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## United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6225

June 23, 2020

The Honorable Mike Pompeo  
Secretary of State  
U.S. Department of State  
2201 C Street, N.W.  
Washington D.C. 20520

Secretary Pompeo:

I write regarding the shocking and deeply troubling new revelations by President Trump's former National Security Advisor John Bolton. According to news reports and an excerpt from his upcoming book, Mr. Bolton writes that the President once again sought, and this time received, action from a foreign government aimed at boosting his re-election prospects.

The allegation that the President connected U.S. electoral politics—and his own candidacy—with the outcome of U.S.-China trade negotiations should outrage Americans, and it once again raises troubling questions about whether the President is conducting foreign policy to further the interests of all Americans, or simply his own.

Specifically, in discussions with President Xi Jinping, President Trump is reported to have “turned the conversation to the coming U.S. presidential election, alluding to China’s economic capability to affect the ongoing campaigns, pleading with Xi to ensure he’d win.”<sup>1</sup> President Trump, according to Bolton, “stressed the importance of farmers, and increased Chinese purchases of soybeans and wheat in the electoral outcome.”<sup>2</sup>

This is not the first time that President Trump has apparently solicited China’s interference in a U.S. election. In October 2019, President Trump publicly urged China to investigate his domestic political opponent, Joe Biden.<sup>3</sup> In a June 2019 call, the President reportedly personally raised his political opponents with President Xi.<sup>4</sup> Michael Pillsbury, an outside adviser to the President’s China trade policy, claimed that he had raised the Biden family with Chinese officials when he was in Beijing and that he “got a quite a bit of background on Hunter Biden from the Chinese.”<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Josh Dawsey, “Trump asked China’s Xi to help him win reelection, according to Bolton book,” *The Washington Post*, June 17, 2020.

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

<sup>3</sup> Peter Baker & Eileen Sullivan, “Trump Publicly Urges China to Investigate the Bidens,” *The New York Times*, Oct. 3, 2019. President Trump told reporters, “China should start an investigation into the Bidens, because what happened in China is just about as bad as what happened with Ukraine.” *Id.*

<sup>4</sup> Kylie Atwood et al., “Trump raised Biden with Xi in June call housed in highly secure server,” *CNN*, Oct. 3, 2019.

<sup>5</sup> David Lynch & Josh Dawsey, “Trump adviser gives conflicting accounts on whether Chinese offered information about Hunter Biden,” *The Washington Post*, Oct. 10, 2019.

Nor is it the first time that China may have been willing to intermingle the personal economic fortunes of the President and his family to further its own strategic ends. China's granting of several long-sought trademarks to the president's daughter on the eve of the first meeting between President Trump and President Xi at Mar-a-Lago in 2017 remains a curious and unexplained coincidence.<sup>6</sup>

These accounts raise questions about what you have done to push back against the President's efforts to subvert American foreign policy and our nation's national security to his own personal political and economic interests. The China anecdote is not the only example: Mr. Bolton also recounts President Erdogan's efforts to influence U.S. law enforcement actions against a Turkish firm accused of the largest violation of Iran sanctions in U.S. history, which President Trump reportedly said he would take care of, and recalls the President expressing support for invading Venezuela.<sup>7</sup>

The Senate Foreign Relations Committee has an obligation to examine the questions raised by the President's statements and the reports that the President has, on multiple occasions, raised his political opponents and his own electoral prospects with foreign leaders. The Committee must also examine your role in this matter including what steps, if any, you took to advance the personal or electoral agenda of the President and what steps, if any, you took to protect and advance U.S. national security interests while the President was apparently pursuing a personal agenda.

In fulfillment of this oversight obligation, I request that you immediately provide the Committee with answers to the following questions.

### **China**

1. What did you do to communicate to Chinese officials that U.S. elections should not be a factor in China trade negotiations?
2. In March 2019, you traveled to Iowa for a trip focused largely on China tariffs on agriculture. Did you communicate anything to the President related to electoral considerations as a result of that trip?
3. Did you take any steps to address President Trump's October 2019 public call for China to investigate the Bidens?

### **Halkbank**

4. Has the President asked you to take any action with respect to Halkbank or any ongoing U.S. law enforcement involving a Turkish bank? If so, what did you do in response?

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<sup>6</sup> See Benjamin Haas, "Ivanka Trump brand secures China trademarks on day US president met Xi Jinping," *The Guardian*, Apr. 19, 2017.

<sup>7</sup> Philip Bump, "Bolton's book appears to reinforce how Trump views justice as transactional," *The Washington Post*, June 17, 2020; Alex Daugherty, "Trump said invading Venezuela would be 'cool' and called Guaidó a 'kid' in new Bolton book," *Miami Herald*, June 17, 2020. The President has long acknowledged his "conflict of interest" in Turkey where he holds property.

5. In your October 2019 meeting with President Erdogan, was Halkbank discussed? What, if anything, did you communicate about the U.S. position with regard to Halkbank?
6. Did you take any steps to address the foreign policy channel that Jared Kushner set up with the Turkish finance minister, who is also President Erdogan's son-in-law?

#### **Venezuela**

7. Did you take action to convince the President that invading Venezuela would not be "cool" or in the national security interest of the U.S.?
8. Did you take any steps to counter the President's reported view that Juan Guaidó, recognized by the U.S. as the interim president of Venezuela and key to establishing democratic freedoms, was "weak"?<sup>8</sup>

#### **Foreign Interference**

9. What steps have you taken to communicate to foreign counterparts that the U.S. government is not seeking any action, including policy change, trade incentives, or otherwise, to assist or bolster the President's 2020 election prospects?

I look forward to your prompt response by July 1, 2020 and I call on you to address these allegations in public testimony before the Committee.

Sincerely,



Robert Menendez  
Ranking Member

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<sup>8</sup> Olivia Beavers, "Bolton alleges Trump said it'd be 'cool' to invade Venezuela," *The Hill*, June 17, 2020.