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

October 6, 2020

Mr. Todd Brown
Acting Assistant Secretary of State
Bureau of Diplomatic Security
Department of State
2201 C St. NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Mr. Brown:

More than a year ago, reports emerged that an employee in the Department's Bureau of Economic and Business Affairs was actively involved in the white supremacist movement in the United States, calling into question his suitability to reflect U.S. foreign policy values at home and abroad. My staff first raised this case with Department staff last August and again in February and learned over that time frame that the individual had been removed from his home office and placed on administrative leave. Subsequent press reports raised still-outstanding questions about his status at the Department, including whether he is still employed and if so, receiving a salary.

I understand that the Bureau of Diplomatic Security (DS) conducted an investigation into the individual's suitability to hold a security clearance after these 2019 reports emerged, and that DS would have also overseen a periodic reinvestigation of his security clearance scheduled for 2018. As you may know, I and my staff have long engaged with DS officials about security clearance investigation procedures and adjudications, including assignment restrictions DS places on some individuals along seemingly racial or national grounds when granting clearances.

I have welcomed this engagement but remain concerned about a lack of clarity on several important aspects of DS' security clearance investigation process. These concerns include not just whether discrimination is playing a role in DS' granting of clearances, but also whether DS is sufficiently scrutinizing individuals who may advocate discrimination during the clearance

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process. So I would welcome written answers from you, in consult with the Bureau of Global Talent Management (GTM) or other relevant bureaus, to the following questions:

- What processes and procedures does DS have in place to ensure that security clearance investigators and adjudicators assess and account for an individual's white supremacist views or affiliations to white supremacist or other hate groups?
 - Have these processes and procedures changed since August 2019 and if so, how?
- How is information gathered from the Standard Form 86 (question 29.5), and otherwise during the investigation process, to assess whether an individual has affiliations with white supremacist or other hate groups?
- Are there specific, written instructions provided to investigators to assess whether an individual has affiliations with white supremacist or other hate groups?
- What is the current guidance to DS officials and investigators on how such affiliations should be factored into the clearance decision? Is affiliation with a white supremacist organization or other hate group a concern identified under the National Security Adjudicative Guidelines? Are such affiliations disqualifying?
- Are there specific, written instructions provided to investigators and DS officials on ensuring security clearance review processes themselves are non-discriminatory with respect to an individual's national or racial origin?
- If DS receives a report that a Department employee is affiliated with a white supremacist organization, would this information alone be enough to trigger a DS investigation of the individual's suitability to hold a clearance? Is this information shared with GTM for a suitability review by that bureau?
- Has the bureau determined whether the employee Matthew Gebert's ties to white supremacist groups were apparent during his last regularly scheduled periodic re-investigation?
 - If they were, what was DS' rationale for allowing him to continue to hold a security clearance?
 - If they were not, what are the reasons DS failed to uncover these white supremacist ties?

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- Is Matthew Gebert still employed by the Department? If so, what is his current employee status and is he paid or unpaid?

I trust you agree that discrimination, including on the basis of racial, religious, or national origin, is an affront to the fundamental U.S. values that State Department employees advance. As such, individuals who laud such discrimination have no business working in the Department, let alone holding security clearances necessary to perform sensitive national security-related tasks on behalf of the American people.

I welcome your written answers to these questions by October 13, 2020. I understand my staff is already working with the Department to schedule a quarterly briefing with DS on a range of topics in the bureau's purview, and I have directed them to include this matter among the topics addressed. Thank you for your service to the Department, and I welcome continued dialogue with you and your bureau on these important matters.

Sincerely,



ELIOT L. ENGEL
Chairman

Cc:

Ambassador Carol Perez, Director of Global Talent