was a short letter compared to --

A Yes.

Q How long was your book?

A My book was -- I don't know -- a couple hundred -- 200 pages, 250 pages.

Q And this is maybe 11, 12 paragraphs?

A Yes.

Q Okay. So it would make sense for them to be able to process this more quickly --

A Yes.

Q -- than an extensive book?

A Yes. And it was fully consistent with their processing of other op-eds I had written.

Q I want to look in that letter at what you've described as earmarks.

So the October 19th letter says that the arrival on the U.S. political scene of emails has all of the classic earmarks of a Russian information operation.

If you recall, what did you mean by the use of the term "earmarks"?

A The timing, you know, the timing relative to the election and the debate; the fact that these emails had been around for a long time, you know, in one form or another, and all of a sudden, they come out; you know, the fact that the Russians were

already -- we knew from our own intelligence community, led by John Ratcliffe, that the Russians were interfering in this election. We knew from the Treasury Department that a specific Ukrainian was involved in this interference, an agent of Russian intelligence; that we knew that -- and we knew that, you know, two of Trump's most important confidants were somehow involved in this laptop getting from point A to point B.

Q And I'm going to walk through those in a minute. But what's the actual, in your mind, definition of the term "earmark"?

A Example, right, indicator. "Indicator" is the best word.

Q Is it a term of art, or is it --

A No, it's not. It's not.

Q Okay. And, in that paragraph, it says: All the classic earmarks of a Russian information operation.

And you use the term "information operation," not "disinformation operation."

Right?

A Correct.

Q Was that an intentional choice?

A Yes. In fact, if you look at the first draft, you know, of what Mr. Polymeropoulos sent me, he used the word "disinformation" all over the place. And, you know, I thought that was a huge mistake, and I wanted to make it clear we didn't know, right? And, to the extent I used the word in here, I chose "information."

Q So you just talked through kind of at a 30,000-foot level the different factors, and I want to go through each one kind of in sequence.

So, in the eighth paragraph of the letter, which is the last paragraph on the bottom of the first page -- I won't make you count them -- it reads: Such an operation -- meaning a Russian operation -- would be consistent with Russian objectives,



as outlined publicly and recently by the intelligence community, to create political chaos in the United States and to deepen divisions here but also to undermine the candidacy of former Vice President Biden and thereby help the candidacy of President Trump."

Why would it have been consistent with Russian objectives to create political chaos in the United States and deepen divisions here?

A Because that was part -- right, they were trying, in my view, and I think in the view of the intelligence community, expressed, you know, both at the time and then in the aftermath, as well as the Senate Intelligence Committee's report, is they really had two goals, right? One was to simply create chaos here with all the interference they did in 2016 and the interference they were doing in 2020 and, in particular, you know, damage former Secretary of State Clinton in the 2016 election and damage former Vice President Biden in the 2020 election. That was their -- those were their two intents.

Q And what was your understanding of why Russia would have had an intent to help President Biden over then candidate Vice President Biden?

A To help President Trump?

Q I'm sorry. Help President Trump, right.

A Yeah. Because the Russians hated Secretary Clinton and hated Vice President Biden --

Q Okay.

A -- for the positions that they took during the Obama administration against Russia.

Q I want to introduce into the record a statement from the then National Counterintelligence and Security Center Director, William or Bill --

A Evanina.

Q -- Evanina. Thank you.

██████████ It's dated August 7, 2022, and it's entitled "Election Update for the American Public." This is exhibit 17.

[Morell Exhibit No. 17.

Was marked for identification.]

BY ██████████

Q Are you familiar with this?

A Yes.

Q So can you -- so you're familiar with the National Counterintelligence and Security Center?

A I am.

Q Okay. Can you broadly explain what the mission is of the NCSC?

A Yeah. Their mission is not to do this. Their mission is to make Americans and, in particular, American companies aware of the intelligence efforts of other countries to steal information in the United States, in particular intellectual property, from American countries largely focused on China.

Q Okay. And I know you said it's not their mission to do this, but they did make this evaluation?

A Yes.

Q Do you think this evaluation is reliable?

A Yes, I do.

Q Okay. Could you read the highlighted passage that begins "Russia"?

A "Russia. We assess that Russia is using a range of measures to primarily denigrate former Vice President Biden and what it sees as an anti-Russia 'establishment.' This is consistent with Moscow's public criticism of him when he was Vice President for his role in the Obama Administration's policies on Ukraine and its support for the

anti-Putin opposition inside Russia. For example, pro-Russia Ukrainian Parliamentarian Andriy Derkach is spreading claims about corruption -- including through publicizing leaked phone calls -- to undermine former Vice President Biden's candidacy and the Democratic Party. Some Kremlin-linked actors are also seeking to boost President Trump's candidacy on social media and Russian television."

Q So the statement was released in August 2020, which was 2 months prior to your October 19, 2020, letter?

A Yes.

Q Is this statement from the President Trump appointed head of the National Counterintelligence and Security Center the type of, quote, public and recent reports to which you're referring when you drafted the October letter?

A Yes.

Q Okay. Moving on, the ninth paragraph of the October 19th letter, it's the top of the second page -- sorry -- your letter.

A Oh, sorry.

Q It says: Such an operation would be consistent with some of the key methods Russia has used in its now multiyear operation to interfere with our democracy -- the hacking, via cyber operations, and the dumping of accurate information or the distribution of inaccurate or misinformation. Russia did both of these during the 2016 Presidential election -- judgments shared by the U.S. Intelligence Community, the investigation into Russian activities by Special Counsel Robert Mueller, and the entirety, all Republicans and Democrats, on the current Senate Intelligence Committee.

Do you recall what, quote, judgments shared by the U.S. intelligence Community was a reference to?

A Here we're talking about 2016, so it was the declassified document that you

showed me earlier.

Q Okay. Is that the January 2017 assessment?

A Yes, yes.

Q Okay. And paragraph 9 also refers to the investigation by Special Counsel Robert Mueller which led to the April 2020 release of the report on the investigation into Russian interference in the 2016 Presidential election, sometimes called the Mueller report.

A Volume I, right, of the Mueller report?

Q Yes, Volume I.

A Yes.

Q And this report determined that the Russian government hacked into the computer networks of the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee and the Democratic National Committee and then released stolen Clinton campaign and DNC documents using various personas in order to interfere with the 2016 Presidential election, correct?

A Yes.

Q Okay. And then, finally, the last part of paragraph 9 refers to the findings of the Senate Intelligence Committee report, which we've discussed earlier?

A Yes.

Q So this is a reference to the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence report on Russian Active Measures campaign.

A Yes.

Q The final version was released in October of 2020.

A Yes.

Q Okay.

██████████ I want to introduce actually part of that into the record as exhibit 18.

A Okay.

[Morell Exhibit No. 18.

Was marked for identification.]

BY ██████████

Q This is the cover page in the findings section of that report. It's not the full report.

A Okay.

Q Because, again, I think it's a thousand pages long.

A Okay.

Q On page Roman numeral VII, the first sentence of the section entitled "Hack and Leak" reads: The committee found that Russian President Vladimir Putin ordered the Russian effort to hack computer networks and accounts affiliated with the Democratic Party and leak information damaging to Hillary Clinton and her campaign for President.

Is this consistent with the type of concerns that were expressed in paragraph 9 of the October 19th letter?

A Yes, ma'am.

Q Okay. So paragraph 9 accurately described past methods that Russia has used to interfere in U.S. elections, correct?

A Yes, ma'am.

Q Okay. And you would agree that there's widespread agreement in the intelligence and national security community that Russia did, in fact, engage in these kind of hack-and-dump and other interference?

A Yes, ma'am.

Q Okay. And can you explain how this past interference, the knowledge of what happened in 2016, provided important context for you for what you perceived as possible Russian interference again in 2020?

A You know, because I was so interested in what the Russians had done in 2016, you know, I read the three documents that we just talked about that we referenced in the report, right, the U.S. intelligence community review, Mueller's Volume I, and the Senate Intelligence Committee's Volume I, right, which is on what the Russians did. I read those, you know, as closely as I've ever read anything.

And, you know, part of my suspicion for their involvement in 2020 in the way that we describe in the letter was based absolutely on what they had done in 2016.

Q Because what they had done in 2016 suggested future actions by them?

A Absolutely.

Q Okay. And is that true of how intelligence analysts work? They look at prior actions and use that --

A Sure.

Q -- to assess people?

A Sure. It's part of what they do, right, part of what they look at.

[1:20 p.m.]

BY [REDACTED]

Q Okay.

The next paragraph, the tenth paragraph, which is the second paragraph on the second page of the October 19th letter, states that "the Russians, according to media reports and cybersecurity experts, targeted Burisma late last year for cyber collection and gained access to emails."

Do you recall the media reports or --

A Yes.

Q -- cybersecurity experts --

A Yes.

Q And can you --

A The media reports about the Burisma hacks, yes.

Q Okay.

I want to introduce as exhibit 19 a January 13, 2020, New York Times article entitled "Russians Hacked Ukrainian Gas Company at Center of Impeachment."

[Morell Exhibit No. 19.

Was marked for identification.]

BY [REDACTED]

Q This article states that -- I'll give you a second to review it. I'm sorry.

A No, I know the story.

Q The article states that the GRU used phishing emails to target Burisma and gain access to their computers --

A My microphone just fell off.

Q Oh.

A Fell over.

Q Can you tell us what the GRU is?

A It's the Russian military intelligence service.

Q Okay. Is this the type of media report to which you were referring when you drafted this paragraph?

A Yes.

Q Okay. Do you have any reason to doubt the veracity of this reporting?

A No.

Q So that's a true statement in this letter?

A Yes.

Q Okay.

A Yeah.

I'd say something else, though, too, if it's okay. Right? It's not only what we know about what the Russians did, right, hacking Burisma; it's what we don't know. I mean, this is an incredibly sophisticated intelligence service, so there are probably many, many more hacks we don't know about than we do know about.

Q Right. Understood.

That paragraph 10 continues on: "Ukrainian politician and businessman Andriy Derkach, identified and sanctioned by the U.S. Treasury Department for being a 10-year Russian agent interfering in the 2020 election, passed purported materials on Burisma and Hunter Biden to Giuliani."

Sorry, this is in paragraph 10 of the October 19th letter.

A Oh, I'm sorry. I'm sorry, I'm lost. Where am I? I've got too much paper in front of me, guys.



Okay.

Q So the last sentence of the second paragraph on the second page refers to Andrii Derkach being sanctioned --

A Yes.

Q -- for being a 10-year Russian agent. Do you recall how you learned about Mr. Derkach being sanctioned?

A It was after Mr. Blinken called me and I did my internet search. I found the Treasury designation.

Q Okay.

And I am going to introduce that Treasury designation -- or the press release discussing that designation. This is exhibit 20.

[Morell Exhibit No. 20.

Was marked for identification.]

BY [REDACTED]

Q And this is a September 10, 2020, Treasury Department press release stating, in relevant part, that "Treasury designated Andrii Derkach pursuant to Executive Order 13848 for his efforts to influence the 2020 U.S. presidential election. Derkach, a Member of the Ukrainian Parliament, has been an active Russian agent for over a decade, maintaining close connections with the Russian Intelligence Services. Derkach has directly or indirectly engaged in, sponsored, concealed, or otherwise been complicit in foreign interference in an attempt to undermine the upcoming 2020 U.S. presidential election."

So this statement, this directly supports the statements that you made in your letter about Derkach being sanctioned for being a 10-year Russian agent interfering in the 2020 election --

A Yes.

Q -- correct?

A Yes.

Q So this was a true statement in your letter, an --

A Yes.

Q -- accurate statement?

And Rudy Giuliani was known to associate with Mr. Derkach, correct?

A My understanding from the media, yes.

Q And what's your understanding of who Rudy Giuliani is?

A He was the President's private attorney. I don't know if he is anymore.

Q President Trump?

A President Trump, yes.

Q I want to introduce a -- okay.

In your experience, in your 33 years of intelligence experience and subsequent experience as well, does the Treasury ever sanction individuals as Russian agents for no reason, or do they usually have a pretty strong body of evidence to support that?

A They have a strong body of evidence to support such a judgment.

Q And can you describe what the process might look like to gather -- what type of evidence might be in that and what the process might be like to gather that evidence?

A So I've never worked at Treasury, I've never worked in sanctions office --

Q Yeah.

A -- right? But, you know, I have some insight because Treasury sits at the Deputies Committee national security table.

And so, you know, they gather -- you know, they see things that raise questions. They're on the distribution for all intelligence, right --

Q Uh-huh.

A -- related to what they do. They usually take the first step, in saying, hey, this might be something we want to look at.

Q Yes.

A They pull all the information together. They often come back to the intelligence community with questions.

Q Okay.

A You know, what do you mean by this? Where did this come from? How much confidence do you have in that?

So there's a dialogue back and forth between Treasury and the intelligence community, based on my knowledge of how the process works. But I've never been inside the process.

Q Understood.

So I want to introduce a Daily Beast article which was published on October 17, 2020, entitled "Rudy: Only 50/50 Chance I Worked with a 'Russian Spy' to Dig Dirt on Bidens and Ukraine."

[Morell Exhibit No. 21.

Was marked for identification.]

BY [REDACTED]

Q So this article is actually a report of an hour-long interview that The Daily Beast did with Mr. Giuliani in which Giuliani said that he, quote, "viewed his latest leak to the New York Post," referring to the Biden laptop leak, quote, "as an extension of his years-long efforts to work with Ukrainians to dig up dirt on the Bidens."

Was it concerning to you or would it have been concerning to you that Rudy Giuliani viewed the leak of the laptop as part of his ongoing work with the Ukrainians to

dig up dirt on the Bidens?

A Yes.

Q Why is that?

A It would've been another data point. I wasn't aware of this at the time. In my mind, it would've been another data point. Still circumstantial, but it would've been another data point.

Q Right. And so you do think it's relevant that Rudy Giuliani described it as part of his --

A Yes.

Q -- ongoing work to dig up dirt?

A Yes. And, in particular, doing so, you know, with a Russian agent.

Q Okay.

And the interview reads, in part, quote, "Derkach for years has tried to pass damaging -- and largely false -- information about the Ukraine government's supposed attempts to undermine Trump, and the Bidens' supposed dirty dealings in Kyiv. Derkach dispatched packets of disinformation about the Obama administration and the Bidens to lawmakers on Capitol Hill throughout 2019 and finally met with Giuliani in December 2019 in Kyiv during the middle of the House impeachment process. Derkach and Giuliani appeared together in an anti-Biden television series produced by the Trumpist network OAN, and Giuliani has interviewed Derkach about the Bidens on his YouTube series Common Sense."

Putting aside the comments about this being part of Giuliani's years-long efforts to dig up dirt with the Ukrainians, is just the fact that he was associating with a known Russian agent of concern to you?

A Yes. It's either concerning because he knew about it and, therefore, he

shouldn't have done it, or it's concerning that he was not warned off, right, that the government didn't say to him, "Hey, you should not be talking to this guy. He's a Russian agent." Either way, it's concerning to me.

Q And Giuliani also was known to have ties to an individual named Andrii Telizhenko, correct?

A I did not -- I don't know that name.

Q Okay.

You said that it was concerning to you that Rudy Giuliani would not have -- either way, he was associating or people knew he was associating and nobody warned him. But the sanctions that we just walked through were issued in mid-September, correct?

A Yeah. And I don't know the timing of Mr. Giuliani's contact with Mr. Derkach.

Q Right. But we know that the Hunter Biden laptop story was in October --

A Yes.

Q -- of 2014.

A Yes.

Q So that would've been after the sanctions.

A Yes, but we don't know when the New York Post acquired the --

Q Right.

A -- hard drive. Right.

Q So the next earmark that the letter -- sorry. Yeah. The next earmark the letter notes -- that the letter notes that, according to the Post, U.S. intelligence agencies warned the White House that Giuliani was the target of an influence operation by Russian intelligence.

I'm going to introduce the Washington Post article that reports that. It was

dated October 15, 2020. It's entitled "White House Was Warned Giuliani Was a Target of Russian Intelligence Operation to Feed Misinformation to Trump."

[Morell Exhibit No. 22.

Was marked for identification.]

BY [REDACTED]

Q So the article -- I also want to -- so I want to note for the record, this article was issued on October 15, 2020. When it was issued, it said that Giuliani himself was warned that he was a target of an intelligence operation.

A I didn't know that.

Q The Post later issued a correction to that part of the story in May 2021, and they said Giuliani had not been warned directly --

A Okay.

Q -- but the White House had been warned.

A Okay.

Q And, as you said, Giuliani was President Trump's personal --

A Attorney.

Q -- lawyer for the -- so, presumably, any warning could have been passed along to him.

The October 15, 2020, Post article says that "the warnings were based on multiple sources, including intercepted communications, that showed Giuliani was interacting with people tied to Russian intelligence during a December 2019 trip to Ukraine, where he was gathering information that he thought would expose corrupt acts by former vice president Joe Biden and his son Hunter."

"The intelligence raised concerns that Giuliani was being used to feed Russian misinformation to the president, the former officials said, speaking on the condition of

anonymity to discuss sensitive information and conversations."

Was this fact something that added to your concern about the Hunter Biden emails, or the supposed emails, potentially being part of a Russian intent to interfere in the 2020 election?

A I was not aware of this at the time.

Q Okay.

But the statement in the October 19th letter that refers to the Washington Post article -- the Washington Post article was a real article?

A Yes.

Q This statement was not inaccurate in the letter?

A Correct. Correct.

Q Okay.

So we have discussed a number of factors that led you to have concerns about Russia potentially interfering in the 2020 --

A Can we go back and correct something I just said?

Q Sure.

A I was clearly aware of this article, because we cited it here. I don't know if it was something that Marc wrote that I just picked up. I didn't remember the article 2 minutes ago when you asked --

Q Uh-huh.

A -- but, clearly, we cited it. And I either just took it from Mr. Polymeropoulos and trusted him or I went and looked at it myself.

So I just wanted to correct what I said earlier.

Q Okay.

So we've talked through a number of factors that led you to have concerns about

Russian potentially interfering. So I want to actually turn to some evidence that suggests Russia did successfully interfere in the 2020 election.

In particular, I want to introduce a January 7, 2021, intelligence community assessment. It's entitled "Foreign Threats to the 2020 U.S. Federal Elections."

[Morell Exhibit No. 23.

Was marked for identification.]

BY [REDACTED]

Q Now, this was actually a classified report, but the de- -- it was classified when it was released in January of 2020. I'm introducing the declassified version, which was released I believe in March of that year.

Are you familiar with this?

A Uh-huh.

Q Have you read it before?

A Uh-huh.

The Reporter. Can you say --

Mr. Morell. Oh, I'm sorry, I'm sorry.

Yes, I'm familiar with it, and, yes, I've read it before.

BY [REDACTED]

Q So I want to turn to the fourth page of the document, which is actually Roman numeral i.

A Uh-huh.

Q I've highlighted Key Judgment 2, which says:

"We assess that Russian President Putin authorized, and a range of Russian government organizations conducted, influence operations aimed at denigrating President Biden's candidacy and the Democratic Party, supporting former President



Trump, undermining public confidence in the electoral process, and exacerbating sociopolitical divisions in the U.S. Unlike in 2016, we did not see persistent Russian cyber efforts to gain access to election infrastructure. We have high confidence in our assessment; Russian state and proxy actors who all serve the Kremlin's interests worked to affect U.S. public perceptions in a consistent manner. A key element of Moscow's strategy this election cycle was its use of proxies linked to Russian intelligence to push influence narratives -- including misleading or unsubstantiated allegations against President Biden -- to U.S. media organizations, U.S. officials, and prominent U.S. individuals, including some close to former President Trump and his administration."

So is this description consistent with the type of concerns about Russian interference that you expressed in the October 19th letter?

A Yes.

Q And based on the Treasury Department sanction, do you believe that Andrii Derkach may have been a Russian intelligence proxy pushing influence narratives?

A I have no doubt about that.

Q Okay.

A I trust the Treasury designation, and it said exactly that.

Q And, to your knowledge, was Rudy Giuliani an individual close to former President Trump and his administration?

A Yes.

Q Okay.

And I just want to clarify one more thing for the record.

A Uh-huh.

Q There was some discussion earlier about the emails being authentic or verified or -- you have not reviewed them?

A No. I'm going on the basis of what seems to be a consistent view on the part of media outlets that they are authentic.

Q Okay. So that's just based on your review of media outlets, and you've not had any conversations with anybody in the intelligence community about them?

A No, I have not.

Q Okay. So purely based on public information?

A Yes.

Q Okay.

A It seems to be an accepted view now that they're authentic.

Q Okay.

Thank you. We don't have any further questions.

We can go off the record. Thank you.

[Whereupon, at 1:35 p.m., the interview was concluded.]

Certificate of Deponent/Interviewee

I have read the foregoing \_\_\_\_ pages, which contain the correct transcript of the answers made by me to the questions therein recorded.

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Witness Name

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Date

# DRAFT

## Errata Review Sheet M. Morell testimony before the House Judiciary Committee

Page	Reads	Should Read
14	I didn't want to <b>leave</b>	I didn't want to <b><u>lead</u></b>
14	people who had served <b>on</b> administrations	people who had served <b><u>in</u></b> administrations
29	<u>Jordan</u> . So who was on the <b>record</b> ?	<u>Jordan</u> . So who was on the <b><u>board</u></b> ?
31	this might have <b>been</b> in the	is might have <b><u>done</u></b> in the
33	Travers no, <b>do</b> not send	Travers no, <b><u>I did</u></b> not send
36	and these were the things <b>where</b> I found, <b>right</b> , after Mr.	and these were the things <b><u>that</u></b> I found <b><u>right</u></b> after Mr.
38	<u>Morell</u> . So the first statement was 100 percent the first	<u>Morell</u> . So the first statement was 100 percent <b><u>--</u></b> the first
42	debate certainly <b>makes it</b> caveated	debate certainly <b><u>wasn't</u></b> caveated
56	I got to know him when <b>my his</b> wife	I got to know him when <b><u>his</u></b> wife
61	weaken us that we need to focus on, in terms of	weaken us <b><u>and</u></b> that we need to focus on <b><u>them</u></b> , in terms of