

**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM

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March 6, 2018

General John Kelly  
Chief of Staff  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20006

Dear General Kelly:

I am writing to request information about the decision in February 2017 to reject an application for access to Sensitive Compartmented Information (SCI) for Robin Townley, a Senior Director on the National Security Council who served as one of the closest deputies to then-National Security Advisor Michael Flynn, as well as on the decision within days for both General Flynn and Mr. Townley to leave their positions at the White House.

According to a press report at the time, Mr. Townley was informed on Friday, February 10, 2017, that “the Central Intelligence Agency had rejected his request for an elite security clearance required for service on the NSC.” This report stated that “the rejection was approved by Mike Pompeo, President Donald Trump’s CIA director, and that it infuriated Flynn and his allies.” According to this report:

[T]he CIA did not offer much explanation for why Townley’s request for so-called “Sensitive Compartmented Information” clearance was rejected. But the sources said that Flynn and his allies believe it was motivated by Townley’s skepticism of the intelligence community’s techniques—sentiments shared by Flynn.<sup>1</sup>

By the following Monday—three days later—General Flynn was also ousted from his position as National Security Advisor.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *CIA Freezes Out Top Flynn Aide*, Politico (Feb. 10, 2017) (online at [www.politico.com/story/2017/02/mike-flynn-nsa-aide-trump-234923](http://www.politico.com/story/2017/02/mike-flynn-nsa-aide-trump-234923)).

<sup>2</sup> *Michael Flynn Resigns as National Security Adviser*, New York Times (Feb. 13, 2017) (online at [www.nytimes.com/2017/02/13/us/politics/donald-trump-national-security-adviser-michael-flynn.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2017/02/13/us/politics/donald-trump-national-security-adviser-michael-flynn.html)); *White House: President Trump Fired Michael Flynn*, Time (Feb. 14, 2017) (online at <http://time.com/4670930/white-house-president-trump-asked-for-flynn-resignation/>).

For more than a year, I have repeatedly raised concerns about the security clearance process at the White House, but you have declined to respond to any of my previous requests.<sup>3</sup> In this case, a number of critical questions are raised by the denial of Mr. Townley's SCI application. For example, it is unclear:

- why Mr. Townley's application for access to SCI was denied, particularly since he is a former Marine intelligence officer who reportedly held a Top Secret security clearance;
- what, if anything, his denial had to do with his relationship with General Flynn, who has since pleaded guilty to lying to the FBI about his contacts with Russian officials;<sup>4</sup>
- whether Mr. Townley was given interim access to SCI information before his application was denied, whether he was given access to classified information he should not have been given access to, and if so, what that information was; and
- whether Mr. Townley continues to hold a Top Secret clearance today or whether the White House suspended or revoked his access to all classified information as a result of derogatory information that barred him from obtaining access to SCI information.

In order to investigate the circumstances surrounding the denial of Mr. Townley's security clearance application and his removal from White House employment, I ask that you provide the following information by March 20, 2018:

- (1) Mr. Townley's application for access to SCI-level security clearance;
- (2) all documents and communications referring or relating to Mr. Townley's security clearance application;
- (3) all documents and communications received from any other agency referring or relating to Mr. Townley's application for an SCI clearance or his suitability for such a clearance;
- (4) all documents and communications referring or relating to classified information that Mr. Townley had access to since December 2016;

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<sup>3</sup> See, e.g., Letter from Ranking Member Elijah E. Cummings, House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, to Chief of Staff John Kelly, The White House, et al. (Oct. 5, 2017) (online at <https://democrats-oversight.house.gov/sites/democrats.oversight.house.gov/files/EEC%20to%20WH%20DSS%20NBIB%2010-05-17.pdf>).

<sup>4</sup> *Michael Flynn Pleads Guilty to Lying to the F.B.I. and Will Cooperate with Russia Inquiry*, New York Times (Dec. 1, 2017) (online at [www.nytimes.com/2017/12/01/us/politics/michael-flynn-guilty-russia-investigation.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2017/12/01/us/politics/michael-flynn-guilty-russia-investigation.html)).

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- (5) all documents and communications related to any investigations or national security concerns related to Mr. Townley; and
- (6) all documents or communications related to Mr. Townley's vetting, hiring, employment, personnel actions, and the termination of his employment.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Elijah E. Cummings  
Elijah E. Cummings  
Ranking Member

cc: The Honorable Trey Gowdy, Chairman