

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 18, 2017

The Honorable Daniel R. Coats
Director of National Intelligence
Washington, D.C. 20511

Dear Director Coats:

We write to request a review and damage assessment regarding whether any classified information may have been disclosed by the President or his senior advisers to representatives of the Russian government during a meeting in the Oval Office on May 10, 2017. As you know, the ability to properly safeguard classified information is a fundamental obligation of those entrusted with our nation's secrets, and any allegation of disclosure involving a foreign adversary must be thoroughly reviewed with action taken to mitigate the potential damage.

Last Wednesday—one day after firing FBI Director James B. Comey—President Trump welcomed into the Oval Office Sergei Lavrov, the Russian Foreign Minister, and Sergey Kislyak, the Russian Ambassador to the United States. According to recent reports, during this same meeting, President Trump revealed “highly classified information” to Minister Lavrov and Ambassador Kislyak, and others present in the meeting.¹ One official described the disclosure as involving “code-word information,” and added that President Trump “revealed more information to the Russian ambassador than we have shared with our own allies.”² Shortly after the meeting, photos were publicly released showing President Trump shaking hands with Minister Lavrov and Ambassador Kislyak, which were taken by the lone member of the press allowed to attend the event, a photographer from the Russian state news agency TASS.³

According to one report, “[a]fter Trump’s meeting, senior White House officials took steps to contain the damage, placing calls to the CIA and National Security Agency.”⁴ The

¹ *Trump Revealed Highly Classified Information to Russian Foreign Minister and Ambassador*, Washington Post (May 15, 2017) (online at www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/trump-revealed-highly-classified-information-to-russian-foreign-minister-and-ambassador/2017/05/15/530c172a-3960-11e7-9e48-c4f199710b69_story.html); *Sources: Trump Shared Classified Info with Russians*, CNN (May 16, 2017) (online at www.cnn.com/2017/05/15/politics/trump-russia-classified-information/).

² *Id.*

³ *News Outlets Shut out of Trump Meeting with Russians*, Politico (May 10, 2017) (online at www.politico.com/blogs/on-media/2017/05/10/trump-russia-meeting-media-shut-out-238221).

⁴ *Trump Revealed Highly Classified Information to Russian Foreign Minister and Ambassador*, Washington Post (May 15, 2017) (online at www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/trump-revealed-highly-classified-

report further stated that one official “also called for the problematic portion of Trump’s discussion to be stricken from internal memos and for the full transcript to be limited to a small circle of recipients, efforts to prevent sensitive details from being disseminated further or leaked.”⁵

While several Administration officials have strongly disputed that the meeting discussed sources and methods or military operations not already publicly disclosed, no one—including President Trump or National Security Advisor H.R. McMaster—has yet denied that classified information was shared, possibly including specific threat information. In fact, Tuesday morning, President Trump tweeted:

As President I wanted to share with Russia (at an openly scheduled W.H. meeting) which I have the absolute right to do, facts pertaining ... to terrorism and airline flight safety. Humanitarian reasons, plus I want Russia to greatly step up their fight against ISIS & terrorism.⁶

In a press briefing Tuesday afternoon, National Security Adviser McMaster further stated that the President “made the decision [to share the information] in the context of the conversation, which was wholly appropriate.” He also stated that “the President wasn’t even aware, you know, where this information came from. He wasn’t briefed on the source or method of the information either.”⁷

This is not the first such instance when sensitive information may have been mishandled by senior members of the Administration. In February, during a state visit by the Prime Minister of Japan, the President reportedly discussed the response to a North Korean missile test with his advisers and the Japanese delegation in full view of diners, members, and staff at the President’s Mar-a-Lago club, in what was described as an “al fresco situation room.”⁸ Also in February, the *Wall Street Journal* reported that “U.S. intelligence officials have withheld sensitive intelligence from President Donald Trump because they are concerned it could be leaked or compromised.”⁹

information-to-russian-foreign-minister-and-ambassador/2017/05/15/530c172a-3960-11e7-9e48-c4f199710b69_story.html).

⁵ *Id.*

⁶ Official Twitter Account of Donald J. Trump, @realDonaldTrump (May 16, 2017) (online at <https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/864438529472049152>).

⁷ *PBS News Hour*, PBS (May 16, 2017) (online at www.youtube.com/watch?v=YgYEWdceKCs).

⁸ *Trump Turns Mar-a-Lago Club Terrace into Open-air Situation Room*, Washington Post (Feb. 13, 2017) (online at www.washingtonpost.com/politics/trump-turns-mar-a-lago-club-terrace-into-open-air-situation-room/2017/02/13/c5525096-f20d-11e6-a9b0-ecee7ce475fc_story.html).

⁹ *Spies Keep Intelligence From Donald Trump on Leak Concerns*, Wall Street Journal (Feb. 16, 2017) (online at www.wsj.com/articles/spies-keep-intelligence-from-donald-trump-1487209351).

U.S. allies have reportedly raised similar concerns.¹⁰

While the President is empowered to classify and declassify information at his discretion, it is unclear whether any alleged disclosure during last week's meeting, if it occurred, was an intentional act of "instant" declassification, an inadvertent disclosure, or done for any other reason. What is clear is that any alleged disclosure of this nature may compromise sensitive methods of intelligence collection, imperil sources who risk their lives to provide information, and result in reduced intelligence-sharing with our partners and reduced confidence in the ability of the U.S. Government to keep a secret.

Under Intelligence Community (IC) Directives issued by your office, damage assessments are used "to evaluate actual or potential damage to national security resulting from the unauthorized disclosure or compromise of classified national intelligence."¹¹ IC Directive 732 states:

In cases where the unauthorized disclosure or compromise involves classified national intelligence originating from or otherwise affecting more than one IC element or U.S. Government department or agency, there will be a Community damage assessment. Such damage assessments shall include participation and support from the affected IC elements and other representatives as directed by the DNI.¹²

The Directive charges DNI's National Counterintelligence Executive to "[o]versee and coordinate equity reviews and formal damage assessments within the IC" and "[l]ead, when designated by the DNI, or facilitate damage assessment teams when the unauthorized disclosure or compromise involves classified national intelligence affecting more than one IC element or U.S. Government department or agency."¹³

We request that you determine whether classified information was disclosed or compromised in any way during the May 10, 2017 meeting, and if so, to designate the National Counterintelligence Executive, in consultation with the Inspector General of the Intelligence Community, as the lead agency for conducting a damage assessment. Additionally, please provide unclassified written responses to the following as soon as possible, but no later than June 1, 2017:

1. Was any classified information disclosed or compromised during the meeting between President Trump and representatives of the Russian government on May 10, 2017?

¹⁰ *U.S. Spies Fear Allies Will Stop Sharing Intel under Russia-Friendly Trump*, Politico (Jan. 21, 2017) (online at www.politico.com/story/2017/01/trump-intelligence-russia-233899).

¹¹ Office of the Director of National Intelligence, Intelligence Community Directive 732 (June 27, 2014) (online at www.dni.gov/files/documents/ICD/ICD%20732.pdf).

¹² *Id.*

¹³ *Id.*

2. If classified information was disclosed or compromised, please provide:
- a. A description of the circumstances under which the disclosure or compromise occurred;
 - b. An itemized list of the classification level of any such information disclosed or compromised as well as whether such information has been declassified or downgraded as a result of the disclosure or compromise;
 - c. Whether any steps taken to alter or destroy notes or transcripts related to the May 10 meeting or limit their distribution complied with applicable security protocols regarding security violations;
 - d. A list of all individuals who attended the meeting, including the names of Russian officials;
 - e. A description of steps taken by President Trump or other U.S. officials to ensure that the information disclosed would not be shared with any other foreign government, including whether the President or his advisers requested any assurance not to share this information; and
 - f. A description of steps the Intelligence Community has taken or will take to minimize the potential loss of intelligence in future meetings with foreign leaders.

Thank you very much for your prompt attention to this matter.

Sincerely yours,



Tom Carper
U.S. Senator



Martin Heinrich
U.S. Senator



Gary Peters
U.S. Senator

cc: Mr. William Evanina
Director
National Counterintelligence and Security Center

Mr. Wayne A. Stone
Acting Inspector General
Inspector General of the Intelligence Community