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One Hundred Nineteenth Congress
U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Foreign Affairs
2170 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515
www.foreignaffairs.house.gov

May 19th, 2025

The Honorable Marco Rubio
Secretary
U.S. Department of State
2201 C St NW
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Secretary Rubio,

We are concerned by the lack of clarity over the official status and duties of the various special appointees serving in the Trump Administration whose responsibilities are related to this Committee's jurisdiction. We request clarification regarding the status of these officials, including whether they are, or are supported by, Department of State employees and whether they are exercising significant authority pursuant to the laws of the United States.

We are aware of at least six such special appointees that the Trump Administration has publicly announced prior to and since taking office on January 20, 2025, with responsibilities within the Department of State, including Senior Advisor on Arab and Middle Eastern Affairs Massad Boulos, who was also subsequently announced as Senior Advisor for Africa; Special Presidential Envoy for Special Missions Ambassador Richard Grenell; Special Envoy to Latin America Mauricio Claver-Carone, Special Envoy for Russia and Ukraine Keith Kellogg, Special Envoy to the United Kingdom Mark Burnett, and Special Envoy for Hostage Response (SPEHA) Adam Boehler.

Congress has only expressly authorized SPEHA, none of the remaining positions are in statute. Further, in 2021 Congress amended the State Department Basic Authorities Act of 1956 (hereafter, the Basic Authorities Act), which requires the executive branch to engage with Congress regarding the appointment of special appointees at the Department of State.¹ Specifically, section 1(j) of the Basic Authorities Act (hereafter, Section 1(j)) requires the President to appoint individuals to serve as special envoys or in positions performing a similar function, regardless of title, at the Department of State who are exercising significant authority

¹ Section 5105 of the Department of State Authorization Act of 2021 (Division E of P.L. 117-81)

pursuant to the laws of the United States by and with the advice and consent of the Senate. For special appointees exercising significant authority in temporary appointments for not longer than 180 days, the executive branch is required to notify the House Foreign Affairs Committee and Senate Foreign Relations Committee not later than 15 days after the appointment. For special appointees who are not exercising significant authority, the executive branch is required to notify the House Foreign Affairs Committee and Senate Foreign Relations Committee not later than 15 days before the appointment.

To date, this Committee has received notifications for five of the above-mentioned special appointees: on April 4 for Special Envoy Bohler who was purportedly appointed on March 19; and on February 19 for Special Envoys Kellogg, Clavier-Carone, and Burnett and February 20 for Special Presidential Envoy Grenell, whose appointments were purportedly made on February 3. But the nature and timing of this information suggests a lack of full compliance with statutory notification requirements. For example, Special Presidential Envoy Grenell, whose role had first been announced by President-Elect Trump on December 14, subsequently undertook official duties prior to February 3—including a “secret mission” to Venezuela on January 31 that he described on a podcast.² And Special Envoy Bohler—whose nomination was pending with the Senate at the time—spoke on television on February 11 about his and others’ work in the Administration to secure the release of Marc Fogel and teased his knowledge of additional releases to come.³

We also note the failure of this administration to notify Congress of the appointment of Massad Boulos, who appears to be exercising significant authority pursuant to the laws of the United States and have not been submitted for Senate advice and consent. We note that Mr. Boulos’ latest role was announced on the State Department’s website on April 1, suggesting he is indeed a State Department employee.⁴

⁵In order for Congress to conduct effective oversight of the Department of State and other foreign policy matters, it is critical that we understand the nature of the roles and responsibilities of special appointees in accordance with the law. Therefore, in order to ensure this Administration is not in violation of Section 1(j), we request answers to the following questions by no later than May 29, 2025:

1. What are the employment status, employing agency/office, title(s), and official responsibilities of Senior Advisor on Arab and Middle Eastern Affairs and Senior Advisor on Africa Massad Boulos? Please include a description of any State Department staff currently supporting his work or reporting to him.

² [Trump appoints longtime foreign policy adviser Richard Grenell to serve as special missions envoy | AP News; Ric Grenell Shares Exclusive Details About His Secret Trip to Venezuela to Rescue American Prisoners – Megyn Kelly](#)

³ [Trump Hostage Envoy Says Another American Coming Home 'Tomorrow' - Newsweek](#)

⁴ [Announcement of Massad Boulos as Senior Advisor for Africa - United States Department of State](#)

2. Under what authority, title, and employment status was Special Presidential Envoy Ric Grenell performing official government duties prior to February 3, 2025? Please include a description of any State Department staff currently supporting his work or reporting to him.
3. Under what authority, title, and employment status was Special Envoy Adam Bohler performing official government duties prior to March 19, 2025? Please include a description of any State Department staff currently supporting his work or reporting to him.
4. Please clarify the status of the reviews by the State Department Office of the Legal Adviser for potential conflicts of interest of the five special appointees who were already notified to the Committee and when the Department will submit supplemental information on these reviews, as referenced in each of the written notifications.

We look forward to your cooperation on these matters.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Gregory W. Meeks". The signature is stylized with a large, sweeping initial "G" and a long horizontal line extending to the right.

GREGORY W. MEEKS
Ranking Member