

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

INTERVIEW OF: JOHN BRENNAN

Thursday, May 11, 2023

Washington, D.C.

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

Present: Representatives Jordan, Gaetz, Johnson of Louisiana, Biggs, Hageman,

Stewart, Armstrong, and Goldman.

Appearances:

For the COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY:

██████████ GENERAL COUNSEL  
██████████ SENIOR PROFESSIONAL STAFF  
██████████ COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR AND COUNSEL  
██████████ DEPUTY GENERAL COUNSEL  
██████████ SENIOR ADVISOR  
██████████ SENIOR ADVISOR  
██████████ DEPUTY COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR  
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██████████ CHIEF COUNSEL FOR OVERSIGHT  
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For the SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE CONSTITUTION  
AND LIMITED GOVERNMENT:

[REDACTED] MINORITY PROFESSIONAL STAFF MEMBER

For the PERMANENT SELECT COMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE:

[REDACTED] STAFF DIRECTOR, SUBCOMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT  
AND INVESTIGATIONS

[REDACTED] GENERAL COUNSEL

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For JOHN BRENNAN:

ROBERT LITT, ESQ.

HAYDN FORREST, ESQ.

Morrison & Foerster LLP

2100 L Street NW, Suite 900

Washington, D.C. 20037

██████████ Good morning.

This is a transcribed interview of former CIA Director John Brennan. Chairman Jordan and Chairman Turner have requested this interview as part of the committee's investigation of Federal law enforcement and intelligence matters within our respective jurisdictions.

Would the witness please state your name for the record?

Mr. Brennan. John Owen Brennan.

██████████ And you're here with your lawyers. Could your lawyers also identify themselves for the record.

Mr. Litt. Robert Litt from Morrison & Foerster.

Mr. Forrest. Haydn Forrest, also from Morrison & Foerster.

██████████ Thank you.

This investigation serves to inform potential legislative reforms within the jurisdictions of our committees.

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

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.

On behalf of the committees, I want to thank you for appearing here today to answer our questions voluntarily. My name is ██████████ I'm a lawyer with the House Judiciary Committee, majority side.

I'd like to have the staffers in the room introduce themselves. The only staffers are staffers with either of the committees. There's no personal office staff. So we'll go around the room, starting with my colleague [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Hi. I'm [REDACTED] Chairman Jordan's staff.

[REDACTED] [REDACTED] chief oversight counsel for the House Judiciary Committee Democratic staff.

[REDACTED] [REDACTED] House Intelligence, minority general counsel.

[REDACTED] [REDACTED] House Judiciary Committee intern.

[REDACTED] [REDACTED] House Judiciary, Democratic staff.

[REDACTED] [REDACTED] House Judiciary Democrats.

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

[REDACTED] [REDACTED] the HPSCI general counsel.

[REDACTED] [REDACTED] Chairman Jordan's staff.

[REDACTED] [REDACTED] Chairman Jordan's staff.

[REDACTED] [REDACTED] Chairman Jordan's staff.

[REDACTED] [REDACTED] counsel for Chairman Jordan's staff on House Judiciary.

[REDACTED] [REDACTED] oversight and investigations counsel for HPSCI majority.

[REDACTED] [REDACTED] senior special counsel, Chairman Jordan's staff.

[REDACTED] [REDACTED] with Chairman Jordan.

[REDACTED] [REDACTED] with Chairman Jordan.

[REDACTED] And we are privileged to be joined here to by some of our members.

We'll have them introduce themselves.

Chairman Jordan. Jim Jordan.

Mr. Stewart. Chris Stewart.

Mr. Johnson of Louisiana. Mike Johnson of Louisiana.

Mr. Armstrong. Kelly Armstrong.

Mr. Gaetz. Matt Gaetz.

Mr. Biggs. Andy Biggs.

[REDACTED] I'll go over the ground rules and guidelines that we'll follow during today's interview.

Our questioning will proceed in rounds. The majority will ask questions first for an hour, and then the minority will have an opportunity to ask questions for an equal period of time. We'll alternate back and forth until we are complete.

Typically, we'll take a short break at the end of each hour, but if you'd like to take a break apart from that, just let us know. If you need to confer with your counsel or otherwise break, please, we'd like to extend that courtesy.

As you can see, there's an official court reporter taking down everything we say. So we'll do our best to not talk over one another. From time to time, we might have to back up and restate a question and so forth.

We want you to answer our questions in the most complete and truthful manner possible, so we will take our time.

If you have questions or don't understand one of the questions we've asked you, let us know. Our questions may cover a 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 don't remember, it's best not to guess. Please give us your best recollection. And it's okay to tell us if you learned information from a third party. The Rules of Evidence aren't in play here. Just tell us how you came to know the information.



If there are things you don't know or can't remember, just say so, and inform us who, to the best of your knowledge, might be able to provide a more complete answer to that question.

You should understand that, although this interview is not under oath, that by law -- and we go through this with all witnesses -- you're required to answer questions before Congress truthfully.

Do you understand that?

Mr. Brennan. Yes, I do.

██████████ And there's Federal statutes, such as 18 United States Code, 1001, that deal with those situations. Do you understand that?

Mr. Brennan. Yes, I do.

██████████ We may have some exhibits here today, and we'll keep them with us and with the court reporter, even if it's a document that you may have provided to the committee.

Do you have any questions before --

Mr. Brennan. No.

Mr. Litt. I do have a short statement I'd like to put on the record.

██████████ Absolutely.

Mr. Litt. Yeah.

██████████ Let me just ask my Democrat --

Mr. Litt. Sure.

██████████ -- counterpart to see if she has any welcoming remarks.

██████████ No. We thank the witness for joining us, and we believe we will have Democratic members in here as well. We'll let them introduce themselves. I think there's a handful of other committee hearings going on right now.

██████████ Okay.

And, please, sir.

Mr. Litt. Okay. Thank you.

John Brennan, as you know, has decades of distinguished service to our Nation. He's served under both Republican and Democratic administrations in a variety of national security positions.

He's here today voluntarily in response to a letter dated February 26, 2023, from the chairman of the Judiciary Committee and the chairman of the Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, which requested that he produce documents and give an interview on the subject of the public statement that he and others signed in October 2020 concerning the New York Post's reporting about Hunter Biden.

By responding to this letter and agreeing to be interviewed, Director Brennan does not in any way concede that this inquiry has any legitimate legislative purpose. Congress has no right of oversight over statements by private citizens on matters of public interest, even if Members disagree with those statements.

As Chairman Jordan said, "the most important right we have as American citizens under the First Amendment is our right to speak, our right to communicate in a political fashion, and not be attacked or harassed for doing so."

So long as they do not disclose classified information, former national security officials have the same First Amendment rights as anyone else.

Thus, as I explained in my letter of March 13, 2023, even under the most expansive view of Congress's authority, there's no basis for this transparent attempt to police political speech and intimidate private citizens into not exercising their constitutional rights.

Nonetheless, and without waiving any rights he has, Director Brennan is prepared

to answer your questions about the statement in question.

██████████ Okay. Thank you.

And to the extent -- you know, you're here voluntarily, so, you know, from time to time, if we ask a question and you're not willing to answer it, you know, we'll just have to move on.

I will note that, a lot of times, it's easier to just answer, if you can, even if you believe it's outside the scope. We don't normally, and we haven't here, engaged in any scope negotiations.

Mr. Litt. Yes.

██████████ But it's voluntary. So we're free to ask questions we want, and you're free to tell us to, you know, come back later. Obviously, the coming-back-later questions, you know, gets into bringing you back and using a subpoena and that type of thing, so hopefully we can just -- you can just answer the questions we have.

Mr. Litt. Yeah, but there shouldn't be any problem if we are talking about the Hunter Biden laptop.

██████████ Okay. Yeah, I mean, it's possible that we may have questions that we consider to be related that might stray from the statement.

And my colleague ██████████ is going to get our questions started here. The time is 10:17.

██████████ Good morning, Director Brennan.

Mr. Brennan. Good morning.

██████████ Again, my name is ██████████ I'm with Chairman Jordan's staff.

EXAMINATION

BY ██████████

Q I want to start by kind of going through a little bit of your professional

background. Would you mind detailing for us some of the senior government positions you've held?

A I joined the CIA in 1980. Senior positions? I was the Director of the National Counterterrorism Center. Before that, I was the Director of the Terrorist Threat Integration Center. I also was the Deputy Executive Director of CIA. I was the chief of staff to Director Tenet. And I was Director of CIA.

In addition, I was President Clinton's daily intelligence briefer. I was chief of station in the Middle East for 3 years. So there was a variety of positions I held during my 33-plus years in government service.

Q And, sir, when did you retire from the CIA?

A I retired the first time in 2005, went into the private sector for 3 years, and then returned during the Obama administration.

During President Obama's first term, I was Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism and Deputy National Security Advisor. I served in that capacity from January of 2008 until March of 2013, at which time then I was appointed to be Director of CIA.

Q And was the last position you held at the CIA Director?

A Yes, it was.

Q And how long did you hold that position?

A From March the 13th, I believe -- March 8th of 2013 to January 20th of 2017.

Q And what do you do now?

A I am a husband, father, grandfather.

I am a lecturer at my alma maters, Fordham University in New York as well as University of Texas at Austin.

I serve on a number of foundation boards: the Third Option Foundation, which

takes care of former CIA officers who either fell in the line of duty or have been maimed or paralyzed.

I also serve on the Board of Trustees of the International Institute of Strategic Studies, which is London-based.

I serve on the Board of Advisors to FAMIL USA, which tries to take care of Afghan citizens who served in support of CIA and U.S. Government objectives in Afghanistan.

I am a consultant with MSNBC and NBC.

I serve on one public board; that's ImmunityBio, Incorporated.

I serve on the Board of Directors for Treliant, which is a private company.

And there are, you know, other things -- I do consultancy on an infrequent basis.

I am a principal in the WestExec Advisors here in Washington, D.C. And I speak at universities regularly.

Q Thank you for that.

And today we're going to speak a lot about the October 19, 2020, public statement that was signed by 51 former intel officials. So I'll go ahead and enter that as exhibit No. 1 today.

[Brennan Exhibit No. 1.

Was marked for identification.]

BY [REDACTED]

Q Director Brennan, you were one of the 51 former intelligence officials that signed this public statement, correct?

A That's correct.

Q And how would you characterize the public statement?

A It was raising public awareness about the potential for Russia to once again engage in information operations to influence a U.S. Presidential election.

Q And what was the intent of the statement?

A To raise public awareness about how the Russians use our open and free society here with information operations.

Q And I'll get into more of the content a little bit later on but kind of wanted to go through the timeline.

Did you have any role in the creation of the statement?

A No, I did not.

Q Did you draft the statement in any way?

A No, I didn't.

Q Do you know who drafted the statement?

A I have seen press reports saying that it was drafted by Michael Morell and Marc Polymeropoulos, but I don't know that for a fact. I didn't hear that directly from them.

Q And do you currently interact with Mr. Michael Morell?

A Michael has been a friend and a colleague for 40 years, and, yes, I have had interactions with him over the past several years.

Q And how often would you interact with Mr. Marc Polymeropoulos?

A Not often.

Q Did you overlap in any of your roles?

A He, in fact, served at the CIA for a fair amount of time when I was Director of the CIA, as well as previously, so I had interactions with Marc. And he worked in the same Office of Near Eastern and South Asian Analysis many years ago when I was there. I think it was in the 1980s, before he shifted his discipline within the agency.

Q And when did you first learn of the interest of getting former intelligence officials to sign on to a public statement regarding Hunter Biden's emails?

A I believe there was an email that came to me and others a day or two before I agreed to sign that I discarded.

Q Okay.

A I frequently will get requests to sign on to different types of letters, and I didn't take up the opportunity at that time.

It was when Michael, who had served as my deputy of CIA in addition to being a very close colleague over the years, made a request of me, on the 19th of October I think it was, if he could add my name to the list, and I said yes.

Q And do you know, who did the first request come from?

A I don't recall.

Q Do you know if you had worked with them at the CIA?

A I don't recall who it was, so I can't say whether I worked with them at the CIA.

Q And do you know any other individuals who received that same request?

A Well, subsequently, I know a number of the individuals who were on the list of signatories, so I presume that they were recipients of that request, but I don't know.

Q And was it your same understanding that this would be the same public statement that Mr. Morell reached out to you about, or was it a different public statement?

A Repeat that question.

Q So the first request that you received from the individual that you don't remember who it was, was that the same public statement that Mr. Morell reached out to you about signing on to?

A I don't know. I just know that I read the statement that Michael sent me when he was asking me to sign on to it. So I only recall one statement, the one that was

published.

Q Okay.

I'm going to offer as exhibit No. 2, an October 19, 2020, email from Mr. Morell with the subject line "Request to Sign Statement."

[Brennan Exhibit No. 2.

Was marked for identification.]

BY [REDACTED]

Q And please take a moment to review it, sir.

A Okay.

Mr. Litt. Take a look at the attachment as well.

Mr. Brennan. Oh.

Okay.

BY [REDACTED]

Q In the first line of the email, Mr. Morell states, "To all," and then in parentheses says, "Everyone is on the bcc line to protect folks' privacy." So we're not entirely sure who all received this email.

Do you remember if you received this specific email from Mr. Morell?

A I don't.

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

Do you remember reading that paragraph at the time?

A I don't remember this email at all, so I can't remember that sentence.

Q Does it concern you, looking at the email now, that the intent behind the



public statement was to give the VP a talking point to use at the debate?

A That may have been the intent of the drafters of that email, even the drafters of the statement itself. But my intent, as I mentioned, I wanted to bring attention to the potential for Russian interference in the Presidential election once again, because I had firsthand knowledge of their interference in the 2016 Presidential election.

Q Did you have any role in recruiting other signatories to the statement?

A No.

Q Do you know who all conducted outreach as part of the effort to get signatories?

A Well, based on what you just shared with me, I presume it was this email that did that.

Q And we know from testimony and documents that have been produced to the committees that Mr. Morell kind of shopped the statement around to a number of former intelligence officials -- for instance, Lisa Monaco, David Kris, Jeh Johnson, Dan Coats, and Mike Chertoff -- who did not sign on to the statement.

Have you spoken to any of those individuals regarding the public statement?

A No. I don't recall speaking to any of them about it.

Q Do you know what role Ms. Kristin Wood played in the creation and promotion of the statement?

A I don't.

Q Do you interact with Ms. Wood at all?

A Not since she was at the Agency. I haven't had -- I don't recall any interaction with her.

Q Do you know what role Nick Shapiro played in the creation and promotion of the statement?

A My understanding is that Nick brought the statement to the attention of the media.

Q And is it correct that Mr. Shapiro used to work for you?

A Yes. He was deputy press spokesperson in the White House when I was Homeland Security Advisor. And then he came with me to CIA. He was my deputy chief of staff at CIA.

Q And how often do you interact with Mr. Shapiro?

A Nick is a close friend, and so I have, you know, periodic interaction with him now. The last time I saw him was when he came to CIA headquarters for the unveiling of my official portrait a couple months ago. But I have not had a lot of interaction with him recently.

When my memoir was being published, both the initial publication in early October of 2020 as well as the paperback version, Nick helped to arrange interviews with various elements for the publication of that book.

Q Did you speak to Mr. Shapiro at all regarding the public statement?

A You know, back in October of 2020, I had a fair amount of interaction with Nick because I was involved in the publication of my memoir. And so I presume at that time that I did.

Q Do you remember any discussions that you had with Mr. Shapiro regarding the public statement?

A I think I acknowledged that I signed it.

Q Uh-huh.

A And, again, I don't know what I was told at the time about his role in actually helping to send it to the press.

Q So you don't remember any conversations you may have had with him

regarding what he was doing to get the public statement out to the media?

A Again, this is over 2 years ago, and so I -- I was focused on my memoir at the time.

Q Okay.

Do you know what role, if any, Director James Clapper played in the creation or promotion of the statement?

A I do not believe he played any role. I know he is a signatory to it.

Q Do you know if he offered any edits to the statement?

A It's my understanding that there was an edit that Jim had offered.

Q And --

A I don't know what the edit was.

Q So you don't have any understanding of what edit he might've suggested?

A No.

Q Okay. Do you know if it was incorporated into the final letter?

A I don't know.

Q Do you know what role former Director of the National Counterterrorism Center Nick Rasmussen played in the creation of the statement?

A I just know that he is a signatory.

Q Do you interact with Mr. Rasmussen often?

A In his various capacities since he left government, I have had interactions with Nick. He was working at the McCain Institute here in Washington, and I spoke to his students a couple of times. And I had, I think, breakfast with him maybe a year and a half ago or so. So very intermittent contact with Nick.

Q And the version of the statement that's attached to the email that is now exhibit No. 2 has some language that was cut from the final version of the letter. And I'll

just go ahead and read that right now.

It says, "For those who argue that it is important for the truth to come out -- even if it comes at the cost of foreign interference -- let us share our understanding of the what transpired between Vice President Biden and the Ukrainians. It is not what Biden's opponents want Americans to think."

"When the Vice President took a private and public stand against the then Prosecutor General of Ukraine Victor Shokin, he did so as a matter of Obama Administration policy, because Shokin was corrupt, because he was not investigating corruption in Ukraine, and because the Obama Administration wanted a prosecutor who would. This included any corruption at Burisma. Shokin was not investigating Burisma. Biden was not protecting Burisma. Indeed, by arguing that Ukraine needed an aggressive prosecutor, Biden was arguing for just the opposite. The Russians want you to think otherwise."

Do you know why it was removed.

A I don't.

Q Do you know who suggested taking those paragraphs out?

A I don't.

Q Mr. Morell mentioned in some emails that some folks thought the paragraphs were too political. Do you agree that those paragraphs were too political?

A I prefer the letter in its final form, certainly.

Q So you were okay with those paragraphs being removed?

A That's not what I said -- oh, being removed? Yes --

Q Correct.

A -- I was -- yeah. And, as I recall, when I agreed to sign the letter, I don't recall reading that language.

Q And so, had these paragraphs been in the final version of the letter, would you have signed on?

A I do not believe I would have, but that's a hypothetical. And it's hard for me to say what I would've done in October 2020.

Q And can you kind of walk us through your understanding of why you wouldn't have signed on if those paragraphs were still included?

A Because I'm more comfortable without them.

Q You're more comfortable -- why are you --

A I'm not disputing the accuracy of those sentences there. I think it is accurate. But, again, my intent with signing this was to make sure I drew attention -- or, supported the effort to try to draw public attention to Russian information operations. This went beyond -- the language that you just read went beyond the use of information operations by the Russians to interfere in the election. And that was my intent here.

Q So you were not comfortable with these paragraphs. Is that correct?

A Again, I don't recall reading them, so I can't talk to my comfort or discomfort at the time. I am very comfortable with the final version. And, as I said, the language there at the end of that strayed from the Russian-information-operations message that I wanted to make sure the American public was aware of.

Q At any time following the publication of the statement, did you become aware that these paragraphs were removed?

A No. This is the first time that I recall reading them. I don't recall reading them before.

Q And at the time you were asked to sign on by Mr. Morell, did he indicate to you what the purpose -- his purpose for the statement was and why he was seeking other signatories for the letter?

A I think you are in possession of the email exchange that I had with Michael -- I think my counsel provided it to you -- where he asked that I sign on to it. And he said, I'd like to give the -- I forget what the language is exactly.

Mr. Litt. It's okay.

██████████ We can enter it as exhibit No. 3, sir.

Mr. Gaetz. Before we go to No. 3, just to conclude exhibit 2, there is a part of the email correspondence from Michael and Marc that says, "If you want to agree to sign but make that 'conditional' on seeing who else is going to sign, I'm happy to send you the final list, probably tomorrow, before obtaining your final approval."

So, Director Brennan, were you in the group of people who were willing to sign without seeing the other signatories, or did you want to see the other signatories before signing.

Mr. Brennan. I didn't respond to that email. I only responded to Michael's followup email that went specifically to me.

Mr. Gaetz. Did you at any point desire to see who else was signing the letter before providing your own agreement to sign it?

Mr. Brennan. In the email that Michael sent me, he included the names of some individuals, who I have subsequently learned did not sign that letter.

But I was comfortable, again, with the content of it. My interest was not so much in who else was signing; it was in the content itself that would convey the message about Russian interference in the election.

Mr. Gaetz. So you never asked who else was signing, correct?

Mr. Brennan. I didn't respond to that first email. The email that Michael sent me included the names of other individuals that he said were going to sign.

Mr. Gaetz. Right. That's my question --

Mr. Brennan. And that's when I agreed to sign.

Mr. Gaetz. Yeah. My question is, at any point, before or after that, did you ever ask to see who else was signing before you agreed to sign?

Mr. Brennan. No, I did not.

Mr. Gaetz. Thank you.

██████████ This will be exhibit No. 3. It's an email exchange between Mr. Morell and Director Brennan.

[Brennan Exhibit No. 3.

Was marked for identification.]

BY ██████████

Q Feel free to take a moment to review, if you need to, sir.

A Oh, I've seen this.

Q Okay.

So, in the email, you were told that Mr. Morell was, quote, trying to give the campaign, particularly during the debate on Thursday, a "talking point" to push back on Trump on this issue.

Is that correct?

A That's what's included in the email.

Q And you have testified already that that was not your intent, correct?

A My intent was to make sure that the public warning was out about Russian information operations. Yes.

Q Were you worried at all with Mr. Morell's intent for it to be used at the debate?

A My impression was that Michael wanted to make sure that there was going to be language, substance, that was going to accurately portray the concerns about

Russian information operations so that then-candidate Biden would have accurate content to use if the subject came up.

Q So did it ever concern you that this was going to be too political, if it was going to be used at a Presidential debate?

A I think the more factual a debate can be, which is not always the case, I think it makes for a much better debate. And it's better to inform the American public with accurate information, which is what this letter tried to do.

Q And you responded to Mr. Morell by saying, "Ok, Michael, add my name to the list. Good initiative. Thanks for asking me to sign on."

Why did you call this a good initiative?

A Because I think it's important for there to be broader public awareness about these Russian attempts to interfere in the election -- in Presidential elections.

As I said, I was intimately involved and know of Russian information operations in the 2016 election. And, at the time, I think I would've appreciated more professionals in the public domain ringing that bell.

And so, therefore, in the 2020 election, I believed it was worthwhile and important for national security professionals, many of whom had intimate knowledge of Russian intelligence operations, to be able to provide information to the American public about it.

Q And at the time that Mr. Morell emailed you, what information did you have that suggested that the New York Post's reporting on the Hunter Biden laptop and emails was Russian information?

A Didn't say it was. We said that it raised our concerns and our suspicions that this could be -- I think it referenced the emails, Hunter Biden's emails there.

As we said in the letter itself, Russian information operations takes a wide range of



dimensions, to include the amplification of accurate information.

Q Uh-huh. What specifically raised your suspicions?

A Well, several things.

One is that the Counterintelligence Executive, Bill Evanina, in both July and August of 2020 raised publicly the concerns about Russian attempts to interfere in the election as a way to denigrate then-candidate Biden and to help Donald Trump.

My background, again, and knowing what they did in 2016 raised it; the fact that this came on the eve of the Presidential election; the fact that Rudy Giuliani was somehow involved in the obtaining of this -- it had a number of those hallmarks that indicated to me that there is, in fact, a potential that this is part of a broader effort on the part of the Russians to once again interfere in our election.

Q Did you review any type of information regarding the laptop or the emails that rose your suspicions, or was it just based upon your experience?

A I remember seeing the New York Post article at the time, and it was in the press. And so, again, what I saw, which included, you know, salacious photos and those types of things, this is the type of thing that the Russians have excelled at over the years, in terms of pushing out something in order to advance their own objectives and interests.

Q Were you privy to any information outside of the public realm?

A No, I was not.

Q Did you --

A Outside of my previous experience in intelligence -- professional experience working against the Russians --

Chairman Jordan. Director, were you --

Mr. Brennan. -- not in the public domain.

Chairman Jordan. Director, were you aware of what Director of National

Intelligence John Ratcliffe said on the morning of October 19th regarding this Biden laptop story, where he said that it wasn't a Russian disinformation operation?

Mr. Brennan. I don't know if I was aware of it at the time, but I would have dismissed it anyway.

Chairman Jordan. Why would you have dismissed it?

Mr. Brennan. Because I don't think John Ratcliffe was an independent, objective leader of the intelligence community at the time.

Chairman Jordan. So you would dismiss the statement from the Director of National Intelligence -- the Acting -- the Director of National Intelligence at the time, in the administration, getting intelligence in real-time, you would just dismiss that out of hand?

Mr. Brennan. Not out of hand, but I think it was -- a week or two prior to that, there was a selective release of information that included my briefing notes to President Obama in the White House Situation Room that was misrepresenting, in fact, the facts, where it was pushed out in redacted version. And I did think that was a very, very unfortunate, unprofessional, unethical engagement on the part of the Director of National Intelligence in a Presidential election.

Mr. Gaetz. So your dismissing Mr. Ratcliffe was somehow payback for the fact that you thought that your briefing to President Obama had been mischaracterized?

Mr. Brennan. No, that's not what I said.

Mr. Gaetz. Okay. Well, I'm trying to understand how this event that seems to have aggrieved you regarding the briefing to President Obama impacted your view of the Ratcliffe assessment.

Mr. Brennan. It didn't aggrieve me. It just indicated to me that John Ratcliffe was not going to be an independent, nonpartisan, apolitical actor.

And I did take the words of Bill Evanina in the Counterintelligence and Security Center, the Executive, about the determination of the Russians, as well as others, to interfere in the election.

Mr. Gaetz. And what did Mr. Evanina ever say about Hunter Biden's laptop?

Mr. Brennan. I don't know what he said about it or not. I just know that he said very publicly, repeatedly, that the Russians were interfering in the election.

Mr. Gaetz. But he never said there was a laptop that was a feature of that interference, right?

Mr. Brennan. I don't know what he said about the laptop.

Mr. Gaetz. Okay.

So I'm just trying to get the full universe of your basis for signing this letter. One, you say the Evanina analysis. Second, you say the election timing. Third, you say the involvement of Rudy Giuliani. And, fourth, you say the inclusion of salacious photos.

Have I missed anything?

Mr. Brennan. My many years of experience in the intelligence community, my intimate knowledge of Russian information operations in previous elections.

Mr. Gaetz. And what about that experience told you that the laptop was a feature of Russian misinformation?

Mr. Brennan. Again, the language in the letter says that our suspicions are raised that this, in fact, could be a part of a Russian information operation effort.

Mr. Gaetz. Right. And I'm trying to understand your full and complete basis for saying that that was a probability.

Mr. Brennan. And I think I've explained that to you.

Mr. Johnson of Louisiana. Mr. Brennan, just quickly, do you regard yourself as an independent, nonpartisan actor? You said the Director was not. Are you?

Mr. Brennan. Yes, I believe I am.

Mr. Biggs. So --

Mr. Johnson of Louisiana. And -- go ahead.

Mr. Biggs. Yeah.

So I wanted to get back to a couple things you said.

You said that you wanted to ring the bell of Russian interference or potential Russian interference in U.S. elections. Is that a fair characterization of --

Mr. Brennan. Yes.

Mr. Biggs. -- your testimony?

And so I'm looking at the letter, and it substantially talks about Russian interference in the -- potential Russian interference in the election of 2020, okay? But it also hangs its hat, in a large way, on the post of Hunter Biden's laptop, to the extent that it says here, "A 'laptop op' fits the bill, as the publication of the emails are clearly designed to discredit Biden."

And I guess the first question I want to ask you is: If they had not mentioned the Hunter Biden laptop at all but they were ringing the bell about potential Russian interference, would that have been a letter you would've signed?

Mr. Brennan. Well, I agreed to sign this letter with the inclusion of that reference, so I think, by definition, I would've been willing to sign that letter without it.

Mr. Biggs. Okay.

So I guess the followup, then, is: With regard to this specific language that says that the laptop itself -- or, "the emails are clearly designed to discredit Biden," with the laptop having been verified and the emails now having been verified as accurate and real, do you still agree that those emails effectively discredit Joe Biden?

Mr. Brennan. I am unaware of any official determination that the emails on that

laptop are all real, all unredacted, whatever. I don't know -- I know there are various press reports about it. The press has reviewed it. I'm -- I don't know.

Mr. Biggs. Okay. So the fact that --

Mr. Brennan. And I'd -- and even if they are all real, it doesn't mean that the Russians were not involved somehow in the obtaining of the laptop, the dissemination of it, and the exploitation of it, which is part of Russian information operations --

Mr. Biggs. That gets around the question I asked, though. The question I asked you -- and let's frame it with the answer that you just gave. If these are real, if these are verified emails, if they're not Russian disinformation, those emails do discredit Joe Biden and cast him in a very negative way, right?

Mr. Brennan. They are certainly unhelpful, because they can be exploited by partisan actors.

Mr. Biggs. But is that why you think that line was in this, was because they could be exploited by partisan --

Mr. Brennan. I wasn't involved in the drafting of it, so, therefore, I don't know what was the motivation of putting in particular words and particular sentences.

Mr. Biggs. And you weren't interested enough to make queries about those --

Mr. Brennan. I was interested enough to read the contents of it, which I felt were an accurate depiction of the potential of Russian information operations in it.

Mr. Biggs. Thank you.

██████████ Mr. Stewart?

Mr. Stewart. Director, thank you for coming in. It's good to see you.

I'd like to reference a couple comments that you and your counsel made just for clarity and then ask you a couple other things.

In your opening statement, Counsel, you said -- and there's no doubt we

agree -- that you have the ability to engage as a private citizen in making public statements. No one contends that at all.

But I hope that you would also not deny our responsibility to determine if those statements are true --

Mr. Litt. I would --

Mr. Stewart. -- especially of -- especially of someone as distinguished as you are and the previous positions which you have held, as you've elaborated on today.

And I would ask you, do you think the CIA Director should be a political or a partisan position?

Mr. Litt. Can I -- I would just like to say that, indeed, I do dispute Congress's right to determine whether political statements are true or false in general.

Mr. Stewart. Okay. We can agree to disagree on that.

Mr. Litt. Okay.

Mr. Stewart. I think it's a fundamental --

Mr. Litt. I don't think freedom of speech was conditioned on that.

Mr. Stewart. Okay.

Do you believe that the CIA Director should be a nonpartisan and nonpolitical position?

Mr. Brennan. It's a Senate-confirmed political appointee --

Mr. Stewart. I understand.

Mr. Brennan. -- at this point.

Mr. Stewart. Yeah.

Mr. Brennan. And I do think it's important that the Congress, the Senate, have the ability to confirm the appointments of the senior-most members of the national security --

Mr. Stewart. That's really not what I'm asking you. I'm talking about the individual itself, should that individual be known or reveal themselves as a very partisan, political person? Or would the CIA Director, hopefully, be someone who stood outside of politics and didn't involve themselves in political --

Mr. Brennan. Are you talking about CIA Directors while they're in office?

Mr. Stewart. I'm talking about a current CIA Director while in office.

Mr. Brennan. As a current CIA Director, absolutely.

Mr. Stewart. Would you believe that someone who is a former CIA Director or Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, someone who is in a position that most Americans consider nonpolitical, again, an organization that should hopefully stand outside of the political debate, that someone who is a former CIA Director would therefore have a responsibility to be professional and nonpartisan in their own conversations or their public statements after they've --

Mr. Brennan. Yes. And I believe that after my departure from the CIA I have maintained that nonpartisan and professional demeanor.

Mr. Stewart. Well -- and I'll read you some of your comments and ask you to respond to that, if you would. And I think we can agree that, given the enormous power and authority that the CIA has to influence events around the world, I think the American people do expect -- and I'm glad you agree with me -- that that Director would stay above politics.

You've indicated so yourself. In an editorial you wrote in Politico, you said, "Many have condemned my public criticism of Trump, arguing that as a former CIA Director I should bite my tongue. My criticism, however, has not been political. I have never been and never will be a partisan."

Do you remember writing that?

Mr. Brennan. It sounds familiar. It sounds like something I would write or say.

Mr. Stewart. Let me read you one of several of your public statements.

March 17, 2018, speaking of President Trump: "When the full extent of your venality, moral turpitude, and political corruption becomes known, you will take your rightful place as a displaced demagogue in the dustbin of history."

Mr. Brennan. I remember writing that, yes.

Mr. Stewart. Does that sound like a nonpolitical statement?

Mr. Brennan. It sounds like somebody who is very concerned and very angry at how Donald Trump abused his office.

Mr. Stewart. Does it sound like a nonpolitical statement?

Mr. Brennan. If -- well, I don't know how you define "nonpolitical."

Mr. Stewart. You've indicated that you have not been political. I am asking you --

Mr. Brennan. That does not mean that I cannot speak about politics and what's going on in the political --

Mr. Stewart. All right.

Mr. Brennan. -- environment here in Washington.

Mr. Stewart. I understand that. I'm just asking, does that sound like a nonpolitical, nonpartisan statement?

Mr. Brennan. That sounds like a very honest judgment on the part of a former Director of the Central Intelligence Agency.

Mr. Stewart. Does it sound nonpartisan to you? Does it sound like something that someone who wasn't partisan would say?

Mr. Brennan. If they felt outraged over the behavior and the actions of an individual, irrespective of their party affiliation, yes, it is nonpartisan.



Mr. Stewart. You think that to call someone a disgraced demagogue, talk about their political corruption, their moral turpitude, you believe that is a nonpartisan statement?

Mr. Brennan. It's a statement directed against an individual, Donald Trump.

Mr. Stewart. Right, that you believe is nonpartisan?

Mr. Brennan. It's a personal judgment on my part about a specific individual.

Mr. Stewart. That's not what I'm asking. I'm asking, yes or no --

Mr. Brennan. That is nonpartisan.

Mr. Stewart. You believe that's nonpartisan?

Mr. Brennan. I do believe it's nonpartisan.

Mr. Stewart. Do you think most Americans would accept that?

Mr. Brennan. I don't know what most Americans will think.

Mr. Stewart. Yeah.

Let me ask you about some others.

As you say, you are nonpartisan. You don't involve yourself in politics. You don't care.

"Donald Trump's press conference performance in Helsinki" -- this is your statement, July 16th -- "rises to & exceeds the threshold of 'high crimes & misdemeanors.'" It was nothing short of treasonous."

Mr. Brennan. Uh-huh.

Mr. Stewart. "Not only were President Trump's comments imbecilic, he is wholly in the pocket of Putin."

We've since had -- since that statement, we've had the Russian investigation and Mueller report, two impeachments. Was there ever any charges of treason towards Mr. Trump.

Mr. Brennan. Not that I recall.

Mr. Stewart. Do you believe there should have been?

Mr. Brennan. I believe that what Mr. Trump did while he was in office and at that press conference in Helsinki was disgraceful. Taking the --

Mr. Stewart. Do you think he was treasonous?

Mr. Brennan. Taking the side of Vladimir Putin against the considered view of the intelligence community that was supported by the Mueller investigation, the Senate Intelligence Committee, and others about the Russian interference in the election, I thought that was outrageous.

Mr. Stewart. Do you think it rose to the level of high crimes and misdemeanors for a President to take a view that's opposite of yours?

Mr. Brennan. It wasn't just opposite of mine. It was counter to the considered view --

Mr. Stewart. There were --

Mr. Brennan. -- and judgment of the intelligence community --

Mr. Stewart. There are other --

Mr. Litt. Would you let him finish his answer, please.

Mr. Stewart. Sorry.

Mr. Brennan. I didn't say he committed treason. I said it was treasonous. It's, like, poisonous. It's treacherous. It's all of those features.

Mr. Stewart. You said they are "nothing short of treasonous."

Mr. Brennan. Sir, read that again.

Mr. Stewart. You said, "It was nothing short of treasonous." But you just said right now that it wasn't treason.

Mr. Brennan. "Treasonous" and "treason," I think, are two different things.

Mr. Stewart. Okay. All right. I'd love for you --

Mr. Brennan. But besides --

Mr. Stewart. -- to explain the difference.

Mr. Brennan. -- that, I said it publicly.

Mr. Stewart. That's right. As a nonpartisan --

Mr. Brennan. Jim Jordan likes freedom of speech, right?

Mr. Stewart. As a nonpartisan, by the way, right?

Mr. Brennan. You shouldn't be harassed for speaking out publicly on these issues.

Mr. Stewart. Well, do you feel harassed by this?

Mr. Brennan. Well, I question what this grouping, this committee, whatever it's called, is doing.

Mr. Stewart. Do you feel harassed by this?

Mr. Brennan. No.

Mr. Stewart. We're reading your comments and asking you to respond to them.

Mr. Brennan. Okay, and I'm responding.

Mr. Stewart. You said there's a difference between "treason" and "treasonous." Can you explain that difference?

Mr. Brennan. I used the term "treasonous."

Mr. Stewart. Would you explain the difference?

Mr. Brennan. Well, it's a difference of several letters.

Mr. Stewart. Okay. Other than the spelling, which I think we all understand, is there a difference between "treason" and "treasonous"? You just said there was.

Mr. Brennan. When I was saying "treasonous," I felt that this was a betrayal of his oath of office, a betrayal of the American people, a betrayal of this country, of our

history, and of our laws.

Mr. Stewart. So you believe he committed high crime and misdemeanors?

Mr. Brennan. I believe he betrayed this country.

Mr. Stewart. You believe he committed treason.

Mr. Brennan. I believe he betrayed this country.

Mr. Stewart. You said you believe he committed treason.

Mr. Brennan. I don't know how many times we'll go back and forth.

Mr. Stewart. All right.

If I could, was the Hunter Biden laptop a Russian disinformation campaign?

Mr. Brennan. We never said it was a disinformation campaign. In the letter, I believe it cites a USA Today story that makes reference to it possibly being a part of a smoke bomb of disinformation.

Mr. Stewart. So you never believed it was a disinformation campaign?

Mr. Brennan. I was concerned that it was part of a Russian information operation to influence the outcome of the election, as I stated previously.

Mr. Stewart. But from what we now know, I'm asking you, was the Hunter Biden laptop a Russian disinformation campaign?

Mr. Brennan. I don't know, because I don't have access to intelligence and investigative efforts on this front. I just don't know.

Mr. Stewart. Have you ever seen any information -- because there's been a multitude of reporting on this, as I'm sure you know, from a multitude of sources. Have you seen any information subsequent to your statement that would indicate or prove that it was a Russian disinformation campaign?

Mr. Brennan. I have not been reading closely the reports about this --

Mr. Stewart. Surely you've seen some of them.

Mr. Brennan. Sorry?

Mr. Stewart. Surely you've seen some of them.

Mr. Brennan. I've seen some, yes, but they run the gamut from probably the most specious to the most accurate, and I'm not in a position at this point to determine their accuracy.

Mr. Stewart. Okay. I'm not asking you to determine their accuracy or not. I'm just asking, have you seen any information that would indicate the Hunter Biden laptop was a Russian disinformation campaign?

Mr. Brennan. I may have. I don't know. I don't recall.

Mr. Stewart. You don't recall whether you've seen information that the Hunter Biden laptop was a Russian disinformation campaign?

Mr. Brennan. That's not what we said, and so I'm not in a position to determine that.

Mr. Stewart. Okay. I'm going to ask one more time for clarity. You cannot say now that you have seen any information that would indicate the Russian -- or, the Hunter Biden laptop was Russian disinformation? You have not seen any information that would indicate this?

Mr. Brennan. I do not recall --

Mr. Stewart. I'll take that as a "no."

Mr. Brennan. -- what I have seen on this issue.

Mr. Stewart. One other thing I'd like to come back to that you said. In your previous statement a little while ago, you said you wanted the -- you were hoping that this would provide so that the debate was more factual and that the more facts that are provided in the public debate, the better that is.

I'm just paraphrasing your comment from --

Mr. Brennan. Yes.

Mr. Stewart. -- a few moments ago.

In fact, this letter made the debate less factual, didn't it? Because President Biden was able to say, "That's garbage," and we know that's not true.

So this letter made the debate less factual. It made less information, less accurate information available to the American people, did it not?

Mr. Brennan. This letter never said it was garbage.

Mr. Stewart. Well, that's the President quoting from your letter.

Mr. Brennan. Well, I cannot control what others might do with this letter, like I can't control what this committee does --

Mr. Stewart. I understand --

Mr. Brennan. -- with this letter.

Mr. Stewart. -- that, but the outcome was --

Mr. Litt. Could you -- I don't think he finished his thought.

Mr. Brennan. And so I can't control how it's going to be characterized or mischaracterized by individuals, by press, whatever else. Having worked in the intelligence profession for many, many years, I know that our words are frequently misrepresented and mischaracterized for a variety of purposes --

Mr. Stewart. So for the --

Mr. Brennan. -- including political purposes.

Mr. Stewart. -- President to call the claims that this was an accurate laptop -- that the information is accurate, for him to claim that was garbage, that was inaccurate for the President to say that then?

Mr. Brennan. Again, I'm not going to comment on what --

Mr. Stewart. So let me ask one more time.

Mr. Brennan. -- then-candidate Biden said.

Mr. Stewart. Did the letter and the 51 signatures make the debate more or less accurate?

Mr. Brennan. I don't know.

Mr. Stewart. Well, it clearly made it less accurate, because the President called it garbage. He said that you all had said it was inaccurate, and we know that's not true.

Mr. Brennan. That's not what we said, though.

Mr. Stewart. Well, we can certainly debate that and you can make that claim, but the letter speaks for itself and the intent of the letter speaks for itself.

And I just think it's ironic that you say, well, we wanted the debate to be accurate, and let's provide them something that's inaccurate so he can say something inaccurate.

Mr. Brennan. It wasn't inaccurate. The letter is not inaccurate.

Mr. Stewart. Well, it certainly is.

Mr. Brennan. And how so?

Mr. Stewart. Do you not understand why it's inaccurate? Are you proud you signed that letter? Do you stand --

Mr. Brennan. I am glad I signed the letter, yes.

Mr. Stewart. You stand by the letter?

Mr. Brennan. I do.

Mr. Stewart. If you were to be presented with that letter today, you would sign it again?

Mr. Brennan. I think I probably would make one adjustment to it.

Mr. Stewart. What would that be?

Mr. Brennan. In the letter, on the second page, I believe, this paragraph begins, "Our view that the Russians are involved in the Hunter Biden email issue is consistent

with" -- I would say, "Our view that the Russians might be involved." So I would change that one word, "are," to "might be."

Mr. Stewart. Once again, do you have any information that indicates the Russian were involved?

Mr. Brennan. I don't have any information that they weren't.

Mr. Stewart. Well, that's not my question. We can hypothesize all sorts of thing. Maybe Chile is involved. We have no information that they weren't. Maybe my mom was involved. I have no information that she wasn't.

Mr. Litt. You could ask.

Mr. Stewart. I'm asking, do you have any information that indicates that Russia was involved in this laptop?

Mr. Brennan. No. But, again, I will take the opposite position, which is, I don't -- I cannot say that they weren't.

Mr. Stewart. Well, again, I don't think my mom was either.

Mr. Brennan. We're proud of your mom. That's good.

Mr. Stewart. Yeah. Unfortunately, she's passed, so it would be really remarkable if she was involved.

I have more, but I will yield my time. Thank you.

BY [REDACTED]

Q Just a couple followups.

Has anyone from the Hunter Biden camp disputed the content of the laptop that you're aware of?

A I don't know.

Q Okay.

And the USA Today article you mentioned, I mean, wasn't that a story planted by



the Biden campaign?

A I have no idea.

Q Okay. But if it was planted by the Biden campaign, would that have changed any of your calculus?

A Again, that's a hypothetical. Had I known that at the time, I -- I am unaware of any involvement of the Biden campaign in the USA Today story.

Q Okay.

And one last question, and I'll turn it back to my colleague [REDACTED] unless other members have questions.

At this time, was Mr. Morell, who you indicated was a close friend and former colleague, was he trying to position himself to be the Director of the CIA under a Biden administration?

A I know he had aspirations to return to the government. I will leave it to Michael to characterize his interest in such a position.

Q But do you think his involvement with sort of executive-producing this initiative was an effort to gain favor and maybe be appointed --

A I will leave it to Michael to describe exactly his intent.

Q Okay. But, at the time, you said that you had frequent communications with him. I mean, were you working with him to help him position himself as the CIA Director potentially?

A No.

Q Okay. And did you have any conversations with him about his potentially being the CIA Director under a --

A I may have. I don't recall them.

Q Okay.

Chairman Jordan. Mr. Morell said, when he was sitting where you are, Director, that his motivation was he believed Russia was involved; he wanted President Biden, then-candidate Biden, to have something to push back on President Trump when it came up in the October 22nd debate; and he wanted Joe Biden to be the next President.

Do you share those same three objectives -- did you share those same three objectives when you signed the letter?

Mr. Brennan. State them again.

Chairman Jordan. He believed Russia was involved. You said that was your motivation.

Mr. Brennan. Yes.

Chairman Jordan. Mr. Morell said he wanted Biden to have something to push back on against President Trump in the debate, and he wanted Joe Biden to be the next President.

Mr. Brennan. I certainly did not want Donald Trump to be the next President -- to be the President again, be reelected. I wanted Joe Biden to be. But that was not what was motivating me to sign this letter.

Chairman Jordan. So your only motivation was that you thought Russia was somehow involved.

Mr. Brennan. There were basically two motivations.

One, Michael asked me. He's my former deputy, and I have --

Chairman Jordan. Okay.

Mr. Brennan. -- a tremendous amount of respect for his professionalism. I wouldn't have signed it if he didn't ask me directly.

And, two, I did think it's very important to be able to ring the public bell about Russian interference in our political system and especially a Presidential election.

Chairman Jordan. When you signed it, did you believe that Joe Biden would bring it up during the debate?

Mr. Brennan. I didn't know.

Chairman Jordan. You didn't know.

Mr. Brennan. No.

Chairman Jordan. I mean, you're a smart, sophisticated guy. You went to Fordham, you went to Texas, you ran the CIA. You knew how this was gonna be used, didn't you.

Mr. Brennan. I think Michael's letter said he wanted to push back on Trump, so -- and, as I recall, it was Donald Trump who raised it first and then Joe Biden responded. I don't know whether or not Joe Biden would've raised it on his own. I probably doubt that he would have.

Chairman Jordan. Okay.

Mr. Gaetz. You made mention that Mr. Morell asking you to sign the letter was a critical feature of your acquiescence to signing it. If any other person on the planet Earth had asked you to sign the very same letter, would you have?

Mr. Brennan. There are many other people who I have an equal amount of respect for that if they made a plea and if I believed that something was a worthwhile effort and was accurate I would have signed it.

Mr. Gaetz. If every other person had signed this letter other than Mr. Morell and one of the others had asked you to sign it, would you have signed it?

Mr. Brennan. I don't know.

Mr. Gaetz. Well, as you sit here today reviewing the contents of it, you can't answer that question?

Mr. Brennan. I probably would have in response to some of the others. But I

only was asked by Michael, so I could only answer about my willingness to sign for Michael.

Mr. Gaetz. Okay.

██████████ We've got about 12 minutes left in our round. I want to make sure that any of the members here have an opportunity to use that time.

Mr. Biggs. Can I ask a quick question?

In light of your recent responses, I want to ask, specifically with regard to the last paragraph from page 1 of exhibit 1, the letter -- and you and I have -- I've talked to you about the last sentence before.

But in response to Mr. Jordan, you said that you signed for two reasons: Mr. Morell specifically and directly asked you to sign it, number one; and, number two, you were concerned about Russian interference.

This particular paragraph, though, seems to take a pretty decided political turn, because it's talking about Russia potentially undermining Vice President Biden's campaign and also helping the candidacy of President Trump.

That seems like a pretty direct political statement, especially when you take it in connection with the statements in the last three paragraphs of page 2, which were actually included in the letter as opposed to the two paragraphs that ██████████ mentioned that were cut.

So what I'm suggesting to you -- and I wanted to get your opinion on this. I mean, this paragraph looks like it's designed specifically to foment fear in the public, demonize Trump, aggrandize Vice President Biden. And I'm wondering, what was the necessity of this paragraph?

I know you keep saying, "Well, I didn't write it." But you read it, and you didn't offer any suggestions. What was the purpose of this paragraph if you were really signing

this solely because you wanted to raise concerns about the Russian interference?

Mr. Brennan. That paragraph is pivoting directly off of the explicit language that Bill Evanina published in the July and August timeframes. I think there were two statements that came from the Counterintelligence Executive that said that the Russians were trying to hurt Biden and help Trump.

That came out from a sitting intelligence professional in charge of counterintelligence for the U.S. Government. And so this language is, again, a reflection of that language.

Mr. Biggs. So, two points to that I would ask you about.

Throughout this letter, you refer to references. You cite The Washington Post, USA Today, a number of other media outlets as giving you buttress, giving you foundation, giving you the evidence for including that language.

There is no language in here that provides that, nothing in the public record. So are you relying on some kind of additional intelligence somewhere? You just are relying on something other than public record. Is that fair to say?

Mr. Brennan. No. As I explained to you, Bill Evanina pushed out a press release in July and August where he made explicit reference to Russian efforts to interfere in the election which he said were designed to hurt Biden and help Trump.

RPTR KERR

EDTR ZAMORA

[11:09 a.m.]

Mr. Biggs. But you didn't reference that in here.

Mr. Brennan. No, it's not referenced there, but it is anchored in information in the public domain.

Mr. Biggs. And yet, at the same time, you're citing other references in here. But this one, where you take and you, yourself, use the word "pivot," you're pivoting to -- trying to basically demonize Trump and aggrandize Biden in this, and you didn't provide any citation for that.

And you also, apparently, didn't do your homework with regard to -- and you had no information with regard -- the Biden campaign's influence and how Mr. Morell even came to consider writing the letter. None of that was there. You didn't say, why are we writing this letter? We're just doing this, right?

Mr. Brennan. I didn't hear the question.

Mr. Biggs. You didn't ask Mr. Morell why we're writing this letter. You didn't ask for the objective. You just -- he asked you --

Mr. Brennan. I responded to his email and what he said in the email, and I was, again, motivated by pushing out in public a statement about Russian interference in a Presidential election with information operations.

Mr. Biggs. He also said pushback on Trump, which you mentioned earlier that was a key point for you, was it not?

Mr. Brennan. No, that's something that he wrote. I did not write that.

Mr. Biggs. That's my point. You just are relying -- now, you want to -- you can't have it both ways. You can't say, well, Mr. Morell said this and that and that's why I did

that; but then when he says pushback on Trump, oh, that's what Morell said.

Which is it? Did you buy into what Mr. Morell was selling you or did you not?

Mr. Brennan. I agreed to sign the letter at Michael's request as it was drafted.

Mr. Biggs. As it was redacted. As it was edited. You didn't bother to read the first draft.

Mr. Brennan. I don't recall reading the first draft. I recall reading this one without those paragraphs.

Mr. Biggs. But the point is, you were comfortable with Mr. Morell's approach saying we're going to push back on Trump. You were comfortable with that.

Mr. Brennan. Again, I believed that the statement was an accurate portrayal of Russian information operations and the potential, the possibility that, in fact, what was coming out in the press about this Hunter Biden laptop was, in fact, a part of Russian information operations.

Mr. Biggs. So you were comfortable with Morell's purpose of pushing back on Trump?

Mr. Brennan. I was comfortable with the statement going out publicly.

Mr. Biggs. You were comfortable with Morell's statement that this was done to push back on Trump. You were comfortable with that position.

Mr. Brennan. Again, I can only say what I was comfortable with, which was pushing out the statement publicly.

Ms. Hageman. I just have a quick question, Mr. Brennan. Why did you and the others believe that the contents of the Hunter Biden laptop would pose problems for Mr. Biden?

Mr. Brennan. The way it was being portrayed in the press was in a very negative light, because I knew that partisans, those who were getting involved in the election,

were going to use any opportunity to try to criticize --

Ms. Hageman. Let's talk about the contents --

Mr. Brennan. -- condemn, divide the Biden family --

Mr. Litt. Could you let him finish his answer?

Mr. Brennan. And I know this is typical in the political realm.

Ms. Hageman. Let's talk about the contents. Why did you believe that the contents of the Hunter Biden laptop would pose problems for Mr. Biden?

Mr. Brennan. I didn't know all of the contents in a that laptop. I know that they were starting to come out. Who knows what else would have been coming out.

Ms. Hageman. They were problematic for Mr. Biden. That's why you signed the letter, correct?

Mr. Brennan. No. What I'm saying is that they could have been problematic if, in fact, and, indeed, if the Russians were trying to push this information out in order to further their interest and objectives.

Ms. Hageman. And they could be problematic if they were true, correct?

Mr. Brennan. Again, that's a very hypothetical, because I don't -- didn't know the contents of the laptop that were going to be coming out.

Ms. Hageman. But we know it now, and the contents of that laptop --

Mr. Brennan. Well, you're talking about October --

Ms. Hageman. -- are a problem for Mr. Biden --

Mr. Litt. Let her finish.

Ms. Hageman. -- correct?

Mr. Brennan. Say that again.

Ms. Hageman. The contents of the Hunter Biden laptop are a problem for Mr. Biden, correct?



Mr. Brennan. I don't know the contents of the laptop.

Ms. Hageman. But you signed the letter not knowing the contents of the laptop?

Mr. Brennan. I signed the letter because I was concerned that this was part of a Russian information operation designed to influence the outcome of the 2020 election, just the way they did in 2016, to enhance the prospects of Donald Trump's election.

Ms. Hageman. And why would it be a Russian information campaign? Why would it be negative if the contents of that laptop were not a problem for Mr. Biden?

Mr. Brennan. It's traditional that the Russians will take any opportunity to amplify either accurate information or to try to embarrass candidates that they're trying to defeat in elections.

Ms. Hageman. The contents of the laptop were a problem for the Biden family. I believe that that's what you're saying.

Mr. Brennan. No, that's not what I said. I said I don't know the accuracy of the contents of that laptop. I haven't seen any type of formal government determination about the full contents of that laptop, what was accurate, what wasn't.

BY [REDACTED]

Q I mean, presumably, if the contents of the laptop were not authentic, the Hunter Biden camp would come out and say this is all fake; this isn't my laptop, right?

A I don't know. Presumably.

Q And you did mention that the contents of the laptop at least weren't helpful for the Biden campaign, correct?

A The way that some of these photos and other things that were plastered across different publications certainly were with the intention to try to discredit the Biden family as a whole and, therefore, undermine the candidacy of Joseph Biden.

Q But there's also emails about his business arrangements and some pretty

staggering business deals he was allowed to be a part of because he's related to the Vice President.

A Hunter Biden was not running for office. It was Joe Biden.

Q But if he's trading on his dad's name, I mean, that is something that is worthwhile for the American people to consider when they're casting their vote for President. Isn't that right?

A Trading on names is something that a lot of people have done in recent administrations as well.

Q But isn't that something the American people ought to consider and ought to have a chance to consider?

A I think they can do that.

Q And don't you think this letter served as an opportunity for Facebook and Twitter and some of the social media platforms to just ban coverage of the story entirely?

A I think that took place prior to the letter, the ban and then the reposting of --

Q But this letter gave it some real authority.

A It was a letter signed by private U.S. citizens.

Q Not just private U.S. citizens, former director of the CIA.

A Private U.S. citizens.

Q But private U.S. citizens with --

A With tremendous background experience on Russian information operations that, again, includes the gamut of activities.

Q But you would agree that there's a coefficient of credibility there on a letter like this, as opposed to a letter that was just put out by a bunch of --

Mr. Stewart. Counsel, should I ask?

BY MR. STEWART:

Q When you signed the letter, did you attach your previous positions to your name?

A I believe they were --

Q Does it say John Brennan --

A I believe they were included in that, yes.

Q -- previous CIA director?

A Yes.

Q And all the other signatures did as well.

You didn't sign it John Brennan nothing or John Brennan private citizen. You signed it John Brennan previous CIA director.

A They added my title, yes, to the letter.

██████████ It looks like our time is pretty much up.

██████████ We'll go off the record. Thank you.

██████████ We'll go off the record.

[Recess.]

██████████ All right. It is 11:30 in the morning. We can go back on the record.

BY ██████████

Q Mr. Brennan, good morning again. I'm ██████████ I'm the Democrat chief oversight counsel for the Judiciary Committee, and I'm joined by the general counsel for House Intelligence Committee.

And I also want to note for the record that we do have Mr. Goldman from New York has joined. He was not here at the beginning to introduce himself. He is in the room now.

I want to start out, in the last hour, you were asked about your statements with respect to the Helsinki Summit. Do you recall that?

A Yes, I do.

Q I want to introduce -- actually, could you summarize in your own words what happened at that summit in Helsinki?

A There was a joint press conference with Donald Trump and Vladimir Putin, and there was a question, I believe, that was raised about the intelligence community's assessment about Russian interference in the 2016 Presidential election that was directed to Donald Trump.

And at the time, he said that he -- I don't remember the exact words, but, basically, he believed Vladimir Putin rather than the U.S. intelligence community, that Russia did not interfere in the election.

Q Thank you.

A He said he saw no reason why they would, or something along those lines.

[Brennan Exhibit No. 4.

Was marked for identification.]

BY [REDACTED]

Q Thank you.

I want to introduce as exhibit 4 a July 16th, 2018, BBC article entitled, Trump sides with Russia against FBI at Helsinki summit.

Do you know if you've seen this article before?

A I might have read it at the time.

Q And I can give you a minute to look it over.

A Okay.

Q Okay. On the second page of this printout, there's a quote from Mr. Trump. About halfway down the page it says: At a news conference after the summit, President Trump was asked if he believed his own intelligence agencies or the Russian

President when it came to the allegations of meddling in the elections.

The quote is: "President Putin says it's not Russia. I don't see any reason why it would be," he replied, correct?

A Correct.

Q And then further on in the article there's criticism. It quotes U.S. House Speaker Paul Ryan. It quotes John McCain, Senator Lindsey Graham, Senator Chuck Schumer, DNI Dan Coats as well, correct, and others, I believe, down there further?

A Yes.

Q So it's fair that -- to say that those statements came under pretty broad bipartisan criticism, correct?

A Correct.

Q Mr. Brennan, also, in the earlier hour, the comment was made that Congress has a role to determine if public statements are true. Do you recall that being said?

A I do recall that being said.

Q Do you have an opinion on that statement?

A Yeah, I believe that I don't know anything in the Constitution that gives the Congress such a responsibility.

Q So you believe it's outside the scope of Congress' duty to --

A Yes. And, clearly, Congress has taken up that crusade over the years, although only selectively on the part of some partisans.

Q Also in the first hour, we discussed fairly extensively the timing of the October 19th, 2020, letter in relation to the Presidential debate. Do you recall that?

A Yes.

Q At the time that the letter was released, to your knowledge, was Mr. Morell a private citizen?

A He was.

Q Were you a private citizen?

A Yes, I was.

Q To your knowledge, were all of the other signatories also private citizens?

A To my knowledge, they were.

Q Would you agree that as a private citizen, you have a right to engage in the political process?

A An absolute right that is anchored in the First Amendment.

Q And do you agree that the First Amendment protected then and continues to protect your right to make statements like those contained in the letter?

A That's my firm belief and hope that it always will protect that right.

Q And do you believe that the other signatories also had a First Amendment right to make the statements that they made in that letter?

A Yes.

[Brennan Exhibit No. 5.

Was marked for identification.]

BY [REDACTED]

Q Okay. I want to introduce as exhibit 5 a February 7th, 2023, email thread between you and Michael Hayden.

Do you recall sending or participating in this email thread?

A Yes, I do.

Q In your initial response to Mr. Hayden, which is at the top of the second page, you said: I find Mr. Jordan's request for a transcribed interview and documentation related to my decision to sign a public statement, as a private citizen -- and that's boldfaced, italicized, and underlined -- a gross infringement on my

First Amendment right to freedom of speech.

Do you recall writing that?

A Yes, I do.

Q Could you explain what you meant by that?

A I just long believe that's one of the reasons why I served the government for nearly three and a half decades was to protect those freedoms and liberties of American citizens. And after my government tenure, I felt that as a private citizen, I had every right to express my views and to sign on to that letter.

Q You also expressed concern about creating a precedent that he, meaning Mr. Jordan, and others could seek to leverage when making frivolous requests of other former intelligence officials in the future. Could you explain what you meant by that?

A I felt that this was a clear effort to try to intimidate former professionals, either from the intelligence community or law enforcement or somewhere else, from putting forth any type of public commentary or statements that were contrary to the political interest of those individuals who were organizing this inquiry.

Q Do you think the fact that you're sitting here today, that you're being investigated for having participated in the political process by signing this letter as a private citizen could chill your willingness to sign similar letters in the future?

A Yes. And I finished up this email to Mike Hayden by saying: This issue involves a very important principle that potentially affects all former intelligence officials, and, accordingly, I want to proceed thoughtfully.

Because it's not just the former officials who signed this letter; it's all those other former officials, as well as future former officials, whether or not they're going to be intimidated by any efforts on the part of Members of Congress of any political background or stripe to try to get them to not express their personal views and their First

Amendment rights.

Q I want to move on. In the earlier -- in the first hour, there was some discussion of disinformation operations, and you also consistently used the term information operations or influence campaign. Could you explain your understanding of the difference between those two terms?

A Well, disinformation is considered to be the intentional dissemination of knowingly false information; disinformation. So you're trying to convince people of things that are -- that you know not to be true.

Misinformation, which is different than disinformation, is the dissemination of information that one might believe is accurate but, in fact, it is inaccurate.

Information operations on the part of intelligence services, such as the Russians, covers the broad gamut of the types of activities that they could be engaged in. Information operations might involve the propagation of disinformation. It might involve the propagation of information that could be embarrassing to a party that they're trying to discredit. It could involve the intentional efforts to disseminate some information more broadly and raise its profile.

The Russians are expert and adept at doing all of those things. And so sometimes it is -- when they hack into computer systems' networks and they steal emails and they push it out, like we've seen before, they can do that, and it might be, in fact, accurate; it might be inaccurate. They could redact it. They could modify it. They could change it.

So the Russians have engaged over the years, and my personal knowledge of that based on my intelligence background, that they have engaged in all aspects of information operations from amplifying true information, from disseminating information that they want to get out, to pushing out disinformation, fabricating information, in fact,



that they push out, again, to advance their interest.

Q And with respect to the amplification of true information, is that actually what we saw happen in 2016?

A Yes. There was -- when we say true information, they might want to amplify opinion pieces from some individuals who are casting aspersions on one candidate and lauding the credentials and capabilities of another. So it's not as though the content itself is accurate. It's though they're taking information that might have been developed or written on its own, or they might have asked for a piece to be written that was very one-sided and misrepresenting the facts. And what the Russians would do then is actually help the dissemination of propagation of that information.

Q And what's the Russians goal in disseminating or helping the propagation of that information?

A Well, in the U.S. Presidential election in 2016, it certainly was to discredit Hillary Clinton. The Russians believed, in fact, that Hillary Clinton was going to win the election, but then they realized that Donald Trump was going to have a better chance of winning if they helped with their information operations.

And so they were pushing out information that was seemingly to discredit Hillary Clinton and to advocate for Donald Trump. They did that in 2016, and, clearly, they were doing it again, according to Bill Evanina and other counterintelligence professionals, in the 2020 election as well.

Q In the earlier hour, you were asked about your responsibility to remain, I guess, nonpartisan as a former CIA director. Do you believe that in your role as the former director of the CIA, you also have a responsibility to warn the public of potential Russian influence operations?

A I participated in discussions in 2016 about how there could be a public

statement coming out from the executive branch that highlighted the Russian activities to interfere in the election. And so the CIA, as CIA director, I participated in those discussions. There was a statement that came out in October of 2016, that was signed by Homeland Security Secretary Jeh Johnson, as well as Director of National Intelligence Jim Clapper, that was a reflection of that concern. We pushed that out.

I also was the first U.S. official to brace the Russians when I confronted the head of the Russian FSB, the Federal Security Bureau, Alexander Bortnikov in early August of 2016, telling him that we knew what they were up to and they'd better cut it out because all Americans would be outraged by any type of Russian interference in the election.

Clearly, it was not the case because not all Americans were outraged by it. Those that were supportive of, I think, these Russian aims were willing to let it go by.

Q And I think you just referenced the October 2016 warning. I want to introduce that into the record as exhibit 6.

[Brennan Exhibit No. 6.

Was marked for identification.]

BY [REDACTED]

Q And let me know when you're ready to continue.

A Okay.

Q Is this the warning that you just referenced?

A Yes, it is.

Q Do you believe that this provided a detailed warning to American people about Russian interference in the 2016 election?

A It certainly raised the alarm about it. And this language was very carefully crafted so that it would be as accurate as possible about Russian efforts to interfere. It did -- it stopped short, though, of saying what the Russian basic intentions were.

Q And do you think it was covered by the media enough to disrupt the Russian operations prior to the 2016 election?

A As I recall, this was released on the same day as the, was it Entertainment Tonight release of the videotape of Donald Trump acknowledging that he groped women. So it was, unfortunately, almost overtaken by that.

Q So is it fair to say that this had a warning about Russian operations, but it didn't actually -- was not sufficient enough to stop those operations from impacting the election?

A I don't know to the extent to which they did impact the election, but I know that the information operations were quite intense and determined, and they were directed by Vladimir Putin and, again, designed to help Trump and hurt Clinton. And this statement didn't say they were designed to help Trump and hurt Clinton.

I think there was a real concern on the part of the Obama administration that President Obama, as being the sort of the titular head of the Democratic Party, not be seen as weighing in in any way in a Presidential election in favor of his preferred candidate.

[Brennan Exhibit No. 7.

Was marked for identification.]

BY [REDACTED]

Q And I want to turn to the 2017 Intelligence Community Assessment that came out in January after the election. I'll introduce this as Exhibit No. 7.

Are you familiar with this assessment?

A I'm quite familiar with it, yes.

Q Would you agree that this assessment has a clearer description of the Russian interference efforts than the October 7th warning did?

A It's a very comprehensive, thoughtful description and analysis of what the Russians were doing in that 2016 Presidential election, yes.

Q And it's certainly much more detailed than the October statement, correct?

A By a great extent, yes.

Q Do you think that that -- if this type of detailed information had been available prior to the 2016 election, that might have had an impact on the election?

A I think it certainly would have gained quite a bit more attention prior to the election. I'm sure the media and the press would have seized upon it and pushed it out, and so I believe the American people would have been much more aware of the full extent of those activities.

Q And why is it important for the American people to be aware of the extent of activities?

A Because I would like to think that Americans do not want any type of foreign entity government party to try to manipulate our system here in order to have a preferred candidate of a foreign power, particularly of an adversary, to be able to be elected President of the United States.

Q And is it fair to say that if the intelligence community doesn't inform them of those efforts, Americans can't have -- can't be aware of what's happening, right?

A I think there needs to be a very professional, legitimate, accurate description of this so that the average American is not confused by the different portrayals of it in the press that run the gamut from the far right to the far left. There needs to be objective, independent, apolitical, nonpartisan representation of the facts. And that's where the CIA, the FBI, the NSA, and the Office of Director of National Intelligence collaborated on this effort.

Q I want to turn to the letter itself and the text of the letter as well. You were

asked fairly extensively in the prior hour about the last paragraph on the first page, the --

A Yes.

Q -- such an operation would be consistent with Russian objectives. And I believe you referred to the Bill Evanina statement, and I want to introduce that for the record.

A Yes.

[Brennan Exhibit No. 8.

Was marked for identification.]

BY [REDACTED]

Q That's Exhibit No. 8, and I'm going to ask you to look through it. And we've highlighted a paragraph on the second page in particular.

Again, this came out on August 7th, 2020, and I'll read the highlighted paragraph into the record. It says: 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 Andrii 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.

Is that the paragraph you were referring to when you said that the Evanina assessment informed your decision to sign the letter?

A Yes.

Q Can you explain why that paragraph impacted your decision to sign the

letter?

A Well, when Michael asked me to sign this in October, I was just recently aware of the New York Post reports, but I had been following what the intelligence community, what the government was saying about Russian interference in the election because I had a personal interest to see whether or not the Russians were going to repeat what they did 4 years prior. And so, therefore, I was well aware of Evanina's comments and the concerns that he expressed on behalf of the counterintelligence executive security side.

Q And I think the comment was made in the earlier hour that there is no evidence to support that this was true. Do you recall that being said?

A I recall it and said that that's when I think I pointed out Mr. Evanina's statement.

Q Right. And I also want to introduce, for the record, the January 2021 assessment that supports this as well.

[Brennan Exhibit No. 9.

Was marked for identification.]

Mr. Goldman. Excuse me, [REDACTED] can I just follow up real quick?

Mr. Evanina held what position?

Mr. Brennan. He was the intelligence community's senior counterintelligence executive, and I think his title was director of the Counterintelligence and Security Center, which reports to the Director of National Intelligence.

Mr. Goldman. And under which administration was he working when he released this statement?

Mr. Brennan. This was during the Trump administration.

Mr. Goldman. Thank you.

BY [REDACTED]

Q So turning to what's been marked as Exhibit 9, which is the 2021 -- sorry. It's dated March 10, 2021. This is the unclassified version. I believe the classified version was released in January of that year.

On the Roman numeral II, it's the fourth page of the printout. Again, getting to the accuracy of this statement, the paragraph in the October 19, 2020, letter regarding the goal of the Russian operation to discredit President Biden and promote President Trump --

Mr. Litt. Just to be clear, you're talking about Key Judgment 2 here?

[REDACTED] Key Judgment 2, correct.

Key Judgment 2 says pretty clearly that: 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.

Correct?

A Yes.

Q So, in fact, this came out in March of '21. This supports Mr. Evanina's statement, correct?

A Absolutely, yes.

Q Are you aware of any intelligence community assessments or others that support Mr. Ratcliffe's assessment?

A About the laptop?

Q About the laptop, the assessment we were discussing earlier.

A I am unaware of any.

Q Okay. But the U.S. intelligence community has concluded that President Putin did order operations to interfere with the election to undermine former President Biden, now President Biden, and, thereby, help the candidacy of President Trump, correct?

A Yes. This is a formal U.S. Intelligence Community Assessment.

Q And so this paragraph in the letter was fully accurate, right?

A Yes, I believe so. It was certainly consistent with our concern.

Q The October 19th letter says: There are a number of factors that make us suspicious of Russian involvement.

It says suspicious of Russian involvement, right?

A Uh-huh.

Q And further down, it says: We want to emphasize that we do not know if the emails are true.

Correct?

A Correct.

Q And then, actually, on the very last page, it says: We don't know whether these press reports are accurate.

Right?

A Right.

Q So you were asked earlier about, you know, whether this letter was true and accurate or not, but you caveated it, and you said it actually -- you know, this is based on your assessment as an intelligence professional, but you don't have any nonpublic knowledge, right?

A I made that explicitly clear.

Q Okay.



A It's not just an inference in it. We said we didn't have evidence.

Q Okay. I want to go through a couple more paragraphs in this letter and assess their accuracy, in hindsight. It says at the top of the second page: Such an operation would be consistent with some of the key methods Russia has used in its now multiyear operation to interfere in our democracy.

And then it references hacking and dumping operations.

To your knowledge, is that an accurate statement?

A That is an accurate statement, yes.

Q And can you explain what that was in reference to?

A Over the course of a number of years, the Russians have attempted to interfere in our various elections, not just Presidential elections but others, and as it points out, it reflects a broad array of activities; hacking into systems' networks, databases, and then pushing out emails. So that's the part of the dumping of accurate information or the distribution of inaccurate or misinformation.

So, again, the Russians are quite adept at that type of activity, and I think, again, that was borne out by the Mueller investigation, as well as the assessments that were done by the intelligence community and the Senate Intelligence Committee.

Q Thank you.

And the Senate Intelligence report that you referenced, that was a bipartisan report, correct?

A It was unanimous bipartisan, yes.

Q Okay. And as you said, it did find that the Russians had engaged in a hacking and dumping operation in 2016, correct?

A Yes.

Mr. Goldman. Could I just add one thing?

BY MR. GOLDMAN:

Q Did you read the indictments by the -- the two indictments of -- by Special Counsel Mueller related to both the hacking and dumping operation?

A At the time, I did.

Q And the social media operation?

A Yes.

Q Obviously, indictments are merely allegations, but do you recall that those were several dozen pages each?

A I do recall that they were lengthy.

Q And are you aware that the special counsel's office would have, through law enforcement, unique abilities to investigate cyber operations that are not necessarily available to either Congress or any private citizens?

A Yes.

Q And did you find those indictments to be especially detailed and persuasive?

A I learned a lot more about Russian influence operations as a result of the Mueller report than I even knew during my time at the CIA because of, as you point out, the investigative authorities and procedures that were undertaken that exposed the range and extent and scope of those activities and those actions that warranted law enforcement and judicial investigation.

Q Is there any doubt in your mind that Russia attempted to interfere and influence the 2016 election?

A No doubt whatsoever.

Mr. Goldman. Thanks, Counsel.

[REDACTED] We are actually going to introduce, just so the record is complete, the indictment that Mr. Goldman was just referring to. This is case number 1:18-cr-32-DLF,

District of Columbia District Court. It's a 2018 case. We're introducing the indictment, which is Document No. 1 from that docket. And that will be Exhibit No. 10.

[Brennan Exhibit No. 10.

Was marked for identification.]

BY [REDACTED]

Q And I actually don't know that we have questions about this now, but I wanted to introduce it to complete the record in light of Mr. Goldman's questioning.

A As long as I don't have to read it now.

Q We'll let you take it home if you'd like.

Going on, again, looking at the accuracy of the letter as drafted, the second paragraph on the second page says: Such an operation is also consistent with several data points. The Russians, according to media reports and cybersecurity experts, targeted Burisma late last year for cyber collection and gained access to its emails.

Are you familiar with what Burisma is or was?

A Yes, I am.

Q Can you explain that for the record?

A Well, it's a Ukrainian entity that involved in energy.

Q And are you familiar with allegations that Burisma was hacked?

A Yes, I am aware, that it was an effort on the part of the Russians to hack into it to be able to expose information that they felt would be discrediting of their opponents.

Q And why was that a relevant data point to be referenced in this letter?

A At least according to the press reports at the time, there was an effort to discredit candidate Joe Biden by discrediting Hunter Biden and discrediting his role and involvement in Burisma, as well as the role of Joe Biden in the efforts to try to clean up

corruption inside of Ukraine and the ultimate dismissal of the prosecutor over there who was engaged in that corruption.

So, again, I think what the Russians were trying to do was to expose things that were going to support its allegations of wrongdoing.

Q So is it fair to say that by hacking Burisma, the Russians would have been trying to gather information that they could use against now President Biden?

A Yes. It's one of their tried and true methods, which is to go in and see what they can hack into, see what they can find. As I said, they will release information that they believe is discrediting that information, even if it's an inaccurate representation of what email they found. Sometimes they will redact; sometimes they will modify. They will selectively choose things, but they believe by going into people's systems, they can find things that are going to further their ends.

Q The next sentence in this paragraph continues: And Ukrainian politician and businessman Andrii 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.

I want to introduce -- I'm sorry. Are you familiar with who Andrii Derkach is?

A Yes.

Q What's your understanding of who Mr. Derkach is?

A As it says here, a 10-year Russian agent who was doing things on behalf of the Russians and had a variety of contacts in the West that he was able to exploit for Russian purposes.

Q Are you aware of the fact that Mr. Derkach was sanctioned by the U.S. Government?

A Yes.

Q And are you aware of when he was sanctioned?

A I don't recall off the top of my head.

[Brennan Exhibit No. 11.

Was marked for identification.]

BY [REDACTED]

Q We'll introduce as exhibit 11 the Treasury -- the September 10, 2020, release from the U.S. Department of the Treasury entitled, Treasury Sanctions Russia-Linked Election Interference Actors.

We've highlighted a statement in the middle of this paragraph. It says: Treasury designated Andrii Derkach, pursuant to Executive Order, E.O., 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 Service. 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.

Right?

A Uh-huh.

Q So Mr. Derkach was actually sanctioned in September 2020, over a month before the laptop was in the news, correct?

A Correct.

Q And the sanction in the document actually specifically said that he was sanctioned for trying to influence the 2020 U.S. Presidential election, right?

A Yes.

Q Can you explain -- and the sentence in the October 19th letter says that Mr. Derkach passed purported materials on Burisma and Hunter Biden to Giuliani. Is it

your understanding here that Giuliani is reference to Rudy Giuliani?

A Yes.

Q And who was Mr. Giuliani?

A Former mayor of New York who was an advisor, legal counsel, consigliere to Donald Trump.

Q Why would it have been concerning that Mr. Derkach who had been sanctioned for interfering in the 2020 election had passed information on to Mr. Giuliani?

A Well, obviously, since there was already a determination made that Mr. Derkach was a pawn of the Russians and he was working on their behalf within the Ukrainian Parliament system, that his relationship and passing information to Rudy Giuliani raised concerns. And as we said later in the letter, that there was concern that Rudy Giuliani himself was being targeted by Russia for the various influence operations. And so, therefore, again, this happened a month before this letter, so it stands to reason that the involvement of Mr. Derkach raised some serious, serious red flags about this material.

Q And in your opinion, the American public needed to know about this relationship between Mr. Derkach, who's a sanctioned actor, and Mr. Giuliani?

A That's what this statement tried to do, and that's one of the reasons why I signed onto this letter.

Q Okay. By making that information public, was it your hope that you could, you know, blunt any influence of the Russian efforts to pass information along?

A Yes, because by exposing it, you hope that you're going to help to thwart not only its continued propagation but also any belief in the accuracy of the information.

[Brennan Exhibit No. 12.

Was marked for identification.]

BY [REDACTED]

Q I want to turn to a Daily Beast article published October 17th, 2020, which is two days before your October 19th letter. It's a -- it relates a 1-hour long interview with Rudy Giuliani. It's entitled, Rudy: Only '50/50' Chance I Worked With a 'Russian Spy' to Dig Dirt on Bidens and Ukraine.

This is Exhibit No. 12. And let me know when you're ready to continue.

A Okay.

Q So we've highlighted a page -- I think it's on the last -- page number -- the last page -- that says: Giuliani viewed his latest leak to the New York Post -- referring to the Biden laptop leak -- as an extension of his years-long efforts to work with Ukrainians to dig up dirt on the Bidens.

Right?

A Yep.

Q So Mr. Giuliani, two days before your letter was made public, actually claimed credit for working with the Ukrainians, presumably Derkach, to leak this information to the Post, correct?

A Correct.

Q Would this information have supported the evidence -- your comments in the letter here about Andrii Derkach passing information along to Giuliani?

A It certainly would have, and did.

Q And would it have been concerning to you if Giuliani viewed the leak of the laptop as part of his ongoing work with Ukrainians to dig up dirt on the Bidens?

A It was, given that there was, even by his own acknowledgment, the 50/50 chance that it was a Russian spy that he was receiving information and material from. And so, again, it was clear that Mr. Giuliani was determined to do whatever he could to

try to dig up dirt on the Bidens as a way to help Mr. Trump, and he didn't care who he worked with, as he said.

Q And as an intelligence professional, is it concerning to you that a close advisor to President Trump was working with a sanctioned individual to dig up dirt in this way?

A Yes. And it has been my experience in the past, whenever the U.S. Government becomes aware of this and they think that a U.S. citizen is being unwittingly exploited or manipulated, that they would provide those citizens with a warning briefing. But it's clear that Mr. Giuliani was determined to, again, work with whomever in Ukraine, as well as, by extension, Russia, to find whatever material he could.

Q And are you aware that the White House actually was warned that Giuliani was a target of a Russian intelligence operation?

A It's my understanding that they were.

Q And do you know if the White House took any action in response to that warning?

A I don't know. I don't know.

Q Would it be concerning to you if the White House knew that and didn't take any action?

A I would like to think that responsible officials in the White House would fulfill their obligations to take some action and to make sure that individuals are warned about that so that they would not just, again, unwittingly be used as a pawn.

Q Are you familiar with an individual named Andriy Telizhenko?

A It's ringing a vague bell.

Q But you don't have -- sitting here today, you don't have any recollection of who he was?



A If you hum a few bars, I might know the song, but other than that, I just don't know.

BY MR. GOLDMAN:

Q Director Brennan, when you wrote -- when you signed onto this letter, you were aware that Rudy Giuliani had been publicly associating himself with Andrii Derkach for the prior year?

A That is my recollection, yes, that I was aware of it since it was no secret at the time.

Q Were you also aware that Andrii Derkach sent information to Republican members of the House Intelligence Committee?

A I don't know if I was aware of that or not.

Q And were you aware that he sent information to Senators Graham, Grassley, and Johnson as well?

A I don't recall being aware of that or when I was.

Q Do you have any knowledge about a similar warning that intelligence officials gave to Rudy Giuliani that was also provided to Senator Johnson?

A I remember reports of this in the press because I wasn't privy to any government information at the time.

Q Based on your understanding of Russian information operations, is it possible or does Russia and their intelligence services have the capability of altering a hard drive of a computer?

A Yes. I know that the Russians are able to navigate into networks and go into infrastructure and do some modifications.

Q So is it possible that they are capable of altering documents that are on a hard drive or creating a different hard drive with altered documents?

A Without getting into classified areas, it is my understanding that, yes, they do have that capability.

Q And they can also add documents to a hard drive?

A Yes, they can do that.

Q So it's quite possible for a hard drive to contain accurate and authentic materials as well as altered or additional materials?

A Yes. It all depends on the circumstances of the providence and the possession of the laptop as well as the laptop's access to WiFi systems and other things. And if it's connected, that connectivity gives Russian intelligence services tremendous capability to do things on that laptop.

Q And so, for example, you could take a hard drive of a laptop, download it, alter the materials, and put it either back on that hard drive or a different hard drive. Is that your understanding of one capability that Russian intelligence has?

A I'm not a technical expert, but, again, it is my appreciation, having worked on some of these issues with the technical experts who understand, in depth, the Russian capabilities, that they can get into computer systems and hard drives and do things to them that will alter, modify, delete the contents on those hard drives.

Q And so when you signed this letter -- let me just summarize what you understand -- understood.

You understood that Andrii Derkach was a longtime Russian agent working for Russian intelligence services, that he had been collaborating with Rudy Giuliani, that Rudy Giuliani was the sole source of the materials that were provided to the New York Post, and -- is that correct?

A Yes.

Q Were you aware at that time that Rudy Giuliani did not want to provide the

hard drive to any other media outlets than the New York Post?

A I don't know if I was aware of it at that time. I just know that it was provided to the Washington Post -- or to the New York Post.

Q And did you subsequently learn that Giuliani said on the record to The New York Times that he did not want anyone to do an analysis of the hard drive prior to its publication in the New York Post?

A I am aware of those reports.

Q So when you say that these emails have all the hallmarks of a Russian information operation, the classic earmarks of a Russian information operation, those were all factors that influenced your -- that -- your conclusion of that. Is that correct?

A Yes. I was very concerned about what might have happened when that laptop was out of the possession of Hunter Biden and who might have had access to it and what they might have done.

Q And just so the record is clear, you're talking about once Hunter Biden -- once the laptop was out of his control. But you are aware that there can be multiple copies of the contents of that laptop that are made. Is that correct?

A Yes.

Q And is it your understanding, then, what Mr. Giuliani possessed was a hard drive copy of the laptop, that he didn't actually possess the laptop itself, which was in the possession of the FBI?

A Again, I don't know what I was aware of at the time when I signed the letter and when the FBI took possession of the actual laptop itself.

Q Are you aware that the source of the laptop has stated that he believes that the hard drive that he provided to Mr. Giuliani may have been altered?

A Yes, I'm aware of that.

Q Are you aware of The Washington Post analysis that was done that indicates that the hard drive has been altered?

A Yes, I'm aware of that.

Q Okay. You had mentioned your familiarity with the hacking of Burisma. That was the subject of an impeachment investigation, or Burisma was, and I'm curious whether you understood, either from the impeachment investigation or anything that happened during your tenure or after, that the effort to -- the effort by President Trump to convince Ukrainian President Zelensky to investigate Burisma was consistent with Russian propaganda and/or intelligence efforts.

A I think they were reinforcing of one another in terms of looking for information that the Trump campaign could use in his reelection, yes, absolutely.

Q And you do recall that President Trump withheld military assistance from Ukraine in an effort to extort President Zelensky and force him to open these investigations. Is that right?

A Yes, I am.

Q Okay. Were you aware of how important that military assistance was to Ukraine in their war at the time against Russia?

A Absolutely. I've worked very closely with the Ukrainians during my tenure, and I knew that it was vital for the Ukrainians to be able to maintain its defenses against Russia.

Q And we have now seen that play out in spades. Is that right?

A Yes.

Mr. Goldman. Okay. I have no more questions. Thank you.

BY [REDACTED]

Q I just want to go back to the questions about Giuliani quickly. We talked

through the evidence prior to the election suggesting that Giuliani and Derkach were working to interfere in the election. I just want to turn back to the January -- the 2021 Intelligence Community Assessment real quick to close that out.

We talked through the first sentence or the first couple sentences of Key Judgment 1. But the last --

Mr. Litt. Can you hang on for one second?

██████████ Sorry. I'm sorry. That's Exhibit No. 9.

BY ██████████

Q The last sentence of that Key Judgment 2 reads: 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.

We talked through the sanctions against Mr. Derkach. Do you think it's fair to classify Mr. Derkach as a Russian intelligence proxy pushing influence narratives?

[12:20 p.m.]

Mr. Brennan. Yes. "Proxy" is one term, I guess.

BY [REDACTED]

Q Do you have another that you --

A A "fully recruited asset" is another.

Q And, to your knowledge, was Rudy Giuliani an individual close to former President Trump and his administration?

A That is my understanding.

Q So this last sentence of the assessment actually would fit that fact pattern, correct?

A Correct.

Q Okay.

We only have a couple minutes left.

Director Brennan, did you send this letter or decide to join this letter at the direction of anyone in the intelligence community, meaning in the intelligence community in 2020?

A Absolutely not.

Q Did you have any conversations with anybody then in the intelligence community?

A No.

Q Did you access any classified information?

A No. I was not in good odor with the Trump administration at the time, and they had prohibited me from accessing classified information. So I really had no interaction with the intelligence community.

Q So, to the extent that there have been allegations that you or, I guess, others

who signed the letter somehow colluded with the intelligence community to send this letter, that's not true?

A I certainly had no engagement with them at all.

Q Okay.

And the text of the letter itself doesn't actually endorse any Presidential candidate, correct?

A That's correct.

Q In fact, the closing line says that it's "high time that Russia stops interfering in our democracy," right?

A Yes.

Q And you said earlier that your goal in joining the letter was to make these Russian interference efforts known, correct?

A Expose them, yes.

Q So that line actually directly matches up with your explanation of your reasons for signing the letter, correct?

A Yes.

Q Okay.

I think I have time for about a handful of more questions before our time is up.

You were asked in the earlier hour about social media companies' decision to limit the spread of the New York Post article. Do you recall that?

A Yes.

Q And I think you referenced that happening before you signed the letter?

A That's my recollection.

Q I want to talk through that timeline just in a little bit more detail.

Again, the letter that you joined was published on October 19, 2020, correct?

A Okay.

Q Are you familiar with the date that Twitter -- with the date that Twitter limited the sharing of links to the New York Post story about the laptop?

A It's my understanding that it happened prior to, but I don't know the exact date.

Q Okay.

I'm going to introduce as -- we're out of exhibit stickers -- as exhibit 13 a New York Times story published on October 16, 2020, entitled "In Reversal, Twitter Is No Longer Blocking New York Post Article."

[Brennan Exhibit No. 13.

Was marked for identification.]

BY [REDACTED]

Q Have you seen this before?

A I'm a subscriber and a reader of The New York Times, so I probably saw it at the time.

Q Okay.

So, according to this article, by October 16th, following pressure from Republicans, Twitter permitted its users to freely share the New York Post story, correct?

A Okay. Yeah, uh-huh.

Q And so that was actually 3 full days before you did anything with the letter, correct?

A Right. Uh-huh.

Q So, to the extent that there was a suggestion made earlier that you joining this letter could've added some gravitas that would've led a social media company to take some steps in regard to it, that actually had happened, come and gone, well before you



signed the letter, correct?

A Yes.

Q Okay.

Mr. Goldman. Director Brennan, I just want to go back to this Daily Beast article, the "50/50"-Rudy article.

Mr. Litt. Can you give him a chance to get it?

Mr. Goldman. Yeah.

So, in the first highlighted piece, it says: Asked whether he was concerned if the materials he obtained might in some way be linked to the hacking of Burisma that was an act attributed to Russian intelligence, Rudy Giuliani said, "Wouldn't matter. What's the difference?"

What's your reaction to seeing that?

Mr. Brennan. I'm not surprised that that was Rudy Giuliani's view, because it was my impression that he was willing to resort to any source or material that would, again, advance his and Donald Trump's interests. I find it outrageous and disgraceful but, again, not surprising.

Mr. Goldman. All right.

And, above, it says that the -- in the first long paragraph -- I will just read it. It says -- well, it -- sorry. At the top, it says: "The president knows all about this," Giuliani said, adding that he had briefed Trump on the 'general' parameters of the files.

"But the Hunter Biden material, Giuliani also revealed, wasn't just pre-screened with Trump. He also said that top Republicans on Capitol Hill had been looped into the matter. The president's lawyer said the computer store repairman who claims to have received Hunter Biden's laptop in 2019 alerted several lawmakers on Capitol Hill, including Sen. Ron Johnson and others. 'Jim Jordan. People like that,' Giuliani said,

adding that he 'believed' Rep. Devin Nunes had also received the materials."

What's your reaction to the fact that materials that Giuliani had obtained and had been working with a Russian agent also made their way to Members of Congress and the Senate?

Mr. Brennan. It shows the political effort to, again, do whatever they could to get their candidate elected. And, again, I find it unsurprising that things like this are shared among like-minded individuals, including in Congress.

Mr. Goldman. Director Brennan, are you aware of an ongoing investigation by the House majority that is attacking law enforcement and the intelligence community for what they claim to be a violation of the First Amendment by, quote/unquote, "censoring" social media companies?

Mr. Brennan. I seem to be vaguely aware of something along those lines, but I'm not --

Mr. Goldman. Right.

Mr. Brennan. -- tracking it.

Mr. Goldman. Well, just to give you a background -- and I don't think any of my colleagues on the other side of the aisle will dispute it -- there is an ongoing investigation among several committees that asserts that Americans' First Amendment rights are being violated because law enforcement agencies and the intelligence community are trying to prevent the further interference in our elections by foreign actors through social media, just as we have talked about they did in 2016.

And I wonder if, hearing that, you find it ironic that you are here, being hauled before Congress, to testify about a letter that you wrote as a private citizen under your First Amendment rights?

Mr. Brennan. Well, as my counsel said at the opening, he and I have questions

about the legitimate legislative interest in terms of this inquiry. I do believe that there are more worthwhile things for Congress to be doing right now and addressing. And calling me and other former intelligence professionals before this inquiry, I think, does a disservice to the Congress, does a disservice to the intelligence community, and is unnecessary while other matters can and need to be addressed.

Mr. Goldman. Does it do a disservice to the First Amendment?

Mr. Brennan. I believe it does. And as we referenced before, Chairman Jordan made a very impassioned and public defense of the importance of the First Amendment and people being able to express their views. And so that I find a bit ironic.

And so, again, I am doing this voluntarily because I respect the institution of Congress. I think it's critically, critically important for the functioning of our government. But I do take issue with the effort to, again, have this inquiry directed against private citizens who signed on to a letter in their private capacity.

Mr. Goldman. Thank you.

██████████ And we can go off the record. It's 12:29.

[Recess.]

██████████ Do you want to go first?

██████████ Yeah.

BY ██████████

Q Let's go back to the Daily Beast article, No. 12, exhibit No. 12.

There was a question raised last round that referred to Mr. Jordan.

A Uh-huh.

Q Top of page 3: "But the Hunter Biden material, Giuliani also revealed, wasn't just pre-screened with President Trump. He also said that top Republicans on Capitol Hill had been looped into the matter. The president's lawyer said the computer

store repairman who claims to have received Hunter Biden's laptop in 2019 alerted several lawmakers on Capitol Hill, including Sen. Johnson and others. 'Jim Jordan. People like that.'"

Do you have any awareness of whether that's true?

A No, I do not.

Q Okay. And I'll just represent for the record that, you know, the Jordan office didn't get the laptop. But the fact that the Daily Beast would report this isn't surprising.

BY [REDACTED]

Q Director Brennan, I want to talk to you about the CIA's Prepublication Classification Review Board.

Are you familiar with the CIA's, we'll call it PCRB, if you're okay with that?

A Yes, I am.

Q And what does the CIA's PCRB do?

A It reviews material to be published for classification review to ensure that no classified information is released into public domain if it has not already been declassified.

Q So, if you release anything publicly, do you personally have to submit items to the PCRB?

A Yes, I have numerous times.

Q How many items do you think you've submitted to the PCRB?

A After my first retirement, I submitted maybe, in 2005, 2008, maybe a half-dozen pieces. Since then, I submitted my manuscript for my memoir as well as the additional chapter for my paperback. And I've had maybe a half-dozen or so op-eds that I have submitted too.

Q And what is the process like for, like, an op-ed review by the PCRB?

A You submit it to the PCRB, and you will frequently say that, you know, I'm planning to submit to this to a publication -- maybe it's a journal or something -- and, you know, I'd like to get it back by next week. Or, if something is particularly timely and topical and you're trying to get it released quickly, you can say, I really would appreciate if it can be reviewed as quickly as possible.

Q And what has been your experience with, for instance, an op-ed -- what's the normal timeframe for that approval?

A I've had reviews done within hours. A lot depends on the contents of it and if there's any reference to classified information in it. But I have submitted op-eds in the morning and gotten it back by the end of the day.

Q Uh-huh. And in all of your experiences with the PCRB, how do you normally communicate and correspond with the PCRB?

A Well, for short pieces, like an op-ed or something, you will submit it via email, and they'll get back to you, saying, "We are in receipt of it, and we'll get back to you as soon as possible."

Q Uh-huh.

A And then you'll hear back from them either with full approval or some type of conditional approval if something is changed or something is taken out.

For a longer piece, like for my memoir, I had several sit-down sessions with the PCRB staff as we reviewed material, and they were raising questions about why did I say this was unclassified, and I was able to bring open-source information about it. And so sometimes there's a negotiation, a debate back and forth.

But, again, it depends on the contents, it depends on the length, in terms of how quickly they turn things around.

Chairman Jordan. How long did it take for your book, for your manuscript, when you first submitted it and then when you got the okay?

Mr. Brennan. Oh, I'd have to get back to you on that, but it was probably --

Chairman Jordan. Months?

Mr. Brennan. It was over a month.

Chairman Jordan. Okay.

Mr. Brennan. Yeah. So I submitted --

Chairman Jordan. How many interim -- so, over a month, how many of those interim discussions during that timeframe did you have with --

Mr. Brennan. I think I had maybe two sit-down sessions and a series of telephone conversations and email exchanges. But, again, my memoir is, you know, 350 pages or so.

Chairman Jordan. Yeah.

Mr. Brennan. It was lengthy.

Chairman Jordan. But -- so a number -- multiple interactions with them as they're approving it or gonna give it the thumbs-up?

Mr. Brennan. Right. But most of my op-eds -- I don't think any of my op-eds that I wrote since my last retirement I had any type of objection to.

Chairman Jordan. Okay.

Mr. Brennan. It was --

Chairman Jordan. What's customary for an op-ed? You said --

Mr. Brennan. It can be the same day. It can be the following day. Or --

Chairman Jordan. What's typical?

Mr. Brennan. Well, again, sometimes you ask for it quickly. Sometimes --

Chairman Jordan. Have you done that? Have you asked for it -- said, this needs

to happen quickly?

Mr. Brennan. Yeah, you can do that.

Chairman Jordan. Have you? I'm asking, have you in some of the op-eds you put together?

Mr. Brennan. I did one, I know, on Saudi Arabia, Mohammed Salman and his -- I think it was the Khashoggi killing or something, that I wanted it to be turned around pretty quickly. So I think that might've been the only one.

Chairman Jordan. And what was the motivation for asking for a quick turnaround?

Mr. Brennan. Because there was interest on the part of the press. I think it was either The Washington Post or The New York Times that, in fact, they asked whether I'd be interested in writing an op-ed on it.

Chairman Jordan. And they had a deadline?

Mr. Brennan. As I recall, there was an interest in getting it done that day or the following day.

Chairman Jordan. Any others that you've requested, that you asked be approved quickly?

Mr. Brennan. I don't recall.

Chairman Jordan. So it's fair to say, one time you asked on an op-ed for it to be done quickly, and the reason you asked for it was because the media outlet that was gonna publish it wanted it done quickly.

Mr. Brennan. Was interested in having it done to go with the news reporting that was --

Chairman Jordan. Okay.

BY [REDACTED]

Q And are you aware that Mr. Morell sent the public statement to the CIA's PCRB?

A I saw in one of the emails that you provided earlier that you said it was going to be submitted. I've had a conversation with Michael in the past about the PCRB and his experience, because he did a memoir as well.

Q Uh-huh.

A And Michael knowing well the CIA rules and regulations, I was confident that he was going to do it the right way.

Q And so you were confident that the public statement in some form would be sent to the PCRB for prepublication review before it was published?

A Yes.

Q And in his email to the PCRB, Mr. Morell described the statement as a "rush job." Were you aware of that?

A If it was in the email that you showed me earlier, I am now aware of it. I wasn't aware of it at the time.

Q And do you think this was an attempt to get the statement approved quickly?

A Well, I think if he was trying to get it out quickly, that's what he was suggesting there.

Q Uh-huh.

Do you know if the CIA's PCRB made any edits or said something was classified and should be removed?

A I have no idea.

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



A No. I have heard rumors to that effect. I was certainly unaware of it at the time.

Q So you didn't have any conversations with anyone at the CIA or any former officials who said that they were asked to sign on by the PCRB?

A I was not talking to the CIA at that time. They were not talking to me, I should say.

Q Uh-huh.

And it has been represented to us, the committees, by Mr. David Cariens -- do you know who Mr. Cariens is?

A [Nonverbal response.]

Q He told the committee of his interactions with the PCRB in regards to the book that he was seeking to publish. He had sent it to the PCRB for review. And he told us that when the person in charge of reviewing the book from the PCRB called to say it was approved with no changes, he was told about the draft letter, and the person asked him if he would be willing to sign on.

Were you aware of that before --

A No.

Q -- this interview today?

A No.

Q What's your reaction to that?

A I don't know about the context of that conversation, what actually was said on one side or the other. I just have heard what you're saying now.

Q Uh-huh.

A Usually the PCRB will review something purely for classification purposes for the document or manuscript that was submitted and get back to you.

So I don't know whether or not -- this individual's name is "Carens" or --

Q David Cariens, yes.

A Cariens. Okay. If he knew the person in the PCRB, a former colleague, whatever, of his, a separate conversation, I don't know. So I don't want to speculate as to what actually might have been the context for that.

Q Do you think it's appropriate for an active CIA employee to be asking former employees to sign on to a statement that was pretty political to be used in a political debate?

A I don't believe that an active CIA officer should be soliciting support for a public statement that is being signed by former officials.

Q And I believe we discussed during the first hour kind of the process for disseminating the public statement to the media and that Mr. Shapiro was kind of spearheading that effort. Did you play any role in that effort?

A No.

Q Once the statement was released, did you do any press or media interviews regarding the public statement?

A I did not at my initiative at all. I think there were a couple of interviews when I was asked about it. I think there was a Washington Post podcast where David Ignatius asked me about it. But I did nothing as far as tweeting, I did nothing as far as promoting it or raising it in any of the many media interviews that I did.

Q Do you remember any of the context surrounding what you may have said at the podcast with Mr. Ignatius?

A I remember --

Mr. Litt. What kind of context do you mean?

BY [REDACTED]

Q The context of the content of the discussion on the podcast or what he may have asked you about the statement.

A I have a vague memory of it. And if you want to show me it, I will look at it and respond to it. But I'm not going to guess at what it is that either I said or that he said.

Q And so Politico ultimately ran the story regarding the public statement on October 19th and published an article and the statement. Did you read the Politico article when it came out?

A I might have.

Q Yeah. We'll enter that as exhibit No. 14, I believe.

[Brennan Exhibit No. 14.

Was marked for identification.]

BY [REDACTED]

Q Have you had sufficient time to review?

A I remember now this article. But, again, your question was whether I read it at the time. I don't know. I was busy with the publication of my memoir.

Q But up to this point you've had a chance to read it. Is that correct?

A Yes. Yes.

Q And so the title of the article -- and this was, just for the record, published on October 19, 2020, at 10:30 p.m. Eastern Time. The title of the article says, "Hunter Biden story is Russian disinfo, dozens of former intel officials say."

What was your reaction to that title?

A I don't know. My reaction now is that that's not what the letter said.

Q Uh-huh.

A It didn't say it was disinformation.

Q Because I know that you've testified here today that the letter does not say that it's Russian disinfo, did it give you any pause that this was the title of the article and this was what was being said and conveyed to the American public?

A Again, this is 2-1/2 years ago. I don't know what my reaction was at the time. I was consumed with other things that were going on. If I read this, I'm certain that I would have thought to myself, that's not what the letter said, because that's not what the letter said.

Q So is it accurate to say that you didn't reach out to Politico to correct the record and say that the letter did not say that it was Russian disinfo?

A That is accurate.

Mr. Gaetz. Mr. Brennan, at this time, were you working for any media outlets?

Mr. Brennan. In 2020? Yes, I believe I was a consultant with NBC and MSNBC. Yes.

Mr. Gaetz. And were those the only networks you appeared on pursuant to your consulting agreement with them?

Mr. Brennan. It's an exclusive consulting agreement with them, but I do have a proviso in the contract that for publications I'm able to appear on other networks as well. And that's why I think at this time I think I appeared on several others -- CNN --

Mr. Gaetz. So you were promoting your memoir?

Mr. Brennan. Yes.

Mr. Gaetz. And so, in the promotion of your memoir, did you ever get questions about your participation in this letter?

Mr. Brennan. I don't recall getting questions about it. Again, I -- and I didn't --

Mr. Gaetz. So you were working for NBC News. This letter comes out. It's one of the biggest stories in the world. Politico is writing about it. And NBC News

never asked you to come on their network and discuss it?

Mr. Brennan. I don't recall ever being invited by them to do this. And I guess it's a matter of record in terms of my public appearances there, but --

Mr. Gaetz. Well, if we asked you to produce any documents with any correspondence with anybody at NBC News discussing the contents of this, would that be something you'd be in possession, custody, or control of?

Mr. Brennan. I may or may not be, because I will delete emails after, you know, some period of time.

Mr. Gaetz. Are your emails set to an auto-delete feature?

Mr. Brennan. No.

Mr. Gaetz. Some are. That's why I ask.

So any emails that are deleted in your system are emails you've manually deleted; they're not emails that just atrophy over some term of days?

Mr. Brennan. Generally. I --

Mr. Gaetz. And who's your email provider?

Mr. Brennan. Gmail.

Mr. Gaetz. Do you have any other email providers other than Google?

Mr. Brennan. No.

Mr. Gaetz. And would you ever receive communications from NBC News via text message?

Mr. Brennan. There have been occasions for a fast appearance on a program, yeah.

Mr. Gaetz. And do you recall if you were ever texted regarding NBC News's desire to have you provide commentary on this letter?

Mr. Brennan. I don't recall ever being asked about it.

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

Mr. Brennan. My -- AT&T.

Mr. Gaetz. And you have only one cell phone?

Mr. Gaetz. Yes, I do.

Mr. Gaetz. Thank you.

Thank you, [REDACTED]

BY [REDACTED]

Q And I know we've spoken about this before, but days later, after the statement comes out, on October 22nd, is the final Presidential debate between President Trump and then-candidate Biden. And then Biden did, in fact, use the statement as a talking point during the debate.

Do you remember that?

A Yes, I do.

Q Did you watch the debate or read any reporting surrounding the debate?

A I presume I watched the debate as well as read the reporting around it.

Q And, during the debate, Vice President Biden stated, "Look, there are 50 former national intelligence folks who said that what this, he's accusing me of, is a Russian plan. They have said this has all the characteristics -- four -- five former heads of the CIA, both parties, say what he's saying is a bunch of garbage. Nobody believes it except him and his good friend Rudy Giuliani."

Do you kind of remember that that's what Biden said at the debate?

A I do remember reading about that.

Q What did you think of his statement?

A I don't know what I thought of it at the time.

Q What do you think of it now?

A I think it did not fully, accurately represent what we said in the statement.

Q And what was inaccurate about candidate Biden's statement?

A Read it again.

Q It says, "Look, there are 50 former national intelligence folks who said that what this, he's accusing me of, is a Russian plan. They have said that this has all the characteristics -- four -- five former heads of the CIA, both parties, say what he's saying is a bunch of garbage. Nobody believes it except him and his good friend Rudy Giuliani."

A When he says that it has all the characteristics, that was, I think, an accurate reflection of it. But when he said that it is a Russian plan or whatever -- garbage. That's not what we said in there.

Q Did you make any statements at the time to distance yourself from the remarks of candidate Biden?

A No.

Chairman Jordan. Do you feel like you got played?

Mr. Brennan. Chairman Jordan, I have been in Washington for 40-some-odd years. I am used to intelligence and intelligence professionals being used by both sides of the aisle for political, partisan purposes. I have been condemned by both sides of the aisle.

And so, therefore, I am not surprised at all that anything that an intelligence professional does or says is going to be used by one side or the other to advance its political interests.

Mr. Gaetz. But did candidate Biden misuse this letter in the debate?

Mr. Brennan. I'm not going to characterize his use or misuse of it. I'm just saying that what he said was not an accurate reflection of what the statement said.

Mr. Gaetz. And earlier today you testified that one of the very reasons that you

signed this letter was to ensure that the information in the debate would be accurate.

Do you recall that testimony?

Mr. Brennan. I recall saying I wanted to make sure that the American public was aware of Russian efforts to interfere in the election with influence operations.

Mr. Gaetz. No, I -- that was a separate basis you had. But in listing out, earlier today, your respective bases for signing this letter, one of the bases was that you wanted the debate to be an environment with the most accurate information, and you thought this letter would advance the accuracy of that discussion.

Do you recall that testimony?

Mr. Brennan. Yes.

Mr. Gaetz. And so, since the manifestation of the letter in the debate, we all now acknowledge, was inaccurate as to the point you just referenced -- then-candidate Biden's claim that the laptop was disinformation -- why did the same motivations that drove you to sign the letter for the sake of accuracy in the debate not similarly motivate you to correct the inaccurate use of this product you had signed?

Mr. Brennan. Because I was not going to get into a proactive effort to try to clarify publicly what it was that candidate Biden and other people said about it. It was out in the public domain; people can do what they want with it. But I was not interested in actually carrying out actions that were going to lead to further discussion, debate on it.

I agreed to sign the letter. That was the extent of my involvement. And I didn't want to follow up with it with any type of, you know, corrective action that I thought was my responsibility, because I didn't think it was my responsibility.

Mr. Gaetz. Do you think it undermines your position that you care so deeply about accuracy in debates, that you then subsequently withdrew from the discussion for



the reasons you just mentioned?

Mr. Brennan. No, I don't think so. I'm sure, Congressman, there have been many times that your words have been misrepresented one way or another. I'm sure that you haven't taken every opportunity to correct it, because that would be a full-time job, I'm sure.

Mr. Gaetz. Well, if anybody ever misrepresented something I said in a Presidential debate, I would probably take that opportunity. It seems like a pretty high-profile moment in our national politics.

Mr. Brennan. And if I was the sitting CIA Director, I certainly would have. I was a private citizen, one of 51, who signed on to this statement.

And, in the past, members of the Cabinet and others have corrected things that have been said by Presidents. But as, again, a private citizen, I just didn't feel that that was my responsibility.

Mr. Gaetz. Isn't the reason you didn't correct it because you wanted Joe Biden to win the election and you didn't want to say anything that was contrary to his commentary in the debate?

Mr. Brennan. Is that a question?

Mr. Gaetz. Yeah.

Mr. Brennan. That's your interpretation.

Mr. Gaetz. No, it's a question. My question is, isn't the reason you chose not to --

Mr. Brennan. I made no conscious decision not to engage in it. It was something -- I was -- I had other things going on at the time, and so I was not going to pursue this.

Mr. Gaetz. You had other things going on when you agreed to sign the letter,

didn't you?

Mr. Brennan. Yes. And I agreed to sign it. That was the extent of my involvement.

Mr. Gaetz. But you are now testifying that it was misused and you felt no obligation because you were retired.

Do you still hold a security clearance?

Mr. Brennan. I have held a security clearance, Top Secret/SCI, ever since August of 1980.

Mr. Gaetz. Do you think that holding that security clearance imposes an obligation on you to not have your statement mischaracterized --

Mr. Brennan. No.

Mr. Gaetz. -- for political purposes?

Mr. Brennan. No, there's no obligation that goes along with your classification, your security clearances.

Mr. Gaetz. No obligation?

Mr. Brennan. No.

Mr. Gaetz. Should -- do you -- strike that.

Mr. Brennan. As a private citizen? No, there's no obligation whatsoever.

And my security clearances are held by the government for the government's benefit, not for mine. I don't use my security clearances for anything.

Mr. Gaetz. You don't think that your media contracts are more valuable to the people paying you because you have a security clearance?

Mr. Brennan. No. I don't access classified information. The only time I do that is when the CIA or the government calls me in to engage in a classified discussion, just the way, when I was the CIA Director, I would call some of my predecessors to say,

"Hey, you dealt with this Russian official. How did you deal with him?" or, "Review this."

There's no benefit to me of my security clearances. It's to the benefit of the government.

Mr. Gaetz. When somebody holds a security clearance and they make a public statement about intelligence and foreign disinformation, interference in elections, do you think the imprimatur of that security clearance imposes a greater duty to the truth than someone who doesn't hold such a clearance?

Mr. Brennan. Yes. And that's why, when I signed this letter, I was a firm believer in the contents of this letter raising the prospect that what we saw related to the Hunter Biden laptop was part of a Russian information operation designed to influence the election.

Mr. Gaetz. Director, we've already plowed that ground. Now we're talking about the misuse of that letter in a Presidential debate.

I'll represent to you that your friend, Mr. Morell, testified or provided information to the committee that he knew that in the debate there would not be nuance. He knew precisely how it would be used.

Did he ever share that with you?

Mr. Brennan. No.

Mr. Gaetz. If he had shared with you that he understood that this would be used in a debate for the very reason Joe Biden used it, would that have deterred you from signing it?

Mr. Brennan. He didn't, and, therefore, it's a hypothetical.

Mr. Gaetz. Yeah. We ask hypotheticals all the time, Director.

Mr. Brennan. Yeah, I know.

Mr. Gaetz. We're in the process of doing an investigation about --

Mr. Brennan. And I know why you're asking a leading question like that, so I would give you an answer that you want or that you could use.

Mr. Gaetz. I just want you to answer truthfully, Mr. Director.

Mr. Brennan. I am.

Mr. Gaetz. If you'll turn to exhibit 7 --

Chairman Jordan. Can I just ask one question --

Mr. Gaetz. Certainly.

Chairman Jordan. -- along the same line as Mr. Gaetz?

So, Director, you said you didn't want to take the proactive step of -- after Mr. Biden used it in a false way in the debate, you didn't want to take the proactive step to correct it.

But you obviously took the proactive step in initiating the letter and getting that into the public debate. I think that's --

Mr. Brennan. I didn't initiate the letter.

Chairman Jordan. No, but you signed the letter. Excuse me. Fair enough.

But you took that proactive step in signing on to the letter. I think that's the contradiction we're concerned about as well.

Mr. Brennan. I was responding to a request to sign it. Again, I didn't initiate it. It wasn't proactive on my part.

Michael showed me the letter. I read it. I believed it was an accurate representation of the concerns about Russian interference in the election with influence operations. That was the extent of my engagement with it.

Mr. Gaetz. In exhibit 7 -- you testified that this document's one of the bases that you had to sign the letter, right?

Mr. Brennan. Which one is this?

Mr. Litt. The ICA.

Mr. Brennan. The ICA. Exhibit 7.

██████████ Yeah, it's 7, the 2017 one.

Mr. Brennan. Yeah.

Mr. Gaetz. All right. If you'll turn to page 2, there's a subsection with the heading "Determining Attribution in Cyber Incidents."

Mr. Brennan. On page 2? Not Roman numeral ii, regular page 2.

Mr. Litt. It's the second page.

Mr. Gaetz. What's marked as page 2. It's the third page of the exhibit, but --

Mr. Brennan. Oh, yeah. Okay. Yes.

Mr. Gaetz. So there's a section with the subheading "Determining Attribution of Cyber Incidents."

Mr. Brennan. Got it.

Mr. Gaetz. And the second sentence in that subsection reads, "Every kind of cyber operation, malicious or not, leaves a trail."

What trail did the Russians leave regarding the Hunter Biden laptop?

Mr. Brennan. Again, we didn't say definitively that it was.

Mr. Gaetz. Are you aware of any trail that the Hunter Biden --

Mr. Brennan. And this is talking about a cyber operation here, as opposed to an influence information operation.

Mr. Gaetz. Well, sure, but an operation can be both a cyber operation and an influence operation.

Mr. Brennan. Right, but not all information operations are cyber operations.

Mr. Gaetz. Right, but some are.

Mr. Brennan. Yes.

Mr. Gaetz. So my question here is, since the laptop is a laptop -- or, do you have personal knowledge of any trail left by Russians regarding the Hunter Biden laptop?

Mr. Brennan. I don't have access to either intelligence or law enforcement information that might, in fact, reveal that. I've been a private citizen since 2017.

Mr. Gaetz. So am I to take your answer to mean you don't have any personal knowledge of that?

Mr. Brennan. I don't have any specific personal knowledge of that.

Mr. Gaetz. Yeah. And you didn't when you signed the letter, right?

Mr. Brennan. That's right.

Mr. Gaetz. In the prior hour, my colleague, Mr. Goldman, talked to you about the possibility that the laptop might have been hacked or that materials might have been altered or changed on the laptop.

Do you have any personal knowledge of that having happened?

Mr. Brennan. I don't have any personal knowledge of what the review of that laptop might have revealed. I don't know.

Mr. Gaetz. Right. So just as Mr. Goldman -- I'm trying to make the record clear here that just as Mr. Goldman solicited from you that it's a possibility that it could've been altered, you have no evidence of that?

Mr. Brennan. That's correct.

Mr. Gaetz. And no personal knowledge?

Mr. Brennan. I don't.

Mr. Gaetz. Thank you.

BY [REDACTED]

Q And you're not aware of any statement by the Biden camp that something on the laptop was altered or is fake?

A I don't know if they have any such a statement or not. I don't recollect seeing something.

Q Well, certainly, if something was, they would, in a full-throated manner, identify that, wouldn't they?

A I don't know. I don't know the circumstances of it, whatever.

Q I mean, if something was altered and the Russians planted something on a laptop that wasn't there, don't you think that somebody from Hunter Biden's camp would alert the world to the fact --

Mr. Litt. I think that's a question you ought to ask the Hunter Biden campaign.

Mr. Brennan. I think you should ask the FBI about that, because I don't know whether the Hunter Biden campaign would be aware of any type of altered or modified information.

BY [REDACTED]

Q Well, most of the laptop's been strewn about the internet.

A Again, I don't know. I'll leave that --

Q Okay. I'm only asking just -- in the last hour, you know, our colleagues on the other side were, you know, asking you questions about whether the laptop was altered and so forth.

A Yeah. Well, again, when you look at the provenance of this laptop, rather curious. And you had people like Derkach, you had Giuliani, and you had this computer shop in Delaware right before the election -- whatever. There were a lot of things that raised concerns and suspicions about the provenance of it and whether or not any of the material that was coming out at that time was part of this Russian information operation.

Mr. Gaetz. I'm sorry. What basis do you have to believe that the computer shop in Delaware was connected to a Russian disinformation operation?

Mr. Brennan. Well, it was -- and I think, as it was stated, the owner of that shop wasn't clear about whether or not some material on that laptop could've been altered. I don't know when it came into that person's possession.

There are a lot of things that are still gaps in my knowledge, certainly -- maybe not in the investigators' knowledge -- about who controlled and who had access to that laptop over the time that it was deposited in that computer repair shop and when it got into the hands of others.

Mr. Gaetz. And what investigation did you do to fill those gaps?

Mr. Brennan. I was not in the government at the time. I wasn't even doing an investigation. That would've been inappropriate, for me to do an investigation, as a former intelligence official, particularly against U.S. citizens.

Mr. Gaetz. Yeah. I guess I'm using "investigation" with a little "i," not a big "I."

So, as you assess these gaps in your knowledge, did you take any steps as a private citizen to try to understand or fill those gaps through research, through discussions with colleagues, or any other way prior to signing the letter?

Mr. Brennan. No. I tapped into my understanding and my knowledge of Russian counterintelligence activities and influence operations and made a determination, at the time when I was asked to sign this letter, whether or not I would agree to sign on to it, which I did.

Mr. Gaetz. You have extensive knowledge regarding Russia that you've mentioned as one of your bases for this.

Do you know what I'm referring to when I mention the Steele dossier?

Mr. Brennan. Yes, I do.

Mr. Gaetz. And what's your understanding of the Steele dossier?

Mr. Brennan. It was a dossier of information that was collected by a former



British intelligence officer, who collected information about Donald Trump, first on behalf of a rival Republican candidate and then in support of the Clinton campaign, that was made available to a variety of media outlets as well as to government officials, the FBI.

The first time I put eyes on the Steele dossier was in December of 2016.

Mr. Gaetz. And the Steele dossier emerged in pretty close proximity to the election in 2016, didn't it?

Mr. Brennan. My understanding is it was available to some folks before the election. I didn't see it.

Mr. Litt. I think we're going well-afield from the Hunter Biden laptop.

If you don't want to answer questions on this, I would say I think you're well within your limits --

Mr. Gaetz. Counselor --

Mr. Litt. -- in not answering those questions.

He came here in response to a specific request, and he testified about a statement about the Hunter Biden laptop. The Steele dossier I don't believe has anything to do with that. If you want to bring him back to ask him about the Steele dossier, that's another matter.

But, again, if he's willing to answer the questions, it's on him. I'm just making my point for the record.

Mr. Gaetz. For the record, Counselor, Director Brennan indicated that there were five bases that he had to sign this letter: the Bill Evanina report, the proximity to the election, the involvement of Rudy Giuliani, the salaciousness of the content, and his extensive history as a Russian spy-hunter or as a person in the intelligence community with great familiarity over Russia.

When he provides those five bases, certainly the inclusion of the fifth allows the

committee to explore what interaction he had with any Russia analysis that informed this opinion.

So the scope into the Steele dossier, Fusion GPS, anyone else that touched Russia, was a door opened by the Director when he said that his experience with Russia was one of the very things that informed his participation in the letter.

So, if he'd like to not answer questions about that, that will be the record and we'll proceed accordingly.

So I return to my question. You testified earlier that one of the indicia of Russian disinformation was the proximity and timing to the election in the emergence of these materials from the Hunter Biden laptop.

My question is, did you similarly view the Steele dossier the same way, since it similarly emerged in close proximity to a Presidential election?

Mr. Brennan. As I said, the first time I put eyes on the dossier was in December, was after the election.

Mr. Gaetz. So you were totally unaware of the Steele dossier prior to the election.

Mr. Brennan. I had heard reports about something that was circulating that included salacious information about Donald Trump.

Mr. Gaetz. There's another commonality, isn't there? Salaciousness in the Hunter Biden laptop, salaciousness in the Steele dossier.

Mr. Brennan. Yeah, right. Yeah. Yeah.

Mr. Gaetz. And, you know, you mentioned in your discussions with my colleague, Mr. Goldman, that Rudy Giuliani's contact with foreign nationals was one of the reasons why you believed his involvement was an indicia of Russian disinformation, right?

Mr. Brennan. With a known pawn of Russian intelligence, yes.

Mr. Gaetz. And Christopher Steele and Glenn Simpson, they had contacts with Russian intelligence too, didn't they?

Mr. Brennan. They had contacts with them, yes, but they would never [inaudible] either a recruited asset or a pawn of them.

Mr. Gaetz. Did Steele not speak to individuals as sub-sources who were, in fact, part of the Russian intelligence network?

Mr. Brennan. I'm sure he did.

Mr. Gaetz. So I guess what we're splicing then is the difference between a pawn and a -- and a --

Mr. Brennan. And a contact.

Mr. Gaetz. -- and a contact.

Mr. Brennan. Yeah, there's a big, big difference between them --

Mr. Gaetz. Well --

Mr. Brennan. -- certainly for intelligence professionals.

Mr. Gaetz. Yeah.

And then you mentioned, in your discussion with Mr. Giuliani, that he wanted dirt and he didn't care who he worked with, and that was one of the concerns you had about his involvement.

So are we to then assume that people like Christopher Steele are more discerning in who they retrieve dirt from?

Mr. Litt. Again, John, you don't need to go here if you don't want to.

Mr. Brennan. I will refer to Rudy Giuliani, who made it very clear who he was trying to get elected -- reelected as President of the United States. He was working on behalf of one of those candidates.

Christopher Steele was somebody, my understanding, who was working on behalf of individuals who were promoting someone, but he was not a partisan. Rudy Giuliani certainly is a partisan.

Mr. Gaetz. All right. So the fact that the DNC was providing the financing for the Steele dossier's development doesn't give you concern that it might be partisan?

Mr. Brennan. Again, that was happening back in 2016. Again -- I understand how you were able to tie this to my reference to my expertise, but I don't see any relevance to the Hunter Biden laptop issue now.

Mr. Gaetz. Well, you said that you signed this letter that we now acknowledge Joe Biden misused in a debate to fool the American public because you're this great Russia expert, so I'm trying to understand your Russia expertise. And you were involved in analyzing this information.

Mr. Brennan. No, I was not involved in analyzing the dossier at all. I said the first time I actually saw it, it was after the election. And the CIA was not involved at all with the dossier. You can direct that to the FBI and to others.

Mr. Gaetz. Were you aware of the FBI's involvement with the dossier?

Mr. Brennan. Yes, because there's an annex in the ICA, the Intelligence Community Assessment, that the Bureau asked to be included in there. It was their purview, their area, not ours at all.

Mr. Gaetz. You testified earlier that the emails on the laptop were unhelpful to the Biden campaign. Do you recall that?

Mr. Brennan. No, I don't recall that exactly. Maybe I said it could've been unhelpful or something along those lines. I don't know the context of my comments.

Mr. Gaetz. Sure. Sure. Was that your greatest concern about the contents of the laptop?

Mr. Brennan. The greatest concern about the contents of the laptop, which were fully unknown at the time, was that this, in fact, could be something that the Russians were using as a way to discredit Joe Biden and help Donald Trump.

There was still time before the election, and I knew from my previous experience that the Russians would use whatever opportunity they had to be able to promote their interests and objectives in the Presidential election.

And so raising the concern at that time, given that there was still, I think, a fair amount of things that were unknown about it, what we were trying to do was just to raise the suspicions that we had that it could, in fact, be a Russian influence operation.

Mr. Gaetz. Raising suspicions is important. Did you ever have the suspicion that the First Family might be compromised?

Mr. Brennan. I don't remember thinking that at all at that time.

Mr. Gaetz. And as the contents of the laptop have become more known, have you become concerned about that?

Mr. Brennan. I have the greatest confidence in Joe Biden's integrity and his honesty.

And you can go after Hunter Biden, and, clearly, he had some chapters of his life that I think he regrets.

But from the standpoint of Joe Biden and how he carries out his responsibilities as President of the United States and as previously Senator and then Vice President, there's no question in my mind that his integrity is uncompromisable.

Mr. Gaetz. And the 14 contacts that Joe Biden had with Hunter Biden's business associates, does that in any way undermine your --

Mr. Brennan. No.

Mr. Gaetz. -- belief in his integrity?

Mr. Brennan. No.

Mr. Gaetz. You think that's an appropriate thing for a --

Mr. Brennan. I don't know what the nature of those was. But, again, I have confidence that he was doing things appropriately.

Mr. Gaetz. Well, is that confidence based in knowing what the things are and believing they're appropriate, or is that --

Mr. Brennan. It's working -- it's based on my experience working closely with Joe Biden during his Vice Presidency and hearing him and seeing him acting with the greatest integrity and on behalf of the American people, that I do not believe that he would do anything at all that was inappropriate in terms of his office.

Again, I'm not going to speak to Hunter Biden. I don't think I've ever met Hunter Biden.

Mr. Gaetz. Are you aware of meetings that then-Vice President Biden had with Hunter Biden's business associates?

Mr. Brennan. I recall hearing reports about them. Their accuracy and the content of any type of discussion that might've been had I am unaware of.

Mr. Gaetz. And are you aware that Hunter Biden brought business associates on Air Force Two to meet with Joe Biden?

Mr. Brennan. I have seen reports about it. Again, I don't know the accuracy of those things.

Mr. Gaetz. So, if I represent to you that it's indeed true that on at least 14 occasions Joe Biden met with Hunter Biden's business associates, does that erode your belief in Joe Biden's integrity?

Mr. Brennan. I have the utmost confidence in Joe Biden's integrity.

Mr. Gaetz. Okay. If any -- well, it seems as though you have great affection for

the man. If any Vice President were to be meeting with business associates of their son who is influence-peddling around the world, would that be an appropriate thing to do?

Mr. Brennan. It all depends on the context and the circumstances and whether or not it was just an interaction that happened as a result of being in the same place at the same time -- but so much depends on what was done or said and the circumstances.

Mr. Gaetz. And if what was done or said was the development of a Vice President's son's business portfolio, would that be inappropriate?

Mr. Brennan. I don't know the content of those discussions, so I'm not going to speculate on any of them.

Mr. Gaetz. Okay. Well, I'm going to have some of the specific emails so that we'll have a chance to review that a little bit later in the day, and maybe that'll bring us out of the hypothetical.

Do you know who Tony Bobulinski is?

Mr. Brennan. No, I don't. I may have heard the name, but I don't recall who he might be.

Mr. Gaetz. You mentioned in the earlier hour that Burisma was a Ukrainian energy company. Is it a corrupt company?

Mr. Brennan. I understand that there were concerns about some of the business practices of Burisma, but I'm not a Burisma expert at all, and I don't recall all that I might have read about them.

Mr. Gaetz. Well, during your time -- strike that.

Have you ever made an individual assessment as to whether or not the company is aboveboard?

Mr. Brennan. No, I didn't -- have not.

Mr. Gaetz. And if a company wasn't aboveboard and the son of a Vice President

was introducing its principals to the Vice President, would that be appropriate?

Mr. Brennan. I'm not going to speculate on that. I'm --

Mr. Gaetz. Why not?

Mr. Brennan. Because, again --

Mr. Gaetz. You speculated in the letter that got us all here today.

Mr. Brennan. That's not speculation. Those were judgments about the potential for Russian interference in the election.

Mr. Gaetz. I'm wondering about the potential for this other interference.

Mr. Brennan. Again, I don't know the circumstances, I don't know the facts there, so I'm not going to --

Mr. Gaetz. But, Mr. Director, you didn't know the facts in the other matter either. You've spent most of the day telling us that it's Mr. Morell's -- your trust in your former deputy that caused you to sign this thing.

So I guess I'm trying to understand -- in understanding why you signed this letter, I have to understand your thought process on how you assessed these claims of foreign disinformation. And it seems pretty disparate, that when it's necessary to help the Bidens, you do it, and if it's critical of the Bidens, you throw your hands up and say, I'm not assessing that.

Mr. Brennan. As a private citizen, I believe it is fully within my rights to decide when I'm going to provide my views on some issue.

Mr. Gaetz. And you don't think it's irresponsible to provide those when it's politically helpful and to withhold them when you know inaccurate information is being provided in a Presidential debate pursuant to a tool that you signed and provided the credibility of your former government service.

Mr. Litt. You don't need to accept his characterizations.



Mr. Brennan. I've given you my response.

BY [REDACTED]

Q You said you first learned about the Steele dossier in December 2016?

A I saw it for the first time, put eyes on it. I was made aware before that there was some report that was circulating among the media as well as Washington.

Q Had you known who Christopher Steele was at that point?

Mr. Litt. Be careful here about how you answer this question.

Mr. Brennan. I don't know what I knew at the time. I don't remember what I knew at the time.

Chairman Jordan. Who'd you learn it from? How'd you learn about the dossier in December?

Mr. Brennan. I received a copy of it from the FBI when they were wanting to have a summary of that document put into the -- or, attached to the Intelligence Community Assessment that was done.

This was before Jim Comey -- when we went to Trump Tower and briefed Donald Trump, when Jim Comey was going to talk to Donald Trump about the contents of that dossier.

And the CIA was very much opposed to having any reference or inclusion of the Steele dossier in the Intelligence Community Assessment. And so they sent over a copy of the dossier to say that this was going to be separate from the rest of that assessment. And that's when the CIA was given formal access to it.

Chairman Jordan. Refresh my memory, Director. Did you attend the meeting at Trump Tower in early January --

Mr. Brennan. Yes, I did.

Chairman Jordan. -- of 2017 with Director Comey when he briefed

President-elect Trump on the dossier?

Mr. Brennan. There was myself; Jim Clapper, Director of National Intelligence; Jim Comey; as well as Mike Rogers, Director of NSA, who provided a briefing on the Russian interference in the election.

At the conclusion of that briefing, then we left, everybody left, including Trump's advisors. And Jim Comey stayed behind --

Chairman Jordan. Right.

Mr. Brennan. -- with Donald Trump to give him a briefing on that.

BY [REDACTED]

Q You know, there was some speculation about whether the Steele dossier was alleging that then-candidate Trump was a Russian agent. Do you recall that?

A I recall references to something along those lines. I don't know the exact language that was used in it.

Q Okay. Did any government entity, like the FBI, check with the CIA to see what their information was?

Mr. Litt. Don't reveal anything classified, John.

Mr. Brennan. The FBI and the CIA were working very closely together during this whole episode. Whenever we would get information that involved a U.S. citizen, we would immediately pass it to the FBI, because the CIA has no authority to be following up on that information.

BY [REDACTED]

Q But you said that the information in the Steele dossier didn't -- you didn't read it until after the election.

A That's right.

Q Okay. So the allegation that he was some sort of Russian asset was never

brought to your attention until --

Mr. Litt. Again, I'd make my two points here, which is, number one, we're far afield from the Hunter Biden laptop.

Number two, I think you need to be cautious about what you talk about, about what was brought to your attention in your capacity as DCIA.

Mr. Brennan. My views are contained in the Intelligence Community Assessments that were issued in January of 2017.

BY [REDACTED]

Q In the early summer of 2016, it's been reported that the GCHQ chief, Robert Hannigan, flew to the United States to meet with you in person to deliver information.

Did that information that he delivered to you have anything to do with the Steele dossier allegations?

Mr. Litt. John, I don't know that you should be talking about conversations you may have had with Hannigan.

Mr. Brennan. Well, that never took place, so --

Mr. Litt. That makes it easy.

BY [REDACTED]

Q Okay. So that meeting did not take place?

A I met with Robert Hannigan, but he never passed me any information along those lines.

Q Okay.

A I know it's been reported publicly, like so many other things that are inaccurate.

Q Okay. Fair enough. We talked about some inaccuracies in the Daily Beast article, so --

A Yep.

Q -- understood.

Did you participate in any of the Crossfire Hurricane meetings with Peter Strzok and the FBI in advance of --

A I don't know why we're getting into this right now. I had extensive interaction with the Bureau during 2016 about Russian interference in the election. And so there were a series of meetings that were held at that time with FBI officials.

Q Did that include Mr. Strzok?

A I don't recall.

Q Have you ever met Mr. Strzok before?

A I don't --

Mr. Litt. Can you explain the relevance of Peter Strzok to the Hunter Biden laptop statement in 2020?

██████████ Well, you know, on one hand --

Mr. Litt. I mean, really, he's here at the request of the committee to talk about a specific area. If you want to --

██████████ He doesn't have to answer the question.

Mr. Litt. If you want to bring him up --

██████████ He doesn't have to answer the question.

Mr. Litt. You don't have to ask the question.

██████████ I asked the question. He doesn't have to answer it.

Mr. Brennan. What was the question?

BY ██████████

Q I asked you about your interaction with Peter Strzok. Did you know him --

A I don't recall. I really don't.

Mr. Litt. You really don't need to be going into this, John.

Mr. Brennan. I know. I'm trying to be accommodating --

Chairman Jordan. We appreciate that.

Mr. Brennan. -- voluntarily.

Chairman Jordan. Thank you, Director.

██████████ ██████████ do you want to --

BY ██████████

Q I want to go back to the statement. And, specifically, Mr. Morell told the committee about how, back in October of 2020, on October 17th, now-Secretary Antony Blinken -- but then he was working for the Biden campaign -- reached out to him via phone prior to his drafting of the public statement.

Are you aware of that interaction at all?

A Only because of press reports that have come out about Michael's interview.

Q Are you aware that the phone call between Secretary Blinken and Mr. Morell was the impetus for Morell to read the New York Post story and start drafting the public statement?

A I know only what is in the media. I haven't talked to Michael or Tony about it.

Q And in addition to a phone call from Secretary Blinken, Mr. Morell also received an email from Blinken forwarding a USA Today article titled "A tabloid got a trove of data on Hunter Biden from Rudy Giuliani. Now, the FBI is probing a possible disinformation campaign." And that USA Today article made its way into the public statement.

Are you aware of that?

A I'm aware of the USA Today article.

Q Would it surprise you to learn that the article was originally sent to Secretary Blinken by Andrew Bates, the Biden campaign's director of rapid response?

A I have no comment on that.

Q Did you have any communications with Andrew Bates? Have you ever spoken with him?

A I don't recall ever having a conversation with him.

Q Did you ever have any conversation with Secretary Blinken when he was working for the Biden campaign?

A I do not recall. I may have seen him in -- this was in 2020, right?

Q Yes, sir.

A There might have been some interaction at some point, but it would've been very, very brief and very superficial.

Q Around the time of the public statement? Or do you not recollect when that interaction was?

A I don't recall having any interaction with Tony at that time for the lead-up -- or during the campaign.

Q Are you --

Chairman Jordan. Director, would it have changed your calculus on whether you decide to sign it or not if you'd have known that what prompted Mr. Morell to begin to put this letter together was the contact by the Biden campaign, specifically Tony Blinken, and the article that was emailed to Mr. Morell from Tony Blinken that was emailed to Mr. Blinken by Mr. Bates with the campaign?

If you'd known that there was that much campaign involvement as the catalyst for this, would you have still signed on?

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

As I said before, I try to be apolitical and nonpartisan, and I have tried to steer clear of getting involved in partisan politics.

So, at that time, I just knew what Michael had told me. I know that he had in his email saying he was going to be pushed back against. But if I had known it was more directly tied to the campaign, I don't know if I would've signed it.

Chairman Jordan. And then -- I don't know if we've -- but when it was done, when the debate was over, and then-candidate Biden had used it in the debate and used it, at least in part, in an inaccurate fashion, as you testified to earlier, Mr. Morell gets a call from Mr. Ricchetti, the chairman of the Biden campaign, thanking him for the whole deal.

If you'd have known that kind of -- that kind of focus and involvement, would that have changed your calculus as well?

Mr. Brennan. Well, it was after the fact of my signing it.

Chairman Jordan. I understand. I understand. But it kind of played out I think the way the folks all intended it to play out. At least like the way I think Mr. Morell intended it to play out.

Mr. Brennan. Yeah. I mean, it clearly has given individuals such as yourself and others the opportunity to question the basis for our signing it, given that there were contacts with individuals within the campaign.

Again, I can't speak to what motivated others, either in the campaign or other signatories. I can tell you what motivated me to sign it.

Chairman Jordan. Okay.

Mr. Johnson of Louisiana. Can I just ask -- because it's related to this -- do you think that the statement that you signed and these other intel officials signed has in any way diminished the faith that the American people have in our intel community? Do

you think it's done damage now?

Mr. Brennan. I think there are so many things out there in the public domain that have done damage. The repeated references to the "deep state," the disparagement of the intelligence professionals that Donald Trump and others have engaged in -- I think those have had far, far more impact, and negative impact, on the impression that Americans have about those intelligence, law enforcement, other professionals who work night and day around the globe at great risk and sacrifice.

So I do not believe -- unfortunately, this has been given, now, such enhanced profile. And, again, I understand why you're doing this. But I do not believe that it -- I believe it pales in comparison to the damage that is being done by those who continue to question the integrity of the overwhelming number of intelligence professionals.

Mr. Johnson of Louisiana. I appreciate your response. And I will tell you, honestly, we all lament that this --

Mr. Brennan. Uh-huh.

Mr. Johnson of Louisiana. -- faith in the intel community has been diminished.

We're not doing this for partisan, political purposes. I know you think that's true. We're doing this because, listen, we have to restore the people's faith in the intel community. It's essential to us. And I know field agents. I have family members who are field agents who are great patriots.

But I don't know -- sure, you can say and you believe that Donald Trump has diminished -- you know, increased the belief in the deep state and diminished the faith in the intel community. But would you dispute that the controversy surrounding this statement has also contributed to that? And do you regret it?

Mr. Brennan. I regret that it's given fuel to those who want to create this furor over it.



I don't believe -- I certainly did not hype this and highlight it afterward and really keep ringing the bell. I don't believe other signatories did either. What the press or what individuals might have done to leverage it for their own purposes or leadership or whatever, that's up to them.

But, again, I did this as a private citizen. I --

Mr. Johnson of Louisiana. Sure.

Mr. Brennan. -- didn't do it when I was a sitting government official. And, again, the concern about Russian interference in not just our elections but in our daily lives and how they are using the openness of our society and the social media environment and the digital domain. They are exploiting that in order to advance their interests.

And so I felt an obligation on the part, given my background, to sign on to this when Michael asked me to do it.

Mr. Johnson of Louisiana. I take you at your word, and I respect you. And I used to be a First Amendment lawyer, so I understand the right that you have, the fundamental right you have, to speak your mind. You're not in office anymore.

But I wonder how you reconcile in your mind the fact that you're not actually Joe Q citizen, right? You're the former Director of the CIA. So, whether you like it or not, you walk around with sort of an imprimatur, that, you know, when you say something, it's different than when my neighbor next-door says it, right? Because people put faith in you because they know the level of intel that you have, and the credibility you have is just -- should be unimpeachable, right?

And so, when you put your name on a letter, it's different than if my neighbor does. Do you agree with me?

Mr. Brennan. I agree with you. And if we said the Hunter laptop issue is

disinformation and we were categorical about it and we came in very soundly and roundly saying that this was a Russian op, I completely agree with you. And if it said that, I would not have signed it. It is caveated. It is conditioned. It is characterized as a concern that we have that this, in fact, may be.

There can be misreading it. There can be sloppy reading of it. There can be sloppy representations of it that happened afterward. But, again, the intention here was to bring attention to the Russian influence operations that seem to be pervasive in our country.

Mr. Johnson of Louisiana. Well, actually, the intention of it was, as stated in the email, October 19, 2020, was that, quote, we want to give the Vice President a talking point to use in his response.

That was the intent, right?

Mr. Brennan. That was Michael's intent. My intent was to raise the profile and the concern about Russian influence operations. That's what I did in 2016 -- in 2017. That's what I did when I signed this letter.

Mr. Johnson of Louisiana. And then, a little while later that same day, another email, I guess the one between you and he, he said, we're trying to -- quote, we're trying to give the campaign, particularly during the debate on Thursday, a talking point to push back on Trump on this issue. You said this was a "good initiative." "Thanks for asking me to sign on."

I mean, were there other ways, potentially, to highlight what you were concerned about, Russian disinformation, than providing a talking point to one of the Presidential candidates?

Mr. Brennan. There probably would have been or was. This was the one that was presented to me, and so I agreed to sign on to it.

Again, I was not a government official at the time. And so, therefore, this was the opportunity, the only -- the sole opportunity I had to be able to lend my voice to those who were concerned about Russian interference in the election, as we had seen in the previous Presidential election.

Mr. Johnson of Louisiana. I will yield back, but I just want to say that I think you know -- and I understand why you can't admit on the record and won't say it here, but I think you must believe in your heart of hearts -- because I do believe you're a man of integrity -- that some damage has been done by this and that you do have, I believe, a greater responsibility than most citizens, because when your name goes on something, it means a lot.

And I think you must know that. And I understand why you're not -- I understand why you're explaining things the way they are. But I just think the whole sordid tale is so fortunate, because we have done permanent damage to the intel community's credibility with all this.

Mr. Brennan. When you said "we have," I agree with you. When you say "we have," you're referencing you.

Mr. Johnson of Louisiana. Well, I'll say the whole of government, and you're no bit player in that. You have a huge, huge, outsized influence in all this. And that's what is so deeply concerning to us, and that's why you're here today.

Mr. Brennan. Because of the misreading of the letter? Because of the misrepresentations of the letter by others? Is that what you're saying we have done?

Mr. Johnson of Louisiana. Because you provided a talking point to one of the candidates on the stage in a Presidential election. That's the problem. And you want to be apolitical and nonpartisan, but that's not -- that's not what your actions showed. And that's how the people see it.

Mr. Brennan. Well, I think my actions did show it, that I have been apolitical, nonpartisan.

RPTR SINKFIELD

EDTR ZAMORA

[1:35 p.m.]

Mr. Johnson of Louisiana. Sorry, [REDACTED] I interrupted you. Go ahead.

[REDACTED] I think we're at the end of our hour. So we will at this point take a pause.

Mr. Brennan. Okay.

[REDACTED] We'll go off the record.

[Recess.]

[REDACTED] It's 1:45. We can go back on the record.

BY [REDACTED]

Q Director Brennan, thank you for your patience today. In the --

Mr. Litt. Just to be clear, he will stay here until -- without a break until we're done.

[REDACTED] We appreciate that.

BY [REDACTED]

Q In the prior hour, you were asked about interactions that Tony Blinken may have had with Mr. Morell. You personally were not privy to any of those interactions, correct?

A I haven't been privy to any of them.

Q Okay. And I will represent to you that the transcript in the -- when Mr. Morell testified before this committee earlier this -- or last month, he was specifically asked if Mr. Blinken directed, suggested, or insinuated in any way that Mr. Morell should write a letter or statement on this topic. And Mr. Morell responded: My memory is that he did not, right. My memory is that he asked me, meaning when he called me, he

asked me what I thought.

So I want to correct the record on that piece.

Mr. Blinken was a private citizen at the time, correct?

A Yes.

Q As was Mr. Morell?

A Yes.

Q And so, essentially, they were two private citizens engaged in the political process, correct?

A Correct. As was I.

Q And as every other one of the signatories was, correct?

A Uh-huh.

Q You were asked a fair amount about the Politico article -- this is Exhibit No. 14 -- and whether you had -- you know, whether the headline of that article was accurate or not. You were also asked if you contacted Politico to try to correct the record on the article. Do you remember being asked that?

A I do.

Q And you had actually said that you don't recall if you saw this when it was released, right?

A I don't recall.

Q And so if you hadn't seen it when it's released, you wouldn't have been able to call to correct? You wouldn't have been able to contact anybody to try correct the record because you didn't know it existed, potentially?

A That's correct.

Q Okay. And, actually, if you look at this article on the -- I think it's on page 1, 2, 3 -- on the fourth page.

Mr. Litt. What's at the top of the page?

BY [REDACTED]

Q It says: But the release of the material. There's a Politico dispatch in the middle. That very next paragraph underneath the little Politico dispatch box says -- it actually quotes directly from the letter, and it says: 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.

So it actually quoted directly from the letter, correct?

A Correct.

Q And it made it clear in the body of the email that none of you --

Mr. Litt. Of the article?

BY [REDACTED]

Q I'm sorry. The body of the article that none of the individuals who signed that letter actually had any information about whether the emails were authentic or not, correct?

A Correct.

Q So putting aside the headline that it said here, you know, in the body of the article, it was abundantly clear what the purpose of the letter was?

A Uh-huh.

Q And this -- and, actually, in the very first paragraph of this article, in the very first sentence of this article, there's a hyperlink. It says: More than 50 former senior intelligence officials have signed onto a letter.

And you see how that's in blue?

A Uh-huh.

Q Is it your understanding that that's a hyperlink?

A Yes, it is.

Q And that's a hyperlink to the text of the letter itself?

A Yes.

Q And so anybody reading this article could easily click on that link and view the letter exactly as you signed it, correct?

A Correct.

Q You were asked earlier about the Publication Review Board. I'm sorry, I lost my page. Thank you.

There was a suggestion made that somebody at the Publications Review Board had potentially promoted the letter. And that was in reference to an email produced by -- sent from David Cariens to majority committee staff.

Do you know David Cariens?

A I might, but the name is not springing to my mind, his face and who he is.

Q Okay. And are you aware that the -- and so you didn't have any interactions with him about this letter?

A No.

Q Okay. And are you aware that the representations the majority made to you is solely based on an email that he sent to majority staff?

A I was unaware of what it was based on.

Q And that in that email he said he couldn't remember who he spoke with or what date he spoke with that person?

A I'm hearing this for the first time.

Q Okay. So it's possible that what the majority has cited to you is based on somebody who actually might have a faulty memory, correct?



A Presumably.

Q And I want to look at some of the evidence that actually doesn't rely on what the majority represented to you.

So earlier, the actual email that Mr. Morell sent to the review board was introduced, I believe. And if not, we can introduce it again. It was not introduced. I'm sorry, we'll introduce it as exhibit 15.

[Brennan Exhibit No. 15.

Was marked for identification.]

BY [REDACTED]

Q So this is an email from Michael Morell to the PCRB, correct?

A That's what it appears to be.

Q And the PCRB staff?

And this was sent at 6:34 in the morning on October 19th, correct?

A Uh-huh.

Q And the PCRB staff responded at 7:11 in the morning, and they provided a tracking number, saying his request had been received, right?

A Right.

Q And is this tracking number that's provided here, is that consistent with your experience with when you submit something to the PCRB, that's the kind of response you get?

A Yes.

Q And the sole content here, the sole response from the PCRB says: This submission has been received.

Correct?

A And the tracking number is -- correct.

Q And the tracking number. Correct.

And I want to turn next to the PCRB's clearance of this, which we'll introduce as Exhibit No. 16.

[Brennan Exhibit No. 16.

Was marked for identification.]

BY [REDACTED]

Q So this is dated October 19th, 2020, time stamped 12:44 p.m., correct?

A Uh-huh.

Q And the subject is PCRB submission, then the tracking number, determination-approved, correct?

A Uh-huh. Yes.

Q And the body of the email says it's from PCRB staff, and it says: The Prepublication Classification Review Board has completed its review of your article.

And it clears it, correct?

A Correct.

Q Okay. So this was, what is that, maybe 6 hours approximately after the --

A Yes.

Q -- after the email is sent. Is that inconsistent with how quickly, in your experience, the PCRB can clear something of this nature?

A I know that it can clear things within hours. I've had things cleared, in fact, even maybe faster than this.

Q Okay. And there's nothing in here about David Cariens, correct?

A I don't see anything in here about it.

Q In fact, there's nothing in here about any signatories, correct?

A No. This seems like the standard response when approval is given.

Q Okay. And I want to turn to what we actually do have from Mr. -- contemporaneous email from Mr. Cariens which is where he agreed to sign on to the statement. This is an email from Mr. Cariens to Kristin W, who I'll represent is Kristin Wood, dated October 19th, time stamped 10:36 a.m. We'll introduce this as exhibit 17.

[Brennan Exhibit No. 17.

Was marked for identification.]

BY [REDACTED]

Q And I know you've probably not reviewed this before, so I'll give you a few minutes to review it.

So in this document in front of you, Kristin W emailed David Cariens and presumably others at 10:27 a.m., correct?

A Yes.

Q And she wrote that all the recipients were bcc'ed to protect privacy?

A Uh-huh.

Q And that means that their email addresses aren't displayed, correct?

A That's usually what it means, yes.

Q And Mr. Cariens replied at 10:35 a.m., which is about 8 minutes later, correct?

A Yes.

Q So assuming these time stamps are accurate for Mr. Cariens to have learned about the letter because the PCRB promoted it, he would have had to learn about it in like the 3 hours between the PCRB's receipt of Mr. Morell's submission and Ms. Wood's email, correct? So like between 7:11 in the morning and 10:27 a.m. on October 19th?

A David Cariens was working in the PCRB at the time?

Q No, no, no. He was not. He was an external.

A He was an external.

Q And as far as we can tell, he learned about this email from Kristin Wood just like everybody else, or about the letter just from Kristin Wood just like everybody else.

A Okay.

Q So this actually tends to show that David Cariens learned about the letter and elected to sign on to the letter solely from Kristin Wood's email, correct? There's no reference to the PCRB here?

A There's no reference to knowing about it from anywhere else.

[Brennan Exhibit No. 18.

Was marked for identification.]

BY [REDACTED]

Q Okay. And just to round out the story here, we'll actually introduce the email that David Cariens sent to Republican committee staff. This is exhibit 18. And we don't have extra copies of this, I'm sorry. I think you have it, since it was sent to your --

[REDACTED] That's fine.

BY [REDACTED]

Q So, again, the second paragraph here says: We have no documents because all of the above was done on a phone call.

But, in fact, we have evidence that he should have documents because he sent an email to Ms. Wood, correct?

A I haven't read this yet.

Q I'm sorry.

A The second part: We have no documents because all of the above was

done in a phone call. Neither my wife nor I have discussed the letter with any of the other signatories or any members of the U.S. policy or intelligence agencies.

Okay.

Q So we just introduced as exhibit 18 -- 17, the email from David Cariens to Kristin Wood, which shows that he actually communicated via email to Ms. Wood, correct?

A Before, yes.

Q So at least one paragraph here, that paragraph number two here saying everything was done in a phone call is not accurate, correct, just based on the record we have in front of us?

A It doesn't appear to be accurate. He may have been, you know, not having remembered it or whatever, but at least the way it's stated here.

Q Correct.

A Although he says we have no documents. I don't know if at the time he didn't have this document.

Q My point being that we don't know what he was thinking when he wrote this email, but at least some of it is plainly contradicted by the evidence that we actually do have, correct?

A There is documentation about his engagements prior to this.

Q Okay. And, again, you don't have any personal knowledge of this?

A No, I don't.

Q You were asked extensively about this earlier, so -- there was a discussion earlier about the timing of the letter in relation to the second debate. Do you recall that discussion?

A Yes.

[Brennan Exhibit No. 19.

Was marked for identification.]

BY [REDACTED]

Q I want to introduce into the record as exhibit 19 a FOX News article, which is dated September 14th, 2020. It's entitled, 235 former military leaders support Trump, warn 'our historic way of life is at stake.' I'll give you a minute to review this.

A Okay.

[Brennan Exhibit No. 20.

Was marked for identification.]

BY [REDACTED]

Q And the second document I am going to introduce we'll mark as exhibit 20, and it's the actual letter from those 235 military leaders which is referenced in the article.

Have you seen this letter before today?

A I might have. I remember that it occurred at the time.

Q Okay. And briefly, this letter says that the 2020 election could be the most important election since our country was founded. And it argues that the Democrats opposition to border security and 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 goes on, and it urges Americans to support the reelection of President Trump.

Is that a fair summary of what this letter says?

A Yes, I believe so.

Q Okay. So regardless of what you -- of whether you -- and I should say, this letter is not dated, but the FOX News article says that it was released on -- the FOX News article indicates that it was released on or about September 14th, 2020.

And regardless of whether you agree or disagree with the statements that are made in this letter, do you agree that these retired generals and Air Force lieutenants or Air Force --

A Navy admirals.

Q -- admirals -- Navy admirals, do you agree that they had a First Amendment right to say what they said here?

A Absolutely.

Q And that's kind of similar to the letter that you actually submitted, correct?

A Yes.

Q It's fairly common for people to sign public letters in advance during a Presidential election or during any election, correct?

A Yes.

[Brennan Exhibit No. 21.

Was marked for identification.]

BY [REDACTED]

Q Okay. And closing this out, I want to introduce as exhibit 21 an excerpt from the transcript from the first Presidential debate, which took place on September 29th, 2020. And I should say this is the full transcript of this. It is several hundred pages long, so we're only introducing excerpts here today.

On the -- as printed off, it's page 56 of the full document, but it's the bottom of the second page of what we printed off. We've highlighted some language. This is then President Trump saying: 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.

And it goes on.

Based on what I just read to you, is it accurate to say that the senior military leaders' letter in support of President Trump was released prior to the first Presidential debate?

A Yes.

Q And is it fair to say that that letter played a role at this debate?

A It allowed Donald Trump to reference that letter. Absolutely.

Q And, again, you know, regardless of whether you agree with the statements that are made, do you agree that the senior military leaders, who I should -- can represent were all retired at the time that they signed this letter, had a right to participate in a political process as private citizens?

A Yes.

Q You were asked earlier, again, about allegations that President Biden, the Politico article, and others had mischaracterized the letter. Do you believe that there are Republicans who are mischaracterizing your letter as well?

A There are politicians on a daily basis mischaracterizing the facts and truth, yes.

Q And to your knowledge, have any of them made efforts to correct what they're saying?

A Very rarely.

Q What's the impact on this letter, on the investigation into this letter been on you?

A Well, I've had to procure counsel.

Mr. Litt. Only a benefit.

Mr. Brennan. And I don't like the fact that, again, this is being raised in a, I think,



a partisan manner. And I think it's losing the focus of what Congress should be doing. And so I regret that this furor, this firestorm has been created. But, again, I think the firestorm, the furor has been created responding to the letter as opposed to the letter itself, as I responded to one of the Congressmen earlier. So it's unfortunate that this is taking up all your time, it's taking up my time, and it is, again, further dividing the country.

Clearly, my name is one that has been identified as being rather outspoken against Mr. Trump. It has led to a lot of very vile and hateful commentary, including death threats, just within the past 10 days that I've received from official quarters. And so my concern is that there is, I think, unintended consequences that really could contribute to very untoward and very potentially tragic consequences here, as people are being villainized for, again, exercising their freedom of speech.

BY [REDACTED]

Q Do you fear for your safety?

A I have concerns about it. I've had concerns about it for quite a while. And to the extent that it has -- this is all in closed doors here, but I know that things are pushed out during this inquiry. But I've had to take some extraordinary measures in the past several years because of the efforts by some to -- I don't mind being discredited or being criticized or condemned, but when it comes to the safety and security of family, that's something that I never thought that over 33 years of government service, working to try to protect the national security of this country, would result in this type of activity and actions that make me very concerned about what we might see in the future.

Q And can you say anything further about your concerns about what we might see in the future, where might this lead?

A Well, we already see that there is this very unfortunate polarization in our country where the fringes are trying to take matters into their own hands and how some

elements resort to violence. And, again, I am aware of the very hateful vitriol and nasty commentary. It's not just directed against me. I get a fair amount of it. And it's not just in the social media realm too. Because for whatever reason, I have been portrayed as this individual who is undermining this country's security when, I thought, after 33 years of government service, I was trying to do the exact opposite.

So it really is quite disheartening, dispiriting that, just like in previous congressional investigations I've been involved in, including where I felt that the other side, the Democratic side of the aisle was not upholding what I thought were the necessary responsibilities. I really feel that this is an effort to get certain people and, again, losing sight of what we should be doing as a society, as a country, and as a government. It's very unfortunate.

Q Thank you.

And you said a couple minutes ago that you've had to take additional efforts to protect your safety. Can you tell us anything more about that?

Mr. Litt. I wouldn't, John.

Mr. Brennan. I don't want to because I'm concerned about what I say here and how it may find its way outside the doors. I'm very, very concerned. And so I have considerations on that front.

██████████ Okay. I understand. Thank you. We don't have any further questions. We can go off the record. It's 2:09.

[Discussion off the record.]

██████████ We'll go back on the record. It's 2:11.

BY ██████████

Q You know, we had some discussion about what the relevance is of the Crossfire Hurricane and the Peter Strzok matter in relative comparison. And I just would

like to, you know, articulate that the letter that was signed and used in the debate has been, you know, demonstrated, I think, fairly that it was nothing but a political operation at the end by some of the individuals that hatched the idea -- maybe not all the signers, but the people that started the letter and tried to get signatories for the letter, it was just a political operation. Can you agree with that?

A No. Might have had some political objectives on it. But if there was real concern on the part of individuals, including those that's familiar with the campaign, that this, in fact, could be part of a Russian effort to discredit President Biden. It was not, as you point out, just a political operation. It was an effort, just like in 2016, to try to highlight the possible Russian involvement in the election.

Q And how do you compare that to some of the, you know, inaccurate information that was loaded into the Carter Page FISA application, which by now everybody appreciates is --

A I had nothing to do with that. FISA didn't come through me.

Q But you did have meetings with the FBI around the timeframe about --

Mr. Litt. Can I suggest, Director Brennan has been here since 10:15.

██████████ He doesn't have to answer the question.

Mr. Litt. It's 4 hours -- I said I was going to sit.

If you have other questions relating to the Biden laptop, let's get those done so that you can get all of those answers. And then if you want to go into the other stuff, then we can walk out at that point.

██████████ Okay.

Mr. Brennan. Again, just to reiterate, I had no involvement whatsoever in the FISA process. That's not what the CIA director does.

BY ██████████

Q So are you aware of Carter Page?

A Yes.

Q Like, did you have any, like, official meetings to discuss the content of the --

Mr. Litt. You don't have to discuss the investigation.

Mr. Brennan. First of all, it's a U.S. person. As I said before, the CIA has no authority over any type of U.S. personal investigation.

Mr. Gaetz. What exhibit number are we on?

██████████ Twenty-two.

Mr. Gaetz. I would like to introduce an exhibit.

[Brennan Exhibit No. 22.

Was marked for identification.]

Mr. Gaetz. Director Brennan, this is an email from the Hunter Biden laptop. I'll represent to you it's sent by Mark O'Malley to Hunter Biden, copies to Devon Archer and Anne Marie Person. And it reads: Hunt, I'm trying to get the Moscow agreement executed by the end of this week. In an effort to be proactive, I think we should send bank wiring instructions so we're not waiting on a check from Moscow. If you agree, please have someone forward the appropriate banking instructions. Thank you. MSO.

What role did you have in the government when this email was sent?

Mr. Brennan. In December 2010, I was assistant to President Obama for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism at the White House.

Mr. Gaetz. And were you aware of the relationship between Hunter Biden and Moscow at that time?

Mr. Brennan. No.

Mr. Gaetz. You ever seen this email before?

Mr. Brennan. I don't recall ever seeing this before.

Mr. Gaetz. Is it concerning to you that the son of a sitting Vice President was trying to make a financial arrangement with Moscow at this time?

Mr. Brennan. Well, it doesn't say that. So we're not waiting on a check from Moscow, but it could be an American entity within Moscow. It could be anyone. I don't know the entire context. I don't know what this refers to.

Mr. Gaetz. So would someone in a senior national security role typically be concerned if the son of the sitting Vice President is waiting on a check from Moscow when referring to something as the Moscow agreement?

Mr. Brennan. No, because U.S. businesses have had, prior to the invasion of Ukraine, extensive business activities inside of Russia and in Moscow, the Moscow offices, and could be referred to as the Moscow agreement, that a business might have agreed to. So it doesn't mean that there was any type of Russian Government activity involved in this. So, no. And, again, this is Mark O'Malley, a U.S. person; Hunter Biden, a U.S. person; the other ones. So certainly, on the national security side, we wouldn't have any interest in this.

Mr. Gaetz. Have you seen the name Devon Archer before.

Mr. Brennan. I don't recall.

Mr. Gaetz. If I represent to you that Devon Archer is now a convicted felon, does that ring a bell?

Mr. Brennan. No.

Mr. Gaetz. And if this was indeed a measure that had the semblance of sanction from the Russian Government, would that be concerning to a senior national security official?

Mr. Brennan. It all depends, again, on the context. In 2010, there were things that were going on in Russia and some, including that were agreed to by the Russian

Government, involving businesses and other things. So, again, I have no understanding of what this might refer to.

Mr. Gaetz. What would be the questions that you would ask as a senior intelligence official if you had observed the communication like this while you were in government?

Mr. Brennan. Why am I getting this? Why didn't it go to the FBI? I shouldn't be seeing this either as a White House official or the CIA.

It's a personal correspondence from a U.S. citizen who happens to be the son of a sitting Vice President. But there's no earthly reason why this should be brought to my attention. Be the counterintelligence folks inside the FBI. If there's any concern about some type of business activity that was inappropriate, illicit, illegal, or whatever, I certainly would not have had any exposure to it.

Mr. Gaetz. And the subject of the email says patriarch. And it's from a Mark O'Malley to Hunter Biden.

If you were assessing this, would you draw any conclusions from the use of that word?

Mr. Brennan. Again, I don't know if that could have been the code name of some type of business operation that was underway. It could have been any number of things. It could have been the name of a company. I have no idea.

Mr. Gaetz. It also could have been a reference to Joe Biden, the patriarch, the Biden family, right?

Mr. Brennan. You can interpret it that way.

Mr. Gaetz. Do you believe that's a reasonable interpretation?

Mr. Brennan. When you're saying reasonable, then you're narrowing it down. It's an interpretation certainly. But I wouldn't want to go there even with any type of

speculation because of what it implies.

Mr. Gaetz. Hunter Biden engaging in business deals with people who became felons, with this reference to a Moscow agreement, does that in any way flavor the context of the Hunter Biden laptop and your signing of this letter?

Mr. Brennan. There are a lot of American politicians who had business activities with convicted felons, including family members of various senior U.S. Government officials. So, again, I wouldn't want to make any comment on something like this that would be speculative at best.

Mr. Gaetz. What about the Moscow connection? A similar answer?

Mr. Brennan. Again, Moscow is a city. It's a location. It doesn't say anything about what that could be referencing to, whether it be the Russian Government, Russians, who knows. I have no idea what the reference to Moscow refers to.

Mr. Gaetz. When you signed -- or strike that.

Was it before or after you signed the letter that you learned that there were communications on the Hunter Biden laptop between Hunter Biden and folks connected to China?

Mr. Brennan. I don't know when I read about that. I have no recollection at all.

Mr. Gaetz. So you are aware that the laptop contains communications between Hunter Biden and China, right?

Mr. Brennan. I recall reading press reports on that issue, yes. I don't know when I first learned of it or first read those reports.

Mr. Gaetz. And there's no way to refresh your recollection as to whether or not this is before or after you signed?

Mr. Brennan. I don't know. You're taking two and a half years ago.

Mr. Gaetz. Does that concern you, the connections to China?

Mr. Brennan. This is a globalized world, and individuals of all different stripes, business, political, and so on have connections around the globe with Russians, Chinese, some government officials, business enterprises, interests, parastatals, and others. So just because somebody has a contact with something in China does not by any definition mean that it is inappropriate.

Mr. Gaetz. Is it appropriate for the son of the sitting Vice President to hold investment meetings at the Chinese Embassy?

Mr. Brennan. Again, not knowing -- first of all, I don't know about such meetings, if they were held, but again, it would be a -- the context, what was said, what was done, what it was about, I have no knowledge of what it was. But I can -- I could spit out a scenario where having such a conversation in that location was legitimate.

[Brennan Exhibit No. 23.

Was marked for identification.]

Mr. Gaetz. Another exhibit.

██████████ Is this all one exhibit?

Mr. Gaetz. That's all one exhibit. So I'm just going to reference some features of it, but I want it to be complete for the record.

So if you go to the third page of the exhibit.

Mr. Forrest. Just for the record, this is Exhibit No. 23.

Mr. Litt. Okay. It's the page that has Marvin R. Lang at the top?

Mr. Gaetz. Yes, Marvin R. Lang email. 4:36 p.m., February 28, 2011. And in the email, there's the discussion of this dinner for the annual and -- or funds dinner of Hunter Biden's fund.

Is it appropriate for the son of a sitting Vice President to be raising money for their investment fund at a dinner at the Chinese Embassy?



Mr. Litt. Do you see it?

Mr. Forrest. Just to break in real quick. Can you say -- again, I'm assuming this is also from the Hunter Biden laptop?

Mr. Gaetz. Correct. I'll represent to you it's from the laptop.

Mr. Brennan. Appropriate? The term has -- it's very expansive in terms of what falls under that -- the roof of appropriate.

When U.S. businesspersons and private citizens do things, they have to make sure they're doing it consistent with U.S. law, including the Foreign Agents Registration Act and other types of requirements. And, again, I don't know the nature of the discussion here, the content of it, and whether or not anything was done or said that might have, in fact, been inconsistent with any of those obligations.

Mr. Gaetz. Does it concern you that the son of a sitting Vice President was having a meeting at the Chinese Embassy raising money for his investment fund at their annual dinner? If you don't want to speak to its propriety, perhaps you can speak to whether or not it concerns you.

Mr. Brennan. Not knowing the context, not knowing the nature of the discussion, what was discussed, I am not going to comment on its appropriateness or not.

Mr. Gaetz. So it could be appropriate under some context?

Mr. Brennan. I think, again, appropriate is in the eye of the beholder. I think if, you know, you're looking at it just purely through a political prism, just like you might look at some of the activities of the Trump children and son-in-law through a prism of appropriateness, people might have issues with that. The questions that --

Mr. Gaetz. I'm not asking about them. I'm asking about --

Mr. Brennan. I know. And I am just drawing a comparison that you can have conversations, including in various locations with foreign entities and persons that may be

wholly consistent with U.S. law, U.S. regulations, obligations, that a U.S. citizen can carry out from a business perspective.

Again, I don't know what was discussed. Certainly, there could be things that were inappropriate and things that were appropriate. I have no idea about what was said or done during such meeting.

Mr. Gaetz. Would the CIA ever be concerned about an embassy being used in this way?

Mr. Brennan. If the CIA became aware of a foreign embassy that was being used either for meetings or for communication systems or something else that a U.S. person was involved in, we would immediately refer that information to the FBI for follow-up investigation. But the CIA needs to believe that there is some type of possible criminal activity taking place before they would make that reference.

Mr. Gaetz. And violations of FARA are criminal, right?

Mr. Brennan. Yes.

Mr. Gaetz. So if the son of a sitting Vice President was taking money from the Chinese and then doing their bidding in our country, that would be a violation of FARA, wouldn't it?

Mr. Brennan. I don't know, again, what was done or what was said at these meetings.

Mr. Gaetz. Well, that's what I want to know if it's just concerning to you. I mean, I think most Americans would look at the son of a sitting Vice President raising funds from investors at the Chinese Embassy a concerning event. And it's surprising to me you don't see it that way.

Mr. Brennan. The Chinese Embassy can be a large place. It can be just a venue for a meeting of representatives from different countries, different businesses, from

personal interests across the globe. Again, there's so many different possible scenarios involving this.

Mr. Gaetz. But you didn't know about this meeting and this content of the laptop when you signed the letter?

Mr. Brennan. I don't -- I don't remember being aware of this at all.

Mr. Gaetz. Does this email correspondence have the indicia of Russian disinformation?

Mr. Brennan. I don't know. I haven't looked at it.

Mr. Gaetz. Okay. The email I showed you previously, the prior exhibit, regarding the Moscow deal from Mr. O'Malley to Hunter Biden, subject line patriarch, talking about a Moscow agreement, does that have the indicia of Russian disinformation?

Mr. Brennan. I don't know, and I -- I --

Mr. Gaetz. Well, you knew the laptop did.

Mr. Brennan. No, I said that there was concern about how the laptop might be part of a Russian information operation. I wasn't commenting at all with my signature on any of the individual pieces of information, whether it be emails or others on that laptop.

Mr. Gaetz. Have you ever heard of a company SinoHawk.

Mr. Brennan. It doesn't ring a bell to me.

Mr. Gaetz. If I represent to you that there were communications regarding a SinoHawk business deal on the Hunter Biden laptop, does that ring a bell?

Mr. Brennan. No, no.

[Brennan Exhibit No. 24.

Was marked for identification.]

Mr. Gaetz. I will go to my next exhibit, 24, I believe. I'll represent to you that

these are screenshots from Hunter Biden's contacts from the laptop.

Do you know who Mike Harrington is?

Mr. Brennan. I might know of him, but I don't -- I can't put a face with that. I don't know.

Mr. Gaetz. Do you know any reason why he would be in Hunter Biden's contacts?

Mr. Brennan. Depending on what his responsibilities were within the Bureau, he could have been somebody that a private U.S. citizen was in touch with about a matter.

Mr. Gaetz. I'll skip to the next page of the exhibit, and I'll -- there's the name Bryan Vorndran. Do you know who Bryan Vorndran is?

Mr. Brennan. No.

Mr. Gaetz. Any idea why he would be in Hunter Biden's contacts list?

Mr. Litt. Are you asking him whether somebody he doesn't know -- if he knows why that person would be involved?

Mr. Gaetz. You may know of them and may know some correlation or relation.

Mr. Brennan. I don't know of any these individuals referenced to the FBI. But, again, a lot of U.S. persons who have concerns about maybe what's happening from a counterintelligence perspective or terrorism perspective, whatever, reach out to the FBI to report such things. So that it could have been that these individuals that Hunter Biden for some reason or another had the occasion to reach out to, for what reason, I don't know. But it's not all that unheard of that U.S. businesspersons would have FBI contacts, because a lot of them do.

Mr. Gaetz. I'm not suggesting it's unheard of, Mr. Director. I'm just trying to ascertain whether or not you acknowledge these people or have knowledge as to why they're in here.

Mr. Brennan. No, I don't.

Mr. Gaetz. If you turn to the next page of the exhibit, Louis J.J. Freeh. Do you know who Louis Freeh is?

Mr. Brennan. I do know very well.

Mr. Gaetz. Who's Louis Freeh?

Mr. Brennan. Louis Freeh is a fellow graduate of my high school in New Jersey. Lived down this block from me when we were younger, but he's older than me. He was a FBI director. He was appointed back by George H.W. Bush and was director during Clinton's administration as well.

Mr. Gaetz. Have you ever talked to Louis Freeh about Hunter Biden?

Mr. Brennan. No. I haven't been in touch with Louis in several years.

Mr. Gaetz. Did you have any contact with Louis Freeh about the letter that we've been discussing?

Mr. Brennan. No, I haven't been in touch with Louis Freeh since I left government, I don't think.

Mr. Gaetz. And do you have any knowledge as to why Louis Freeh might be in Hunter Biden's contacts?

Mr. Brennan. Louis Freeh has been involved in quite extensive business activities over the past 20-some odd years. He is very well known in the business community, has a lot of contacts, both domestically and internationally. So it's not surprising that Louis Freeh's contact information shows up in U.S. businessmen's contact list.

Mr. Gaetz. Are you aware of any business that Hunter Biden and Louis Freeh had together?

Mr. Brennan. I'm unaware of it. I don't know.

Mr. Gaetz. Great. I think I'll yield back to my colleagues.

██████████ Okay.

BY ██████████

Q Some of the items that Mr. Gaetz presented to you, do you think that that may have been relevant in the runup to the election for the American people to have access to it and consider it as they were making their decision for President?

A I don't know if it was available or not.

Q Well, it was on the laptop.

A Okay.

Q So --

A So the letter didn't say disregard everything there or don't look at it or don't read the reports that are out there.

Q But it had that effect.

A No, it was saying that take everything that you see out there, it was with a grain of salt, because the Russians may, in fact, have some role in this.

Q I mean, that may have been the way you saw it and the way you decided to sign on to the letter thinking that, but that's not the way Politico reported it. That's not the way candidate Biden at the time portrayed it in the course of a debate.

A Okay.

Q Okay. And so signing onto the letter, you know, acted as a major force at keeping all the contents of the laptop out of the public discord. Do you agree with that?

A I don't know how people reacted to this letter at the time. I don't. It was put out there in the public domain. People -- I'm sure a lot of Americans, most Americans never read that letter then or since then. And the letter was picked up by press. That didn't mean that the laptop, though, and Twitter and others did not, would

have information on it. So people -- it was up to them to decide what they wanted to access and how they wanted to think about it.

Q But the letter certainly served the function of chilling the news coverage. I mean, the --

Mr. Litt. Did the Post stop publishing articles about this as a result of this letter?

██████████ The New York Post?

Mr. Litt. Yeah.

██████████ Okay. Did you hear -- no. No, they did not.

BY ██████████

Q So the question is, isn't it fair to say that the letter chilled the press on this topic? Maybe not the New York Post, maybe not certain outlets, but it certainly did The New York Times. It certainly did The Washington Post.

A I don't know how the press reacted to it. I wouldn't say that it chilled them. It, I think, made them look at this issue and wonder whether or not this was a part of a Russian influence operation. And it's up to the press to decide whether or not they were going to take that warning from former intelligence officials or not. But that certainly didn't prevent them from doing what they needed to do in the runup to the election.

Q Don't you think the letter gave news organizations a reason to shut down news coverage on this?

A No, I don't think so.

Q You don't think so?

A No, not to shut down news coverage on it. In fact, if anything, I think maybe that letter sort of raised this a bit, because it was, in fact, pointing out that the laptop --

Chairman Jordan. It certainly didn't raise it with social media companies. In fact, the New York Post was locked out of their account. And it was, I think, part of this concept of social media companies, Silicon Valley companies limiting people's ability to see the story and get access to the story, which is our -- one of our big concerns when it comes to First Amendment -- First Amendment issues.

Mr. Brennan. It's up to the media companies themselves to determine what type of propagation access they want to give to such stories. And I would like to think that responsible outlets would have taken our letter, read it, and read it carefully and clearly and found that we weren't saying it was Russian disinformation or -- there's concern there. So think about it carefully before believing that this, in fact, is whole truth.

Chairman Jordan. And that's all well and good, Director, but that's not what happened. Our government was meeting weekly with social media companies, telling them to be on the lookout for this kind of thing, and then along comes your letter, which is -- I mean, that's the concern, is our government, FBI, Mr. Chan himself was meeting weekly with big tech companies, social media companies in Silicon Valley saying, you got to -- and then along comes your letter used to suppress speech, again, just a couple of weeks before the most important election we had. That is our concern and --

Mr. Brennan. I don't think --

Mr. Litt. Were there any social media companies that took action against the statement after this letter?

Chairman Jordan. We ask the questions and you answer.

Mr. Litt. I understand. I think the answer to that is no.

Chairman Jordan. I think I ask the questions.

Mr. Litt. Yeah. Okay. I'm just putting that on the record.



Mr. Brennan. The intention here was not to suppress speech at all. It was to provide some warning and concerns about what was out there immediately prior to the election.

Mr. Johnson of Louisiana. Well, in fact, that was not the intention, as stated from the email that's in the record here. The intention was to give the Vice President a talking point.

Mr. Brennan. That was the intention of Michael Morell, as stated in his email. As I said before, my intention here was to raise concerns about Russian interference in the 2020 election, just the way they interfered with influence information operations in the 2016 election. That was my purpose in signing onto this letter.

Mr. Johnson of Louisiana. And I apologize for having bumped in and out here today. But it is your position today, you do believe today that, in fact, the laptop was not Russian disinformation? I mean, you know that that's a --

Mr. Brennan. Again, I don't know all the things that were contained on that laptop. I don't know what type of exploitation that has been done, whether the U.S. Government has done a thorough review of all of the contents there, and whether any of this was, in fact, altered, modified, deleted, or whatever, I have no idea.

Mr. Johnson of Louisiana. So as you sit here today, you stand by the veracity of the statement. So you think exactly the same thing today that you -- with regard to that statement as you did when you signed on. Is that right?

Mr. Brennan. The statement we said raising the concerns. And I stand by the statement that said we had no evidence, but we are raising our concerns and the suspicions that, in fact, it might be part of Russian information operations, either in the amplification of accurate information, the propagation or dissemination or whatever. Russian information operations is not limited only to disinformation. There's a lot of

other things that the Russians have done in the U.S. elections.

Mr. Johnson of Louisiana. Have you seen the polls that show that if -- that the 2020 election outcome would have been different if people had believed the Hunter laptop was legitimate and not a Russian disinformation conspiracy.

Mr. Brennan. No, I have not seen those polls.

Mr. Johnson of Louisiana. Well, they exist. If you haven't seen the polls, what impact do you think this had on the election.

Mr. Brennan. I'm sorry. I didn't hear you.

Mr. Johnson of Louisiana. What impact do you think that this statement and the timing of its release before the debate, what impact do you think this had on the election?

Mr. Brennan. I have no idea. I don't know how widely read it was, how much of any influence it had whatsoever. I don't know. I believe that the Russian interference in the 2016 election probably swayed a lot more views and votes in 2016 than that letter ever did in 2020.

Mr. Johnson of Louisiana. Well, I think we have entered into the record today a series of emails showing the signatories celebrating the use of the statement during the Presidential debate. That was pretty big, in fact, wasn't it?

Mr. Brennan. I'm unaware of that email.

Mr. Johnson of Louisiana. Well, we have some emails. I don't know if they're entered in the record yet, but -- I mean, the signatories to the statement were obviously pleased that the President used it as intended, correct?

Mr. Brennan. I can't speak for the others. There are 51 people. I'm sure they have all different views, including political views.

Mr. Johnson of Louisiana. Were you pleased that he used it in the debate.

Mr. Brennan. I don't recall what I felt at the time.

Mr. Johnson of Louisiana. How do you feel now?

Mr. Brennan. I feel that the statement, again, raised consciousness about the Russian influence operations in the States and that candidate Biden at the time pushed back against it. I would not have characterized the statement the way he did in that debate. But, again, I am content with that letter. Again, I regret the furor and the firestorm that it's created since then.

Mr. Gaetz. Mr. Director, what role did you have in the January 2017 post-election Intelligence Community Assessment on Russian activities and intentions in recent elections, the IC?

Mr. Brennan. I was director of the CIA at the time, and so I reviewed it, and participated in the briefings of it to the Obama administration, to both Houses of Congress, and to Donald Trump.

Mr. Gaetz. Who was the primary drafter of that document?

Mr. Litt. You don't need to answer that question.

Mr. Brennan. I forget his name.

Mr. Gaetz. Okay. Did you personally edit the document?

Mr. Brennan. No.

Mr. Gaetz. Were you aware of dissenting opinions regarding the conclusions?

Mr. Brennan. Yes.

Mr. Gaetz. And was one of those dissenting opinions that Moscow preferred Hillary Clinton because it judged that she would work with its leaders, whereas Trump would be too unpredictable?

Mr. Brennan. There were individuals who had read the document within CIA who were not involved in the drafting or the analysis. And so I listened to some of their

concerns, but I deferred to the experts: the Russian, the counterintelligence, the cyber experts, and the analysts who actually drafted this. And so I did not overturn or change any of the judgments and language in that document.

Mr. Gaetz. Who is Andrea Kendall-Taylor?

Mr. Brennan. She is a former CIA analyst who is retired from the government. I don't know if retired or resigned. And she is a current member in WestExec Advisors, of which I'm affiliated with as well.

Mr. Gaetz. So you're currently in business with her in the private sector?

Mr. Brennan. In business. And she's an analyst. She's a part of WestExec. And so I have been in some virtual meetings with her.

Mr. Gaetz. So you both get paid by the same business entity today?

Mr. Brennan. Yes.

Mr. Gaetz. And what role did she have in drafting or approving the ICA?

Mr. Litt. Give me a second here.

██████████ Off the record.

[Discussion off the record.]

██████████ Back on the record.

Mr. Gaetz. Yeah. I was wondering what the role was in drafting or approving the ICA we've been discussing.

Mr. Brennan. I do not recall, and I would not identify individuals involved in the drafting of an Intelligence Community Assessment.

Mr. Gaetz. Which is it, is it that you don't recall or that you --

Mr. Brennan. Both.

Mr. Gaetz. Okay. And if I represent to you that there are individuals who claim that you did personally edit a crucial section of the intelligence report to try to diminish

the dissenting views and to try to overcharacterize the extent to which Russia favored President Trump, what would be your reaction to that?

Mr. Brennan. That's wrong. They are mistaken. The assessment was reviewed thoroughly by the Senate Intelligence Committee who had kudos for the integrity of that assessment.

Mr. Gaetz. Thank you.

██████████ I think we're all done.

██████████ I'm sorry. Hold on one second. I think we're good, but -- we are good.

[Whereupon, at 2:45 p.m., the interview was adjourned.]

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