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## United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6225

June 7, 2018

The Honorable Steve Linick  
Inspector General  
U.S. Department of State  
Office of the Inspector General  
SA-39  
1700 North Moore St.  
Arlington, VA 22209

Dear Mr. Inspector General:

I request that your office conduct an investigation into recent public comments by U.S. Ambassador to Germany Richard Grenell which fall afoul of longstanding practice by U.S. diplomatic personnel to refrain from advancing the partisan objectives of political parties in the countries in which they serve, and which may have violated a Foreign Affairs Manual prohibition (3 FAM 4123.3) on engaging in partisan political activities abroad.

On June 3, 2018, an article posted on [www.breitbart.com](http://www.breitbart.com) reported on an interview of Ambassador Grenell by Breitbart writer Chris Tomlinson. The article's headline asserted that "Trump's Right Hand Man in Europe Rick Grenell Wants to 'Empower' European Conservatives." The article stated the following:

*At a sit-down interview at his official residence in Berlin with Breitbart London, Ambassador Grenell said: "There are a lot of conservatives throughout Europe who have contacted me to say they are feeling there is a resurgence going on."*

*"I absolutely want to empower other conservatives throughout Europe, other leaders. I think there is a groundswell of conservative policies that are taking hold because of the failed policies of the left," he added.*

The article reported Ambassador Grenell expressing support for promoting "conservative issues" and "candidates that can articulate 'consistent conservative' policies." In the article, Ambassador Grenell is quoted as praising the leader of a neighboring country, Austrian Chancellor Sebastian Kurz, as the type of politician he supports.

In a Tweet later on June 3, responding to criticism of his views expressed in the article, Ambassador Grenell wrote "I condemn those comments completely. Don't put words in my mouth. The idea that I'd endorse candidates/parties is ridiculous."

U.S. ambassadors, whether political appointees or career officials, have long taken pains to avoid interfering in the politics of the countries in which they serve by trumpeting partisan views. Furthermore, while U.S. officials posted abroad have been careful to navigate the political landscape in their host countries objectively, they have also generally avoided publicly promoting political officials, ideologies, or movements located beyond the countries in which they serve.

These practices are essential to ensuring that U.S. envoys are viewed with credibility and are able to build relationships across the political spectrum of the host country in support of U.S. national interests. They must speak authoritatively on behalf of American interests and values across the political spectrum. Furthermore, it is antithetical to our values to endorse or favor one political party or candidate over another in another country's democratic system. Unfortunately, negative reactions from a broad swath of German society to Ambassador Grenell's reported comments seem to have already undermined their trust in him and, by extension, in the United States Government.

In order to restore trust and maintain productive diplomatic ties with one of our closest European allies, it is critical for the State Department to show that it takes these comments and their negative impact on our diplomatic relations abroad seriously. Your opening of an investigation into whether these comments were indeed made as reported, and whether they may have violated longstanding Department protocols or FAM provisions, would demonstrate such resolve and would help to buttress diplomatic best practices by U.S. envoys around the globe.

I urge your office to give this matter immediate and serious attention, and to provide a response on the results of your investigation to relevant Congressional officials.

Sincerely,

  
Robert Menendez  
Ranking Member