

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

February 7, 2022

The Honorable Antony J. Blinken  
Secretary of State  
Department of State

Dear Secretary Blinken:

Recent records have come to light confirming that the State Department withheld records from our offices and improperly restrained us from making information public by inappropriately classifying information during our investigation into conflicts of interest involving Hunter Biden.

In December 2020, nearly three months after we released our report titled, *Hunter Biden, Burisma, and Corruption: The Impact on U.S. Government Policy and Related Concerns*, and after our staff had interviewed George Kent, the State Department provided our offices a partially-redacted November 22, 2016, email from State Department official George Kent to his colleagues.<sup>1</sup> In that email, Kent wrote about his interaction with the Democratic lobbying firm Blue Star Strategies and its “relationship” with Mykola Zlochevsky, the corrupt owner of Burisma. The State Department explained to our offices that the information contained in the eight redacted lines of Kent’s email was “classified.”<sup>2</sup>

*Redactions in George Kent's Nov. 22, 2016 email (excerpt below)*<sup>3</sup>

When Dan came thru town in May, he mentioned to me that Sally P, whom he characterized as an old colleague who had worked in this area (Central and Eastern Europe), would like to talk to me about what the embassy knew about Zlochevsky. I gave Dan as background an earful about the whole Zlochevsky saga – the \$23 million in frozen assets from presumptive corrupt deals selling oil/gas licenses from MinEcology, the 6 months FBI and MI-5 put into the case in an asset recovery effort as the first possible recovery in the wake of the high profile US-UK-World Bank initiative, the PGO under Team Yarema closing the case, transferring it back to MOI as a case against the Ministry of Ecology rather than the Minister (Zlochevsky), and issuing a letter to the lawyers on Christmas Day 2014 that there was no active case open on Zlochevsky so his lawyers could flip it to the UK judge and get the money unfrozen and transferred out of the UK before the FBI and MI-5 knew what was happening, my “entertaining” engagement of Yarema’s top deputy Danylenko in February 2015

I told Dan I would be happy to share all of that with Sally, were she to call me. Dan said that he understood Sally was doing due diligence on exactly this issue, to make the case to Hunter. I never heard from Sally.

<sup>1</sup> Our offices interviewed George Kent on July 24, 2020. Email from George Kent, U.S. Dep’t of St., to Jorgan K. Andrews, et al., U.S. Dep’t of St. (Nov. 22, 2016, 08:28:33 – 0500) [State-2019-18-0016374-75].

<sup>2</sup> Letter from Ryan M. Kaldahl, Acting Assistant Secretary of State, U.S. Dep’t of St., to Ron Johnson, Chairman, S. Comm. Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, and Charles Grassley, Chairman, S. Comm. on Finance, Dec. 1, 2020.

<sup>3</sup> “Sally P” is Sally Painter, the Chief Operating Officer of Blue Star Strategies. Email from George Kent, U.S. Dep’t of St., to Jorgan K. Andrews, et al., U.S. Dep’t of St. (Nov. 22, 2016, 08:28:33 – 0500) [State-2019-18-0016374-75].

The document containing the email stated that the information was classified by “Marie Yovanovitch, Ambassador, U.S. Embassy Kyiv.”<sup>4</sup>

*Classification information from George Kent’s email*<sup>5</sup>



After requests from our staff to the State Department to declassify the document, on March 18, 2021, Senator Grassley wrote to you about this specific email calling for its declassification and noted that there was “no legitimate basis upon which that material should remain classified.”<sup>6</sup> To date, the State Department has refused to produce an unredacted and unclassified copy of this email to our offices. However, a recent news report released a complete copy of this email revealing the information contained underneath the redactions.

Even though this information is now in the public domain, the State Department has yet to officially declassify the document. We call on you to immediately provide an unredacted and unclassified version of this email and end all efforts to hide records from Congress and the American people about Hunter Biden’s connections to Burisma. Further, we request the State Department provide the following:

1. Explain the basis for which Marie Yovanovitch classified a portion of George Kent’s November 22, 2016 email as “confidential.”
2. Provide the date of when Yovanovitch classified this email.
3. Declassify George Kent’s November 22, 2016 email and all other documents that contain information relating to Hunter Biden and Burisma.
4. Provide all documents referring or relating to George Kent’s November 22, 2016 email.
5. Provide all communications relating to the State Department’s decision to withhold these documents from our offices and all communications relating to the State Department’s decision to not declassify the email in question after our requests to do so.

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<sup>4</sup> *Id.*

<sup>5</sup> *Id.*

<sup>6</sup> Letter from Ranking Member Charles E. Grassley, S. Comm. on the Judiciary, to U.S. Dep’t of St. (Mar. 18, 2021), [https://www.grassley.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/grassley\\_to\\_state\\_-\\_classified\\_records\\_re-production\\_kent\\_email.pdf](https://www.grassley.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/grassley_to_state_-_classified_records_re-production_kent_email.pdf).

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Please provide this information as soon as possible but no later than February 14, 2022.  
Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Charles E. Grassley  
Ranking Member  
Committee on the Judiciary



Ron Johnson  
Ranking Member  
Permanent Subcommittee  
on Investigations

Enclosure

cc: The Honorable Jon Ossoff  
Chairman  
Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations

The Honorable Richard J. Durbin  
Chairman  
Committee on the Judiciary