

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

July 21, 2020

Mr. Sean O'Donnell  
Acting Inspector General  
U.S. Department of Defense  
4800 Mark Center Drive  
Alexandria, VA 22350-1500

Dear Mr. O'Donnell:

We are writing to urge you to open an investigation into what appears to have been a concerted effort by the Trump Administration to retaliate against U.S. Army Lieutenant Colonel (LTC) Alexander S. Vindman for his congressional testimony during the impeachment inquiry of President Donald J. Trump.

Specifically, we ask that you examine the Department of Defense's actions regarding the employment, career opportunities, or promotion of LTC Vindman following LTC Vindman's testimony before Congress, and whether they were influenced in any way by White House officials. In addition, we request that your office investigate any actions by DOD or other officials to create a retaliatory work environment for LTC Vindman, including retributive actions taken against his brother LTC Yevgeny Vindman, as well as any systemic improvements that could be made to protect DOD whistleblowers from similar retaliation in the future.

On November 11, 2019, less than two weeks after LTC Vindman testified before Congress, Secretary of Defense Mark Esper insisted that LTC Vindman "shouldn't have any fear of retaliation."<sup>1</sup> Yet, on July 8, 2020, after 21 years of decorated service, LTC Vindman submitted his request for retirement from the U.S. Army. In a statement, his attorney stated:

Through a campaign of bullying, intimidation and retaliation, the president of the United States attempted to force LTC Vindman to choose: Between adhering to the law or pleasing a president. ... Between honoring his oath or protecting his career. Between protecting his promotion or the promotion of his fellow soldiers.<sup>2</sup>

Earlier this week, media reports indicated that after LTC Vindman's congressional testimony, the National Security Council (NSC) sent a memorandum or other document to DOD alleging that LTC Vindman created a "hostile work environment" at the NSC. A subsequent

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<sup>1</sup> *Vindman Should Not Fear Retaliation Over Ukraine Testimony-Pentagon's Esper*, Reuters (Nov. 11, 2019) (online at [www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-trump-impeachment-military/vindman-shouldnt-fear-retaliation-over-ukraine-testimony-pentagons-esper-idUSKBN1XL2DE](http://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-trump-impeachment-military/vindman-shouldnt-fear-retaliation-over-ukraine-testimony-pentagons-esper-idUSKBN1XL2DE)).

<sup>2</sup> *Id.*

command-level investigation was reportedly unable to substantiate any of the allegations cited in the document.<sup>3</sup>

In addition, recent reports suggest that DOD officials communicated to LTC Vindman that he could no longer work in the field of his expertise, that he likely would need to complete a “rehabilitative assignment,” and that the White House was trying to prevent his promotion to the rank of Colonel.<sup>4</sup>

Retaliation against a talented and dedicated war veteran is completely unacceptable and sends the wrong message to our fellow Americans in uniform about the oaths they take to defend and protect the Constitution. It is critical that your office act now to investigate these allegations to ensure that our military system remains impervious to political vendettas.

For all the above reasons, please respond to our committees by July 24, 2020, to advise whether you intend to open an investigation into these allegations of political and retaliatory harassment against LTC Vindman.

The Committee on Oversight and Reform is the principal oversight committee of the House of Representatives and has broad authority to investigate “any matter” at “any time” under House Rule X.

If you have any questions regarding this request, please contact Committee on Oversight and Reform staff at (202) 225-5051 or Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence staff at (202) 225-7690.

Sincerely,



Carolyn B. Maloney  
Chairwoman  
Committee on Oversight and Reform



Adam B. Schiff  
Chairman  
Permanent Select Committee on  
Intelligence

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<sup>3</sup> *White House Officials Sent Document to Pentagon Criticizing Vindman After Impeachment Testimony*, NBC News (July 15, 2020) (online at [www.nbcnews.com/news/military/white-house-officials-sent-document-pentagon-criticizing-vindman-after-impeachment-n1233613](http://www.nbcnews.com/news/military/white-house-officials-sent-document-pentagon-criticizing-vindman-after-impeachment-n1233613)).

<sup>4</sup> *Exclusive: Vindman to Retire from Military. His Lawyer Blames White House ‘Campaign of Bullying, Intimidation and Retaliation’*, CNN (July 8, 2020) (online at [www.cnn.com/2020/07/08/politics/vindman-retiring-alleged-white-house-retaliation/index.html](http://www.cnn.com/2020/07/08/politics/vindman-retiring-alleged-white-house-retaliation/index.html)).

Mr. Sean O'Donnell

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Stephen F. Lynch

Chairman

Subcommittee on National Security

Committee on Oversight and Reform

cc: The Honorable James R. Comer, Ranking Member  
Committee on Oversight and Reform

The Honorable Devin Nunes, Ranking Member  
Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence

The Honorable Glenn Grothman, Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on National Security  
Committee on Oversight and Reform