Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND ACCOUNTABILITY
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July 18, 2024

The Honorable Janet Yellen Secretary U.S. Department of the Treasury 1500 Pennsylvania Ave. NW Washington, D.C. 20220

Dear Secretary Yellen:

As part of a government-wide investigation into the work federal agencies are doing to protect Americans from Chinese Communist Party (CCP or the Party) political warfare, the Committee on Oversight and Accountability (Committee) is investigating CCP threats to the stability of the American economy and its subversion of the international financial system. The CCP continues to advance policies to bring businesses and investors under Party control while shaping economic information on the Chinese economy into economic propaganda to promote the CCP's destructive ambitions.

This behavior is characteristic of the CCP's approach to international institutions that it seeks to subvert even as it pursues its own program of trapping developing nations in debt. This economic propaganda and subversion of the rules-based international financial order puts American businesses and investors at risk. The Department of the Treasury's (Treasury) mission as a steward of U.S. economic and financial systems and its leadership in American engagement with international financial institutions (IFI) place it at a vital crossroads to counter CCP subversion.

Broader Committee Investigation

The Committee is conducting oversight of the federal government's work to protect the American people from CCP political warfare¹ and nefarious influence operations. For decades, the CCP has sought to infiltrate and influence every aspect of American society.² The CCP's goal is plain: defeat the "main enemy," which counterintelligence officials have identified as

¹ "Political warfare seeks to influence emotions, motives, objective reasoning, and behavior of foreign governments, organizations, groups, and individuals in a manner favorable to one's own political-military objectives." Mark Stokes, *The People's Liberation Army General Political Department: Political Warfare with Chinese Characteristics*, Project 2049 Inst. (Oct. 14, 2013).

² See generally Constantine C. Menges, China The Gathering Threat (2005); H.R. Rep. No. 105-851 (1999) ("Cox Report"); Robert Spalding, War Without Rules (2022); Col. Grant Newsham, When China Attacks: A Warning to America (2023); Kerry K. Gershaneck, Political Warfare: Strategies for Combating China's Plan to "Win without Fighting" (2020); see also Larry Diamond and Orville Schell, China's Influence & America's Interests: Promoting Constructive Vigilance, Hoover Inst. (2019).

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America.³ The fronts are multiple; according to the CCP itself: "[t]he battlefield will be everywhere."⁴ And the tools are myriad, with the "united front"⁵ leading as one of the People's Republic of China's (PRC)⁶ "magic weapons,"⁷ as described by General Secretary Xi Jinping, to advance the Party's aim of global domination.⁹ United front work (UFW), which may be executed by the United Front Work Department (UFWD) or elsewhere in the Party, is a "unique blend of engagement, influence activities, and intelligence operations" that the CCP uses to "influence other countries' policy toward the PRC and to gain access to advanced foreign technology." UFW "generally involves covert activity and is a form of interference that aids the CCP's rise." United front "networks" are used "to carry out relationship-focused influence campaigns through a multitude of proxies." ¹²

Despite years of false promises to the West, the CCP openly seeks to achieve its destructive ambition. In 1999, two People's Liberation Army Air Force colonels authored *Unrestricted Warfare*, which has been described as a strategic military vision for the PRC to defeat America through political warfare. Retired Brig. Gen. Robert Spalding, who has served in senior positions in strategy and diplomacy with the U.S. Departments of Defense and State for decades, characterizes the book as "the main blueprint for China's efforts to unseat America as the world's economy, political, and ideological leader," which "shows exactly how a totalitarian nation set out to dominate the West through a comprehensive, long-term strategy that includes everything from corporate sabotage to cyberwarfare to dishonest diplomacy; from violations of international trade law and intellectual property law to calculated abuses of the global financial system." Kerry Gershaneck, former counterintelligence officer who wrote a seminal book on combatting PRC Political Warfare, has explained that *Unrestricted Warfare* details CCP use of "any methods" where "the boundaries between war and non-war and between military and non-

³ Menges, *supra* note 2; Gershaneck, *supra* note 2 ("The PRC is engaged in war against the United States. It is not mere competition or malign influence, but war by PRC definition."); Newsham, *supra* note 2, at 60 (The CCP "seeks global domination" and "will fight its main enemy, the United States, to achieve it.").

⁴ Qiao Liang & Wang Xiangsu, *Unrestricted Warfare: China's Master Plan to Destroy America* (PLA Lit. & Arts Pub. House 1999) (China) (military colonels describing twenty-four varieties of warfare).

⁵ "While the CCP's United Front Work Department has functional responsibility for these [warfare] operations and activities, PRC united front work is a task of all CCP agencies and members." Gershaneck, *supra* note 2, at 22.

⁶ It is essential to understand that Xi Jinping has removed any "veneer of separation between the [CCP] and the

Chinese state." Gershaneck, *supra* note 2, at 43 (quoting Ann-Marie Brady, *Exploit Every Rift: United Front Work Goes Global*, in David Gitter et al., *Party Watch Annual* Report, Ctr. for Adv. China Res. (2018)).

⁷ Ann-Marie Brady, *Magic Weapons: China's political influence activities under Xi Jinping*, Wilson Ctr. (Sept. 18, 2017); *see also* Sel. Comm. on the Chinese Communist Party, *Memorandum: United Front 101*, at 7 ("United Front 101 Memo").

⁸ Alex Joske, *The party speaks for you: Foreign interference and the Chinese Communist Party's united front system*, Austl. Strategic Pol'y Inst. (Jun. 9, 2020) (quoting Xi Jinping at 2015 Central United Front Work Meeting).

⁹ See, e.g., Newsham, supra note 2, at 43 ("The People's Republic of China may settle for dominance rather than occupation, but it does indeed aim to rule us all.").

¹⁰ United Front 101 Memo, *supra* note 7, at 1.

¹¹ Joske, *The party speaks for you, supra* note 8, at 19.

¹² Alex Joske, Spies and Lies: How China's Greatest Covert Operations Fooled the World, at 63 (2022).

¹³ Gershaneck, *supra* note 2.

¹⁴ Spalding, War Without Rules, supra note 2, at xii; see also Robert Spalding, Stealth War, at 12-13 (2019) (Unrestricted Warfare "should be required reading for all branches of the US government and for business leaders, because it outlines, in no uncertain terms, the strategy behind China's policies," including stating that the "new principles of war" are "no longer 'using armed force to compel the enemy to submit to one's will,' but rather are 'using all means, including armed force or non-armed force, military and non-military, and lethal and non-lethal means to compel the enemy to accept one's interests."").

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military affairs [have] systemically broken down."¹⁵ To successfully combat these highly organized and pervasive warfares spawned by China, federal agencies must first recognize and understand them.

The CCP "know[s] the strength of the American people, of the American idea, and that's why China has launched so many warfares to try to weaken us, divide us, and get us to hate ourselves and each other." ¹⁶ Retired Col. Grant Newsham, former U.S. Marine Liaison Officer to the Japan Ground Self-Defense Force and U.S. Foreign Service Officer, has advised that "the way out of this is to rediscover why we are an exceptional country, get to know each other better, and fight side by side." ¹⁷

As all Americans are targets of the PRC's warfare, ¹⁸ federal agencies have responsibilities to (1) conduct outreach to citizens about the dangers they may encounter, and (2) provide appropriate incentives for Americans to proactively protect themselves—their communities, schools, houses of worship, businesses, finances, food, and more—from the threat. Federal agencies must prepare Americans to "take action." To stop the CCP's "destructive actions," retired Brig. Gen. Spalding advises that it will "take macrolevel strategic changes by our government, but also microlevel actions by individuals, businesses and other civic institutions." The Committee is surveying each agency's role to secure Americans and their communities.

Congress has recognized the threat posed by the PRC for some time. Notably, in 1999, the U.S. House Select Committee on U.S. National Security and Military/Commercial Concerns with the People's Republic of China concluded that in the preceding decade, the PRC used a "variety of techniques including espionage, controlled commercial entities, and a network of individuals that engage in contact with scientists, business people and academics" as part of its warfare operations.²¹

With varying degrees of effort and success, federal agencies have sought to address the CCP's attack on what Col. Newsham has aptly described as "[t]he core of America." However, the threat is grave and work must be done across agencies to protect America. Peter Mattis,

¹⁸ "The Three Warfares, the traditional foundation of PRC political warfare, include public opinion/media warfare, psychological warfare, and legal warfare." Gershaneck, *supra* note 2. It "requires efforts to unify military and civilian thinking, divide the enemy into factions, weaken the enemy's combat power, and organize legal offensives." Elsa Kania, *China Brief: The PLA's Latest Strategic Thinking on the Three Warfares*, Jamestown Found. (Aug. 22, 2016).

¹⁵ Gershaneck, *supra* note 2, at 16 (quoting Qiao Liang & Wang Xiangsu, *supra* note 4, at 6-7).

¹⁶ Newsham, *supra* note 2, at 341.

¹⁷ *Id*.

¹⁹ Spalding, War Without Rules, supra note 2, at 214.

²⁰ *Id.; see also* Peter Mattis & Matt Schrader, *America Can't Beat Beijing's Tech Theft With Racial Profiling*, War on the Rocks (Jul. 23, 2019) ("The U.S. government's difficulties in telling a convincing story about the Chinese Communist Party point to a[n] important step: addressing a serious lack of 'China literacy,' both within the enforcement portions of the federal bureaucracy, and in U.S. society as a whole.").

²¹ Cox Report, *supra* note 2, at xxxiii; *see generally* Menges, *supra* note 2.

²² Newsham, *supra* note 2, at 33.

²³ See Newsham, supra note 2, at 309 ("We need to know, value, protect and build the strengths of the United States of America, and shed the light of truth on the corruption, in every sense of the word," of the CCP. "That could mean in discussions with family, community, at school or wherever that understanding needs bolstering." Education courses on PRC political warfare would benefit "[a]ny decision-makers who work with China."); see Gershaneck, supra note 2, at 153 (outlining such courses to "build[] internal defenses").

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former staff director of the Congressional-Executive Commission of China and counterintelligence analyst at the CIA counsels that

Only by being clear in public about the actions and intentions of the Chinese party-state, and being publicly accountable for the actions the U.S. government takes in response, will the United States be able to address Beijing's challenges while upholding our democratic commitment to fair, transparent justice for all Americans.²⁴

To this end, the Committee is conducting this investigation and implores each federal agency to uphold its duty to the American communities for whom they are responsible.

Foundation of CCP Economic Warfare

The CCP's framework for national security, released by General Secretary Xi, establishes a hierarchy of security threats to Party authority and regards economic security as its foundation. Treasury's mission includes concern for American economic and national security, there should be no confusion that this is categorically different from the CCP's interpretation of national security which criminalizes routine business practices and supplants reliable market research with economic propaganda. Notably, the CCP's national security framework emphasizes the importance of preempting potential economic threats before they arise, and revisions to China's Counter Espionage Law broadened the types of sensitive information covered by the law to include all sources of information rather than strictly those pertaining to state secrets. This authority has been used to align the messaging on the Chinese economy to project economic vitality regardless of the reality. Attempts at this economic propaganda have been effective, as evidenced by reporting that brokerage analysts, researchers, and media outlets have been self-censoring criticism of the strength of the Chinese economy. Treasury should consider this foundation of CCP economic warfare to better assess how to protect Americans from the economic warfare targeting our country.

CCP Efforts to Manipulate the International Order

The PRC was admitted to the rules-based international financial system with the understanding that the government-controlled economy would give way to a free market system that would lead to a more open, democratic system of government.³¹ Contrary to the premise of the PRC's admission to international financial institutions (IFIs), the CCP has maintained market control domestically, seeks to supplant the existing international system, and remains an oppressive, authoritarian regime.³² Despite being America's largest economic competitor, China continues to hold developing nation status, which allows it to unfairly subsidize its industries,

²⁴ Mattis and Schrader, *supra* note 20.

²⁵ U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, 2023 Report to Congress, 55-56 (Nov. 2023).

²⁶ Treasury Department, https://home.treasury.gov/about/general-information/role-of-the-treasury (last visited June 5, 2024).

²⁷ U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, *supra* note 25, at 54.

²⁸ *Id.*, at 55-56.

²⁹ Katja Drinhausen & Helena Legarda, "Comprehensive National Security" Unleashed: How Xi's Approach Shapes China's Policies at Home and Abroad, Mercator Institute for China Studies (Sept. 15, 2022).

³⁰ Jay Newman, *China's Coming Lawfare Offensive*, Financial Times (Sept. 15, 2023).

³¹ U.S. Trade Representative, 2023 Report to Congress on China's WTO Compliance, at 2 (Feb. 2024).

³² Drinhausen, *supra* note 29.

affords it protections by the World Trade Organization (WTO),³³ and enables access to loans and advisory services from organizations like the World Bank.³⁴ Simultaneously, China has grown to the second largest economy in the world and maintains large trade barriers against U.S. companies.³⁵

Treasury is the lead federal agency on international economic matters, ³⁶ and is often directed by legislation to use the voice and vote of the United States within IFIs to advance American interests. Yet, too often, Treasury fails to advance U.S. economic security interests vis-à-vis the PRC through these institutions. IFIs include the International Monetary Fund (IMF), WTO and the Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs). Each organization plays an important role in an international financial system that the United States takes a leading role in stewarding. IMF monetary policy aims to ensure the stability of international financial markets through financing support in the event of a crisis such as the 2008 crash;³⁷ the WTO provides a forum for overseeing and administering global trade rules between nations; ³⁸ and the MDBs provide financial assistance to developing countries through loans and grant funding.³⁹ The cornerstone of the MDBs is the World Bank Group (WBG), which is the oldest and most established. It provided nearly \$100 billion in financing during 2022. 40 The CCP has repeatedly evidenced a subversive attitude towards IFIs, with General Secretary Xi stating a thrust of economic engagement is to "sustain and enhance our superiority across the entire production chain . . . forming powerful . . . capabilities based on artificially cutting off supply to foreigners."41 The U.S. Trade Representative characterized China's relationship with the WTO as "a long record of violating, disregarding, and evading existing WTO rules." Despite this record, China is currently classified as a developing nation in the eyes of the IFIs, which brings special benefits, 43 including cumulative loans from the WBG of \$16 billion. 44

The relatively small scale of loans from the WBG to China, compared to their overall economy, belies a more fundamental issue. Former U.S. Executive Director of the WBG, Erik Bethel, has noted that WBG funding brings additional benefits beyond the financial commitment, and that this has been abused by Chinese companies who seek to exploit the bank to attain unfair economic advantages. For example, during Bethel's tenure as the U.S. Executive Director, a

³³ Examples of Provisions for Differential And More Favourable Treatment of Developing Countries, WTO, https://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/devel_e/teccop_e/s_and_d_eg_e.htm (last accessed June 6, 2024).

³⁴ *Investment Project Financing*, World Bank Group, https://www.worldbank.org/en/what-we-do/products-and-services/financing-instruments/investment-project-financing (last accessed June 12, 2024).

³⁵ Joe Leahy et al., *The Looming Trade Tensions Over China's Subsidies*, Financial Times (Jan. 29, 2024).

³⁶ Shayerah I. Akhtar, IFI11016, U.S. Trade Policy Functions: Who Does What?, 2 (last updated Feb. 22, 2024)

³⁷ Martin A. Weiss, IFI10676, The International Monetary Fund, 1 (last updated Mar. 7, 2022).

³⁸ Cathleen D. Cimino-Isaacs & Rachel F. Fefer, R45417, World Trade Organization: Overview and Future Direction, 1 (last updated Oct. 18, 2021).

³⁹ Rebecca M. Nelson, R41170, Multilateral Development Banks: Overview and Issues for Congress, 1 (last updated Sept. 13, 2023).

⁴⁰ *Id.*, at 8.

⁴¹ Grant Newsham, Congressional Testimony Given at a Hearing of the H. Comm. on Oversight and Accountability: Defending America from the Chinese Communist Party's Political Warfare, Part I (Apr. 17, 2024).

⁴² U.S. Trade Representative, *supra* note 31, at 3.

⁴³ *Id.*, at 10.

⁴⁴ Clete R. Willems, *Hearing Before the H. Comm. on Financial Services: Combatting the Economic Threat from China* (Feb. 7, 2023).

⁴⁵ Real Vision, *Kyle Bass: The China Conundrum Ft. Erik Bethel*, YouTube (Nov. 20, 2023), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GxmH9 PQ9Po.

proposal was made to fund a Chinese business that created optical chips for drones, and despite China having one of the world's largest venture capital markets, ⁴⁶ this company sought money from the WBG. ⁴⁷ Over the course of the proposal, it was explained that the involvement of the WBG would make the company "look a little more benign and a little less problematic." ⁴⁸ Aside from the financial benefits of WBG loans, a commitment from the bank to fund a project in a developing nation facilitates a "knowledge transfer" as the bank arranges for financial and technical advisors to assist the project. ⁴⁹ This advantage of financial support, technical advice, and laundering a company's image for investors continues to be afforded to the CCP's coercive economic efforts despite having ample domestic resources.

The ongoing ability of the CCP to avoid its responsibilities under IFI agreements and take advantage of funding and resources intended for truly developing nations is abetted by IFI leadership and staff that are affiliated with the CCP's united front and committed to advancing its goals. A review of top leadership positions at the IMF, WTO, and MDBs reveals that Executive Directors, Managing Directors, Deputy Managing Directors, Vice Presidents for Infrastructure, and many other roles are filled by people affiliated with the CCP's united front. Given the united front's work to covertly advance the CCP's destructive ambitions—and to do so at the behest of Chinese intelligence services—it is apparent that united front influence in the leadership of IFIs poses significant risks to the American economy.

A cornerstone of a new CCP-led economic system is the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).⁵⁷ Launched in 2013, the BRI aimed to encourage Chinese companies, banks, and commercial institutions to help build an economically integrated network of countries.⁵⁸ With a name inspired by the historical Silk Road that once linked China to Europe, the aim of the many projects envisioned under the framework would create a network of roads, bridges, railroads, and shipping ports; as well as, manufacturing and mining operations spanning Africa, Europe, and Asia.⁵⁹ Now ten years after the start of the project, nearly \$1 trillion have been spent on financial integration and physical infrastructure, with most projects being financed by CCP affiliated enterprises.⁶⁰ The details of the debt incurred by BRI participants for these projects is opaque as the CCP consistently refuses to disclose details of the debt or debt relief programs its enterprises offer.⁶¹ This is the case despite the PRC's membership in the IMF, which is currently

⁴⁹ World Bank Group, *supra* note 34.

⁴⁶ Coco Liu, China Venture Funding Hits Record \$131 Billion Despite Crackdown, Bloomberg (Jan. 9, 2022).

⁴⁷ Real Vision, supra note 45.

⁴⁸ *Id*.

⁵⁰ Alex Joske, *The Party Speaks For You*, Australian Strategic Policy Institute (June 9, 2020).

⁵¹ U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, PRC Representation at Intl. Orgs., 14 (Feb. 2024).

⁵² *Id*.

⁵³ *Id.*, at 13.

⁵⁴ *Id.*. at 15.

⁵⁵ *Id.*. at 1.

⁵⁶ Joske, supra note 50.

⁵⁷ James Kynge and Keith Fray, *China's Plan To Reshape World Trade On Its Own Terms*, Financial Times (Feb. 26, 2024).

⁵⁸ Elaine K. Dezenski and Josh Birenbaum, *Tightening the Belt or End of the Road? China's BRI at 10*, Foundation for Defense of Democracies (Feb. 27, 2024).

⁵⁹ Kynge, *supra* note 57.

⁶⁰ Karen M. Sutter, et al., IF11735, China's "One Belt, One Road" Initiative: Economic Issues, 2 (last updated Sept. 27, 2023).

⁶¹ Dezenski, *supra* note 58.

seeking to address that very issue of debt relief for developing nations.⁶² BRI participants are often in need of debt relief: with almost half of the 166 participants qualifying for special WBG loan terms and of ten nations currently receiving debt distress support from the WBG, nine are BRI members.⁶³

There is strategic importance for the CCP to perpetuate ongoing debt repayment issues for BRI participants, as such issues have allowed the CCP control over natural resources and infrastructure—exemplified by the settlement of debts in cobalt mining rights in the Congo⁶⁴ and CCP control of harbor infrastructure in Kenya. China joined the world's international financial stage nearly two decades ago with promises of normalized trade and economic relations and has sought to position itself as a destination for capital investment. This has not materialized. In fact, the CCP has only hardened its position that the market economy in China be under the control of the Party. Despite cooperative rhetoric, the CCP has evidenced a consistently rapacious attitude through its predatory economic relationships via the BRI and subversion of IFIs to assist the CCP in stymicing efforts to address the adverse impacts of the BRI's expanding program of debt entrapment for developing nations.

Conclusion and Requests

Treasury has great responsibilities to protect Americans—all citizens, taxpayers, and investors—from the economic warfare waged by the CCP to supplant American national security and global leadership. In the PRC, American investors and businesses are forced to operate amidst uncertain and punitive legal frameworks that work to align them with Party goals. Internationally, the CCP is eager to join IFIs to gain access and recognition but consistently disregards their agreements and, in fact, uses IFIs to subsidize its own international predatory debt practices.

To assist the Committee in investigating this matter, we request a briefing from the Treasury Department with Committee staff. Please contact Committee staff as soon as possible, but no later than July 10, 2024. This briefing should address the following:

- (1) How Treasury strives to inspire and equip Americans to strengthen their communities, innovate, and create the technologies and phenomena that will secure a strong and prosperous future for our nation;
- (2) How Treasury leadership ensures from the top down that all Treasury employees are aware of CCP warfare and influence operations against America and are equipped to address them wherever they arise;
- (3) CCP Economic Warfare & Treasury's Response

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⁶² Press Release, IMF, Global Sovereign Debt Roundtable Co-Chairs Press Statement (Apr. 12, 2023).

⁶³ U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, *supra* note 25, at 70-71.

⁶⁴ Gerard M. Acosta, *China's One Road, One Belt Grand Strategy: Founded on the Weaponization of the Global Supply Chain*, Defense Transportation Journal (Dec. 1, 2020).

⁶⁵ Real Vision, *supra* note 45.

⁶⁶ U.S. Trade Representative, *supra* note 31, at 3.

⁶⁷ *Id.*, at 10.

- a. Treasury efforts to develop and maintain expertise to identify, assess, and counter CCP influence in domestic and international markets;
- b. Treasury efforts to warn U.S. businesses and financial institutions about the risks of partnering or engaging with PRC companies;
- c. The Office of Foreign Assets Control's (OFAC) efforts to sanction individuals and entities aiding CCP unrestricted warfare against America;
- d. OFAC expertise on CCP economic warfare;
- e. Treasury efforts through the Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States (CFIUS) to protect Americans from CCP economic warfare;
- f. CFIUS expertise on CCP economic warfare;
- g. Treasury's views of CCP and PRC efforts to establish a central bank digital currency (CBDC), and the affect this might have on the U.S. dollar and U.S. economic and national security;
- h. The extent to which Chinese state actors are financially invested in American markets;
- i. Challenges faced by American companies due to unfair trade practices by the CCP;
- j. Proactive steps that can be taken to support American companies competing with CCP-backed companies in critical industries;

(4) Treasury Efforts to Counter CCP Manipulation of IFIs

- a. Treasury efforts to identify and counter CCP staff-level influence at IFIs;
- b. The extent to which BRI debtor members receive loans, grants or other financial assistance from any of the IFIs;
- c. The extent to which IFIs provide loans, grants, or other financial assistance to China;
- d. How Treasury can foster meaningful economic relationships with emerging market countries in an effort to strengthen American competitiveness vis-à-vis CCP economic warfare;

(5) Treasury Leadership Engagement with CCP Officials

- a. Treasury's assessment of the value of its leadership meeting with CCP officials;
- b. Any requests from CCP or PRC officials made to Secretary Yellen during the July 2023 and April 2024 China Visits;
- c. Any requests from CCP or PRC officials made during the meetings of the U.S.-PRC Economic Working Group; and
- d. Any requests from CCP or PRC officials made during the meetings of the U.S.-PRC Finance Working Group.

Please contact Committee staff at (202) 225-5074 to schedule the staff briefing. The Committee on Oversight and Accountability is the principal oversight committee of the U.S. House of Representatives and has broad authority to investigate "any matter" at "any time" under House Rule X. Thank you for your prompt attention to this important investigation.

Sincerely,

James Comer Chairman

Committee on Oversight and Accountability

cc: The Honorable Jamie B. Raskin, Ranking Member Committee on Oversight and Accountability