



Archivist of the
United States

October 25, 2022

The Honorable James Comer
Ranking Member
Committee on Oversight and Reform

The Honorable Jim Jordan
Ranking Member
Committee on the Judiciary
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

By Email

Dear Ranking Members Comer and Jordan:

I write in response to your letter of October 14, 2022, in which you stated:

The fact that NARA transmitted to DOJ a referral that launched a criminal investigation of the former president the same day the Democrat Chairwoman of the Committee inquired whether the agency had been in contact with DOJ raises serious concerns about whether NARA made the referral after pressure from Committee Democrats.

There was, in fact, no connection between these two actions. NARA received the 15 boxes from President Trump on January 18, 2022, and then discovered that they contained classified national security information. Shortly after the discovery, NARA consulted with its Office of Inspector General (OIG), which operates independently of NARA. As DOJ has disclosed publicly in court filings, NARA's OIG subsequently referred the matter to DOJ on February 9, 2022.

Wholly separate and distinct from the above described activities, on February 7, 2022, the *Washington Post* published an article entitled [National Archives had to retrieve Trump White House records from Mar-a-Lago](#). NARA immediately began to receive numerous queries about this article, including from the staff of the House Committee on Oversight and Reform, who informed our staff that Chairwoman Maloney would be sending a letter. Subsequently, on February 9, 2022, the Chairwoman sent the letter to Archivist of the United States David S. Ferriero that is referenced in your letter. The letter did not copy the NARA OIG.

The fact that NARA's OIG sent its referral to DOJ on the same day that Chairwoman Maloney sent her letter to the Archivist is entirely coincidental. At no time and under no circumstances were NARA officials pressured or influenced by Committee Democrats or anyone else. As I emphasized in my October 7, 2022, letter to Ranking Member Comer, NARA has at all times acted professionally and without regard to any political or partisan influence with respect to this matter. Our actions were for the simple purpose of carrying out our core mission of ensuring that NARA has all Presidential records of former Presidents in our custody and control, as required by the Presidential Records Act, and our responsibilities regarding classified national security information.

You have also expressed your concern "about NARA's continued refusal to provide information about its role in the raid on the former president's home." Both I and NARA's Inspector General have already informed Ranking Member Comer that NARA played absolutely no role in, and had no prior knowledge of, the search of President Trump's Mar-a-Lago residence.

We have also explained that DOJ has requested that NARA not share or otherwise disclose to others information related to NARA's recovery of the 15 boxes at this time in order to protect the integrity of DOJ's ongoing work. I have given this same message to Chairwoman Maloney. For this reason, we continue to recommend that you consult directly with DOJ about this issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Debra Steidel Wall".

Debra Steidel Wall
Acting Archivist of the United States

cc: The Honorable Carolyn B. Maloney,
Chairwoman, Committee on Oversight & Reform

The Honorable Jerrold L. Nadler,
Chairman, Committee on the Judiciary