

COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY,
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
WASHINGTON, D.C.

INTERVIEW OF: NICHOLAS SHAPIRO

Wednesday, April 5, 2023

Washington, D.C.

The interview in the above matter was held in Room 2237, Rayburn House Office Building, commencing at 10:02 a.m.

Present: Representatives Jordan and Gaetz.

Appearances:

For the COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY:

- ██████████ GENERAL COUNSEL
- ██████████ LAW CLERK
- ██████████ COUNSEL
- ██████████ DEPUTY GENERAL COUNSEL
- ██████████ SENIOR SPECIAL COUNSEL
- ██████████ DIGITAL DIRECTOR
- ██████████ MINORITY CHIEF OVERSIGHT COUNSEL
- ██████████ MINORITY INTERN
- ██████████ MINORITY PROFESSIONAL STAFF MEMBER

For the PERMANENT SELECT COMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE:

- ██████████ DEPUTY GENERAL COUNSEL
- ██████████ COUNSEL
- ██████████ MINORITY COUNSEL

For NICHOLAS SHAPIRO:

JOHN SANDWEG, ESQ.

TIMOTHY SINI, ESQ.

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██████████ Good morning.

This is a transcribed interview of Mr. Nick Shapiro. Chairman Jordan and Chairman Turner have requested this interview as part of the committee's investigation of Federal law enforcement and intelligence matters within our respective jurisdictions.

This investigation serves to inform potential legislative reforms within the jurisdictions of the committees.

For example, the committees may consider legislative reforms such as revolving-door legislation for Federal employees with security clearances. These reforms might include allowing Federal employees with security clearances to retain their clearances after employment with the government but limiting their ability to receive access to classified information for some duration after their government employment.

The committees may also consider legislative proposals that would ban or restrict intelligence agencies from engaging in, coordinating, or promoting any political activity related to Federal elections, including candidates for Federal office.

The House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence staff will be constrained today to issues relating to the letter signed by the 51 former intel officials. Judiciary Committee staff may have questions that go slightly beyond that, or the Judiciary Committee members.

On behalf of both committees, I want to thank you for joining us here today voluntarily. My name is ██████████ I'm with Mr. Jordan's Judiciary Committee staff.

And we're going to have the staff here introduce themselves, starting with ██████████

██████████ from HPSCI.

██████████ I'm ██████████ counsel with the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence.

[REDACTED] [REDACTED] senior special counsel with House Judiciary Committee.

[REDACTED] I'm [REDACTED] with Jim Jordan in House Judiciary.

[REDACTED] [REDACTED] with the House Judiciary minority.

[REDACTED] [REDACTED] House Judiciary majority.

[REDACTED] [REDACTED] House Judiciary majority.

Chairman Jordan. Jim Jordan.

[REDACTED] [REDACTED] House Intel deputy general counsel, majority.

[REDACTED] [REDACTED] I'm the House Judiciary Committee Democratic staff chief oversight counsel.

[REDACTED] [REDACTED] counsel for the HPSCI minority.

Mr. Sini. Timothy Sini, partner at Nixon Peabody, counsel for Mr. Shapiro.

Mr. Sandweg. John Sandweg, counsel for Mr. Shapiro.

Mr. Shapiro. Mr. Shapiro. Nick Shapiro. Here to help.

[REDACTED] [REDACTED] with Ranking Member Nadler, House Judiciary.

[REDACTED] Thank you.

I'd like to now go over the ground rules and guidelines that we will follow during today's interview.

Our questioning will proceed in rounds. The majority will ask questions for the first hour, and then the minority will have an opportunity to ask questions for an hour. It will be a -- you know, the hour will be -- you know, the Republicans will go for the first hour, whether it's HPSCI or Judiciary, and then the Democrats will have that hour.

Typically, we'll take a short break at the end of each hour, but if you'd like to take a break apart from that, please let us know.

As you can see, there's an official court reporter taking down everything we say to make a written record. So we ask that you give verbal responses.

Do you understand that?

Mr. Shapiro. Yes.

██████████ From time to time, we end up talking over one another, so we may need to back up and we may need to restate our question or have you restate your answer, and that's just the product of having a court reporter here.

We'll do our best to limit the number of people directing questions to you at any given point during an hour, just so we keep it tight.

Please try to speak clearly so the reporter can understand everything and so the folks that may not be close to you here in the room can hear you. It's important we don't talk over one another and interrupt each other, which can happen inadvertently. And that goes for everyone here today in the room.

We encourage witnesses who appear before the committee to freely consult with counsel as they so choose. And it's my understanding that you're appearing today with counsel, who's already identified themselves on the record.

We want you to answer our questions in the most complete and truthful manner as possible, so we'll take our time. If you have questions or if you don't understand one of our questions, please let us know. If you have a need to consult with your counsel, just let us know; we can go off the record.

Do you understand that?

Mr. Shapiro. Yes.

██████████ Our questions will cover a wide range of topics, and if you need clarification, just let us know.

If you don't understand a question or if you don't know the answer and do not

remember, it's best not to guess. Please give us your best recollection. We're not bound by the hearsay rules of the Federal Rules of Evidence, so it's okay to tell us about a communication, even if it was related to you by another person, as long as you just help us understand how you know the information.

You should also understand that, although this interview is not under oath and we're not swearing you in, by law, you're required to answer questions before Congress and congressional staff truthfully. And you understand that, correct?

Mr. Shapiro. Yep.

██████████ Witnesses that knowingly provide false testimony could be subject to criminal prosecution under 18 United States Code 1001.

You understand that, correct?

Mr. Shapiro. Yes.

██████████ And is there any reason today you're unable to provide complete and truthful answers?

Mr. Shapiro. No.

██████████ Finally, I'd like to make a note that the interview today, we're trying to keep this confidential. So, to the extent, after the interview, you can respect that, we'd appreciate it.

For the same reason, the exhibits that we show you here today, whether it's a public document or not a public document, we'll take them back at the end of the interview. Just the fact that we asked you about a particular document, something that, at least for the time being, we're going to just keep here. Even if it's a document that you may have produced to the committee, we will keep it.

That's the end of my welcoming remarks. Please, you know, let me know if you have any questions.

Do the minority staff have any?

██████████ We don't have anything to add. Thank you.

██████████ Okay. So we'll --

Mr. Sandweg. Do you have any questions?

Mr. Shapiro. No.

██████████ Okay. We'll start our hour here.

██████████ Are you going to keep time?

██████████ And I'll keep time, yes.

██████████ Thank you.

██████████ Thank you.

██████████ It's 10:09.

EXAMINATION

BY ██████████

Q Good morning, Mr. Shapiro.

A Morning.

Q Could you please start by telling us a bit about your professional background?

A Sure.

I started my career working at a public relations firm in New Orleans, where I was doing mostly crisis communications.

Then moved to Washington, D.C., and worked on the 2004 Presidential election.

Then worked at Booz Allen Hamilton, where I was a management consultant, doing mostly crisis stuff.

Became a firefighter, a paramedic.

Then joined the Obama campaign, and then was in the White House, then the CIA.

Then worked at Visa, then Airbnb, and then started my own company.

Q And what did you do at the CIA?

A I was the deputy chief of staff and senior advisor to the Director of the CIA.

Q Who was John Brennan at the time, correct?

A Yes.

Q You left the CIA when?

A 2015.

Q Okay.

Acknowledging that we're in an unclassified setting, can you briefly describe your role and responsibilities as deputy chief of staff and senior advisor to the CIA Director?

A Yeah. So my job was basically to make sure the Director of the CIA could do his job.

Q Uh-huh.

A I helped him manage his time, decide what priorities -- he would decide the priorities he wanted to do, and I typically saw everything before he did, and I would make sure that if it was something that was one of his priorities, that we actioned it immediately; if it wasn't, that I would save it for, you know, later in the day or when he had time.

It was my job to ensure when we traveled that everything he needed to happen happened.

And it was often my job to follow up with people in the Agency after meetings to make sure that things that people said they were going to do -- if they had any questions about what the Director might want, that I was the one to help them, to make sure that whatever they produced was something that would be helpful.

Q Thank you.

You were one of 51 former intelligence officials who signed a public statement regarding Hunter Biden's emails, correct?

A Correct.

Q I would now like to enter a document dated October 19, 2020, titled "Public Statement on the Hunter Biden Emails" into the record as exhibit No. 1.

[Shapiro Exhibit No. 1

Was marked for identification.]

BY [REDACTED]

Q How would you describe the public statement?

A How would I describe the public statement? I would describe it as an opinion of 51 former intelligence officials who worked on -- worked for both -- worked for Republican administrations and Democratic administrations, that was informing the American people that it was our belief that the Russians were interfering in the 2020 election.

Q And what was the intent of the statement?

A To let the American people know that we believe the Russians were, again, interfering with the election.

Q And what was your role in the creation of the statement?

A I did not have a role in creating the statement.

Q You did not participate in the drafting?

A No.

Q And how do you know Michael Morell?

A I first met Michael Morell when I worked in the White House and he was either Deputy or Acting Director of the CIA. He's had both titles numerous times.

Q And what role did Mr. Morell play in the creation of this statement?

A He's the one who told me about it, and I think he was helping get it done, have it be written, and find people to sign it.

Q That's the part I wanted to touch on now, is, what was your role in recruiting other signatories to this statement?

A I did not have any role in recruiting anyone else.

Q Oh, okay.

Did you have any specific strategy for your outreach efforts to other former officials?

A I didn't reach out to any other former officials.

Q Okay.

We are aware that Mr. Morell shopped the statement around to numerous other officials who did not agree to sign on. Do you know what their stated reasons for declining to sign on were?

A No.

Chairman Jordan. When did you talk to Mr. Morell first about the draft statement?

Mr. Shapiro. He emailed it to me, and then I believe we got on the phone, like, the next day, I think.

Chairman Jordan. Do you know what day he emailed it to you?

Mr. Shapiro. Sorry?

Chairman Jordan. What day did he email it to you? Was that the 18th or the 17th?

Mr. Shapiro. I think it's in the emails. I don't remember off the top of my head.

Mr. Sandweg. Mr. Chairman, we could show Mr. Shapiro the email if it's helpful.

Chairman Jordan. Okay.

[REDACTED] I can introduce it into the record.

Mr. Sandweg. Okay.

[REDACTED] I would now like to enter an email sent from Michael Morell to Nick Shapiro, dated October 19, 2020, at 6:36 a.m., into the record as exhibit No. 2.

[Shapiro Exhibit No. 2

Was marked for identification.]

BY [REDACTED]

Q It says, "I will explain tomorrow on the phone how this came to be. I've sent the draft to David Kris and Lisa Monaco but have not yet heard back. They should sign. I'm looking for two things -- pairs of seniors who served in the same position from different administrations (Hayden and Panetta, Jeh Johnson and Mike Chertoff, Lisa and Ken Wainstein, Clapper and Coats, etc) and then a slew of former IC and national security who worked Russia. Should have something to give to the media through you tomorrow afternoon."

I don't believe this was your first communication with Mr. Morell regarding this statement, though, correct?

A Yeah. It looks like below I responded to this statement.

Q Correct. And was that the first -- or is this everything? Like, had he call you or anything like that?

A To my knowledge, no. I believe I got this random email.

Q Okay.

Chairman Jordan. So the email on Sunday, October 18th, 6:38 p.m., is when you first talked to Mr. Morell -- or communicated with -- Mr. Morell communicated with you?

Mr. Shapiro. I believe so, yeah.

Chairman Jordan. Okay.

BY [REDACTED]

Q So you proactively offered to help with the efforts in the promotion of the statement, correct?

A Yeah. I said I'd send it around to folks if he wanted me to.

Q We know that the statement as published is different from the draft that was originally circulated. In particular, the last two paragraphs, referencing, quote, "Vice President Joe Biden taking a private and public stand against the then-Prosecutor General of Ukraine, Viktor Shokin," were taken out for being what Mr. Morell described as "too political."

Do you know why that was --

A I don't, no.

Q -- taken out?

A No.

Q Okay.

BY [REDACTED]

Q Did you have a telephone conversation with Mr. Morell?

A I think so, yeah.

Q And can you recollect anything about that call?

A I think he was just telling me that he was doing this. He knows that I know David Kris and Lisa Monaco, so that's why -- when I said I'd send it around to folks if you want me to, those are pretty much the only two people I would know besides John Brennan. So he was telling me that he'd already sent it to them, which is why I didn't send it to anybody.

Q Do you know why they didn't sign the letter?

A I don't.

Q Do you know why anyone on the list here didn't sign the letter? Like, Jeh Johnson didn't sign. Chertoff I don't think signed.

A I didn't talk to any of these people.

Q Okay.

So, as it turned out, you -- you indicated you'd be happy to send it around, but --

A He knew -- that's why he replied, David and Lisa. He knew that that's probably who I was talking about.

Q Okay.

██████████ Sorry, ██████████ Go ahead.

██████████ That's fine.

BY ██████████

Q In the emails Mr. Morell sent out soliciting signatures for the statement with a draft of the statement attached, Mr. Morell wrote, "Marc and I drafted the attached because we believe the Russians were involved in some way in the Hunter Biden email issue and because we think Trump will attack Biden on the issue at this week's debate and we want to give the VP a talking point to use in response."

Was the purpose of this statement, then, to help the Vice President's campaign?

A I think 50 people had probably 50 different reasons. Michael is best to answer why this started. I signed it because I thought the Russians were interfering and was happy to add my name to it.

Q Okay.

Do you know whose idea it was that the statement be drafted?

A Beyond Michael, no.

Q Okay.

Now-Secretary Antony Blinken was employed by the Biden campaign at this time,

correct?

A Maybe. I don't know.

Q Are you aware that --

A I think he was an advisor. I don't know if he was employed or not.

Q Are you aware that Secretary Blinken had called Mr. Morell to discuss this issue with him prior to the statement being drafted?

A I think Michael had mentioned he had chatted with Tony about Russian interference, but --

Q Okay.

A -- he didn't say anything about a statement or link it to that.

Q Okay. So you're --

Chairman Jordan. Let me just interrupt, [REDACTED] Thanks.

So you get the email from Mr. Morell on the 18th, 6:38 p.m. Then you had a conversation with Mr. Morell after that.

Mr. Shapiro. After the email, yeah.

Chairman Jordan. Sometime that same day.

Mr. Shapiro. I don't remember if it was that day or not, but in that time period, yeah.

Chairman Jordan. Okay. And during that conversation, Mr. Morell related to you that he had spoke to Mr. Blinken.

Mr. Shapiro. About Russian interference.

Chairman Jordan. About Russian interference. But not specifically about the letter? Is --

Mr. Shapiro. Correct.

Chairman Jordan. -- that accurate? Okay.

BY [REDACTED]

Q I'd like to enter an email sent from Antony Blinken to Michael Morell of a USA Today article titled, "A tabloid got a trove of data on Hunter Biden from Rudy Giuliani. Now, the FBI is probing a possible disinformation campaign," dated October 17, 2020, at 10:53 p.m., into the record as exhibit No. 3.

[Shapiro Exhibit No. 3

Was marked for identification.]

Mr. Sini. Do you have a copy?

[REDACTED] I have one more copy.

Mr. Sini. Thank you.

BY [REDACTED]

Q Did you have any discussions with Secretary Blinken?

A No.

Q Do you know if Secretary Blinken directed, suggested, or insinuated in any way that Mr. Morell and Mr. Polymeropoulos should write a letter or statement on this topic?

A No.

Q Why do you believe Secretary Blinken sent Mr. Morell that USA Today article?

A I don't know. I think that Tony and Michael go pretty far back and that if Tony was curious about Russian interference, Michael would be a smart person to talk to.

Q The email from Secretary Blinken was originally sent to him by Andrew Bates, then director of rapid response for the Biden campaign and current White House deputy press secretary.

Do you know whether Secretary Blinken was directed by the Biden campaign to

enlist Mr. Morell to write this statement?

A No.

Q Did you have any communications with Andrew Bates?

A Not until I sent the statement to the media.

Q Okay. And I'll touch on that in a second.

Did you talk to anyone else at the Biden campaign?

A No.

Q Okay.

You have extensive experience in political campaign messaging. Why --

A I was on two campaigns.

Q Okay. Why would Secretary Blinken forward Mr. Morell an email sent from the director of rapid response for the Biden campaign, in your opinion?

A Again, I think if Tony wanted to talk about Russian interference, Michael was a good person to talk to.

Q Do you have any reason to believe the Biden campaign planted the USA Today story titled, "A tabloid got a trove of data on Hunter Biden from Rudy Giuliani. Now, the FBI is probing a possible disinformation campaign," published on October 17, 2020?

A I have no idea.

Q Do you know whether Secretary Blinken or Andrew Bates had any contact with USA Today or USA Today journalists Karen Bowen, Kevin Johnson, Matthew Brown, or Jeff Neiburg?

A No clue.

Q Did you?

A No.

Q Okay.

I would also like to enter an email sent from Michael Morell to Nick Shapiro on October 19, 2020, at 8:21 p.m. into the record as exhibit No. 4.

[Shapiro Exhibit No. 4

Was marked for identification.]

BY [REDACTED]

Q The first part there reads, "Between us, the campaign would like Shane Harris to go first. Please share with the campaign when you share with Shane. But, by all means, get it to other reporters as well."

Did the Biden campaign direct your strategy with reporters regarding this statement?

A I wouldn't say I even had a strategy. I just did what Michael asked me to do, which was send it to the press and, from this email, to go to Shane Harris first. And it looks like the campaign wanted that.

Q Do you know why the campaign wanted Shane Harris to go first?

A No idea.

Q Mr. Morell never discussed that with you?

A No. Shane's a really good national security reporter though.

Q Why did Mr. Morell instruct you to share with the campaign when you share with Shane?

A My guess is, to make sure the campaign knew what The Washington Post was going to have.

Q Okay. Did the Biden campaign request that, do you know?

A It sounds like that happened with Michael, but not to me.

Q And you did, in fact, share a copy of the emails you were sending to

journalists to the Biden campaign?

A To Andrew Bates, yeah.

Q And did Andrew Bates respond to you?

A Not over email. We did an extensive search through my email. It's possible we had a phone call, but --

Q Do you recall anything from that phone call? What was discussed?

A No. I think if there was a phone call, it was along the lines of, "Thanks, man."

Q Okay.

Chairman Jordan. So the campaign knew that you were the one who was going to do the outreach to the media? They understood that?

Mr. Shapiro. My guess is, from this email, yeah.

Chairman Jordan. Okay.

BY [REDACTED]

Q And we understand from your productions that there were three journalists that you sent the statement to: Shane Harris of The Washington Post, Julie Pace of the Associated Press, and Natasha Bertrand of Politico?

A Yep.

Q Why those three?

A Shane because I was asked to go to Shane first. And then the AP is a really good outlet you want stories in. And then Politico -- I don't know why I went to Politico after that.

Q Why did Mr. Morell give you different instructions regarding what to say on the record, off the record, and on background?

A So I don't remember, like, having a conversation with him about this. And I

know more about dealing with the press than Michael does, and he'd be the first to tell you that.

But, looking back on this, it makes a lot of sense to me. The thing that Michael was wanting to make sure the press understood was that the letter wasn't saying whether the laptop emails were real or were made up by Russia, just that Russia was involved in it. So he's telling me to make sure reporters know that. And so, when you talk to reporters, unless you want them to quote you, yourself -- like, Nick Shapiro -- you have to say "off the record" so they don't quote me. But I'm impressing upon them the importance to use that in their story that they write, which is, make sure you use that part of the letter that says, we don't know if it's real or not real.

And then "on background" was just, if asked, you know, "Why Michael?" that was going to be the answer. But no one asked me, "Why Michael?" I don't think.

And then the on-the-record quote is just framing what the letter's about.

Q We know that Natasha Bertrand is the one that ultimately ran with the article. Why did Shane Harris and Julie Pace decline to do so?

A I don't remember. I know we -- I'm sure we spoke. But you'd have to ask them. Reporters decline things all the time.

Q Okay. But they did get back to you, I assume, over the phone?

A Yeah.

Q Because we didn't have any of those records and --

A Yeah. I looked back at the emails, and it's clear that I spoke to them before I emailed them, which is normal. When I'm talking to a reporter, I'll call them and say, "Hey, you know, I've got this idea. What do you want to do?" And then, considering it was a letter, I'm sure I said, "I'll follow up and send it to you," which is what I did with each of them.

And then, for each of them, we got back on the phone. And Washington Post and AP said no. And Politico -- I think I probably just reiterated these points to Natasha.

Q Okay.

Mr. Sini. [REDACTED] just to be clear for the record, there is the one -- we do have some -- we have that one email where the reporter --

[REDACTED] With the Julie Pace thumbs-up?

Mr. Sini. Right.

[REDACTED] Got it. Thank you.

Chairman Jordan. Let me ask about "off the record." If it was critical that it be communicated that this was -- that you didn't know, just that you thought this was a Russian disinformation operation, why off the record? Why not have that on the record? It doesn't necessarily have to be attributed to you; it could be attributed to the entire group. But why off the record?

Mr. Shapiro. Mr. Chairman, because it was so important, actually. So it's kind of the opposite. It was on the record in the letter, so I was trying to convince the reporter to make sure that, when they write the story about the letter, to call that part out and put that in the story.

So I'm giving them what's called off-the-record guidance, like, don't --

Chairman Jordan. No, I understand --

Mr. Shapiro. -- say Nick Shapiro says this.

Chairman Jordan. I understand how it works. But it seems to me that that could be emphasized on the record as well.

Mr. Shapiro. Michael has a history of doing this. I've worked with Michael for many years, and he often sends me things like "OTR," and I often have to say to him, that could mean "on the record" or "off the record."

Chairman Jordan. Yeah.

Mr. Shapiro. And so that's a known Michael-Nick problem --

Chairman Jordan. Okay.

Mr. Shapiro. -- that I've dealt with for a long time.

Chairman Jordan. All right. Thanks.

Mr. Shapiro. But he writes "on the record" up top. And me knowing Michael, again, he often confuses that.

Chairman Jordan. Uh-huh.

Mr. Shapiro. No offense to Michael.

BY [REDACTED]

Q And when you were telling the reporters you were giving them each the statement exclusively, you were waiting to hear back as to whether they wanted to give it to the next one?

A Yeah. I think I said, you can have it first, but just so you know, I'll send it to other people too.

Q Okay.

A And then, after two people said no --

Q Then --

A -- third, and then I didn't send it to anyone else.

Q Okay.

A I was tired of this.

Q All right.

Mr. Shapiro, are you familiar with the CIA's Prepublication Classification Review Board?

A Yes.

Q And this statement was sent and approved by the PCRB?

A I assume so. Michael is pretty good about making sure, if there's anything he's involved with writing, that it gets sent there.

Q It was. And I will now enter an email Michael Morell sent to the CIA's PCRB dated October 19, 2020, at 7:11 a.m. into the record as exhibit No. 5.

[Shapiro Exhibit No. 5

Was marked for identification.]

BY [REDACTED]

Q Do you know why Mr. Morell described this statement as a, quote, "rush job" to the PCRB?

A I don't. But I assume it's because he wrote it quickly.

Oh, thanks.

You'd best talk to him, but I assume it's because he wrote it quickly.

Q Do you know whether the CIA's PCRB --

A Oh, "rush job," meaning he wants them to rush, because he wanted it back quickly.

Q Yes.

A That would be my guess, yeah.

Q Did the CIA's PCRB make any edits to the statement before it was published that you're aware of?

A I don't know.

Q Or did they make any suggestions or comments?

A No clue.

Q Are you aware that CIA staff at the PCRB reportedly promoted the letter by asking former CIA officials to sign on to the letter?

A No.

Q I would now like to enter a statement David Cariens provided to the committee in an email dated March 5, 2023, into the record as exhibit No. 6.

A You said the PRB's staff was recruiting people to sign the letter?

Q Correct.

A No. That's not what the PRB does, though.

Q We were equally shocked.

A Yeah.

[Shapiro Exhibit No. 6

Was marked for identification.]

Mr. Sandweg. This is 6?

██████████ No. 6, yeah.

██████████ It's 6.

BY ██████████

Q In a written statement to the committee, Mr. Cariens told me, "When the person in charge of reviewing the book" -- he had a book that was before the PCRFB --

A Who? Sorry.

Q David Cariens. Are you familiar with him, sir?

A No.

Q Okay.

A Is he a former CIA officer?

Q He was. Correct.

He told me that, "When the person in charge of reviewing the book called to say it was approved with no changes, I was told about the draft letter. The person asked me if I would be willing to sign. (I do not recall the person's name or the exact date of the

phone call.) After hearing the letter's contents, and the qualifiers in it such as, quote, 'We want to emphasize that we do not know if the emails provided to the New York Post by President Trump's personal attorney, Rudy Giuliani, are genuine or not and that we do not have evidence of Russian involvement,' I agreed to sign."

Does that sound like it may have been a quid pro quo to you, that the CIA official on the phone was suggesting that we would approve --

A Oh.

Q -- his book if he signed this statement?

A No. I mean, I have no idea what happened here, to be very -- this is the first I'm hearing of this.

But my guess -- and lawyers would probably tell me not to guess or defend the PRB, but what I could've seen happen is someone in the PRB being inappropriate and asking, hey, are you signing this thing? Which, PRB shouldn't be sharing, like, materials they get from one former with other formers. Like, that shouldn't be.

Because, as a former, if you send something -- I've never sent something, but I know people who have -- you're doing that because you're supposed to, but you're also hoping it stays within confidence. Like, usually, if you're going to send something to the PRB, you're sending it elsewhere, and you don't want the PRB spreading that.

So my guess for this was that it was someone who acted inappropriately and was just stupidly outing it and asking these folks if they were going to sign it.

I can't imagine the PRB trying to get someone to sign it by offering to clear something else. That would be really bad.

██████████ And, for the record, we are working with Mr. Cariens to bring him in for a transcribed interview to hear more about this.

Mr. Sandweg. But, to be clear, you have no personal knowledge of any of this?

Mr. Shapiro. I don't even know who he is.

Mr. Sandweg. And you had no communications with the PRB or anyone at the CIA?

Mr. Shapiro. No.

BY [REDACTED]

Q All right. So you did not coordinate with the CIA in promoting this statement?

A No.

Q Okay.

Are you aware of whether any of your fellow signatories coordinated with the CIA in promoting --

A No. This was when Mike Pompeo was CIA Director?

Q -- the statement? Correct.

A I'm sorry, who was --

Q This would've been October -- this was October --

A I was persona non grata during that time, because John Brennan was very much persona non grata during that time.

Q Did you speak to any other offices or staff outside of the PCRB at the CIA regarding this statement?

A No.

Q Do you know whether the statement was sent to any other intelligence agencies for review, such as the ODNI?

A Don't know.

Q Okay.

A Usually, it's only people who write have to send it to their place. So

Michael never worked at any other agency.

Q Okay. So the fact that other signatories may have at some point been on, during their career --

A For just signing it, you wouldn't have to send something.

Q Okay.

A Each agency has its own rules. I only know CIA's, because I was CIA. But, like, I think if you worked at NSA and you wrote something, you're probably supposed to send it to NSA. But, to my knowledge -- or, I know Michael never worked at NSA. And I don't think Marc did.

Q The public statement published in Politico reads, in part, "If we are right, this is Russia trying to influence how Americans vote in this election, and we believe strongly that Americans need to be aware of this."

Do you believe that it was you and your fellow signatories who, in fact, were the ones trying to influence how Americans voted in the 2020 Presidential election?

A No. I think we were telling Americans that Russians are interfering in the election and they should be aware of that.

Q How do you feel now that you know that the contents on the laptop were not Russian disinformation?

A Meaning that they were real?

Q Yes.

A I'm sure glad that we put that in the letter, saying that we don't know if this is real or not.

Q The caveat?

A Yeah.

Q Have you considered issuing an apology to the American public or retracting

the statement, issuing some sort of followup?

A What would we apologize for?

Q Misleading them by saying that --

A By saying we don't know if it's real or fake, and it turned out to be real?

No, I don't think so.

I think if we had said it was fake and it turned out to be real, then we probably would've had a problem. But that's why I'm glad we put that caveat in there, because we didn't know.

Q Do you currently hold a security clearance?

A No.

Q Did you hold a security clearance at the time you drafted the statement?

A No. I didn't draft the statement. But I also didn't --

Q Okay.

A -- hold a security clearance.

Q Correct. When you helped give it out to the press, I mean.

A Yep.

Q Have you ever had access to classified information regarding the contents on Hunter Biden's laptop?

A No.

Q Okay. Are you aware of whether any of your fellow signatories have had access to classified information regarding the contents on Hunter Biden's laptop?

A I have no idea. I didn't know who this person even was.

Q Okay.

Chairman Jordan. In one email that we were just on a little bit ago, the last sentence from Mr. Morell says, "This is a rush job, as it needs to get out as soon as

possible."

Why did it need to get out as soon as possible?

Mr. Shapiro. You'd have to ask Michael. But me trying to be helpful to you guys, I'm assuming, considering he was talking about the debate, he wanted it out before the debate.

Chairman Jordan. Okay.

So you said earlier your goal was to get information to the American people. To what end? What was the ultimate goal?

Mr. Shapiro. My personal goal was to make sure the Americans knew -- the American people knew the Russians were interfering again.

Chairman Jordan. And you wanted to get it out early like Mr. Morell so that --

Mr. Shapiro. I didn't care.

Chairman Jordan. -- before the debate?

Mr. Shapiro. I didn't care. That wasn't my role or part.

Chairman Jordan. When we spoke to Mr. Morell, he indicated that he had three objectives. It was to, one, tell people that they thought it was a Russian information operation. Two, they wanted something for Mr. Biden to have during the upcoming debate, which was on the 22nd. And, three, he wanted Joe Biden to win.

Are those fair -- were those the same three goals you had?

Mr. Shapiro. No. I was never going back into politics, never going back into the Federal Government. I wasn't trying to do anything other than, Michael asked me to send this to the media, and I believed in the letter, so --

Chairman Jordan. Were you aware of Mr. Ratcliffe's statement on the morning of the 19th, prior to the letter being sent, where he said in an interview on FOX News that morning that this is not part of the Russian disinformation campaign?

Mr. Shapiro. I don't remember at the time if I was aware. I'm aware of it now. Like, before this interview, I was looking back at the news around then and saw that.

Chairman Jordan. Was Mr. Ratcliffe wrong?

Mr. Shapiro. Did he say information operation or disinformation operation? That's where a lot of this stuff gets ridiculously confused. What did he say?

Chairman Jordan. It "is not part of some Russian disinformation campaign." He said, "The intelligence community doesn't believe that because there is no intelligence that supports that."

He said, "Let me be clear: The intelligence community doesn't believe this is part of a disinformation campaign. The intelligence community doesn't believe that because there is no intelligence that supports that."

Mr. Shapiro. Yeah.

Chairman Jordan. Ratcliffe went on to say that it is simply not true.

Mr. Shapiro. So, when I was going back and looking at all this stuff, I saw that President Trump's head of counterintelligence, Bill Evanina, in August put out a statement saying that the Russians were interfering in the 2020 election and named this guy, Der- -- I don't know how to pronounce his name -- Derkach, as someone who was trying to spread information about corruption.

And then I remember seeing, a month later, the Secretary of Treasury, Steve Mnuchin, putting out a public statement saying the Russians are making up information. There was some news article that we saw saying that he was spreading deceitful and untrue narratives about Biden to hurt Biden about corruption.

And then I saw Rudy Giuliani speaking in the press, right before the letter, saying, "This information could be hacked. It might not be hacked. I don't know. I'm not disclosing where I got the hard drive." Rudy was meeting with this guy, Derkach.

So all of these things tell a pretty clear story that even the Trump administration was saying the Russians are interfering. There was a Russian agent who was trying to spread information to hurt Hunter Biden about corruption.

I don't see our letter as saying anything different than that.

Chairman Jordan. So the August 7th statement came from the Office of the Director of National Intelligence. So --

Mr. Shapiro. I'm talking about Bill Evanina, not the DNI.

Chairman Jordan. Okay. But -- oh, okay. You're talking about --

Mr. Shapiro. He was the head of counterintelligence. He put out a statement in August saying that Russia is -- and he also said, like, China was interfering, and Iran and other countries too.

Chairman Jordan. Yeah. Okay. Fair enough.

There was also a statement from ODNI in August, and, you know, he said he believed the administration in August but he can't believe them on the 19th. And I'm just trying to --

Mr. Shapiro. No. There is a difference between the word -- that's where I was going with this. "Disinformation," "information," "election interference" -- all these things are getting complicated, I think, for a lot of people.

A disinformation operation is creating fake information.

Chairman Jordan. Uh-huh.

Mr. Shapiro. So, if you read what Treasury Department and Bill Evanina said, they were saying the Russians are creating false narratives about corruption. The Trump administration is saying that. The Trump administration is also saying there's not disinformation. So they were saying two different things.

Which is, I think, part of the reason why our letter is not taking a position on

whether it was real or fake. We're just saying what everyone was saying at the time, which is the Russians were interfering in the election.

Chairman Jordan. What's the impression your letter left with the American people?

Mr. Shapiro. That the Russians are interfering with the election.

Chairman Jordan. That's what you think the impression was?

Mr. Shapiro. We are absolutely telling people that Russians are interfering in the election.

Chairman Jordan. Okay.

BY [REDACTED]

Q I mean, the letter is about the laptop, though.

A That's how they're interfering with the election.

Q Right. But the letter is largely about the laptop, not about the Russians.

A Our letter is saying, the Russians are behind this in some way; we don't know what way.

Q Right. But you acknowledge that it's mostly about the laptop, right?

A Absolutely.

Q Okay.

BY [REDACTED]

Q Now that the contents of Hunter Biden's laptop have been authenticated, including documentation of shady business dealings with Chinese and Ukrainian foreign nationals, do you believe Hunter Biden is a threat to national security?

A I do not think Hunter Biden is a threat to national security.

Q Why not?

A Because I think the President of the United States doesn't make his decisions

based off of anything Hunter Biden is doing.

Q Do you believe Hunter Biden has been compromised?

A I don't know. I'd have to know a heck of a lot more.

Q Okay.

I have no further questions.

Mr. Sini. Could you repeat that last question? I'm sorry.

██████████ Do you believe Hunter Biden has been compromised?

Mr. Shapiro. It feels like everything's out in the open. And hard to compromise someone when everything's out in the open.

Chairman Jordan. Did you have any communications with Mr. Ricchetti, the chair of the Biden campaign?

Mr. Shapiro. No.

Chairman Jordan. Okay.

I think ██████████ asked this earlier. Do you regret now that you were part of the effort to get this letter out there -- this statement out there?

Mr. Shapiro. No. But I will say, I am really glad that we have that line in there saying we don't know if it's real or fake, because if it winds up being real or -- if it wound up being real, I would've felt really bad if we hadn't done that.

BY ██████████

Q Do you have any information about Russian involvement in the laptop situation?

A No. Other than what's in the press, no.

Q What's in the press? Like, what do you understand is the issue with the Russians involved with the laptop?

A Sorry. I was speaking of, like, what Mnuchin and Bill Evanina and everyone

was saying. I have no information about Russian -- I have no evidence or anything about Russian involvement. We have our belief that the Russians were playing a role in spreading it --

Q Okay.

A -- or in some way involved in the laptop.

Q And is your belief supported by any evidence?

A It's supported by what Bill Evanina said, what the Secretary of Treasury said under Trump, what the FBI said right before, what Rudy Giuliani did, and my belief that the Russians are trying --

Q Right, but they didn't say anything about, you know, how it got to the store in Delaware.

A No, but they said that this guy, Derkach, was meeting with Giuliani. And Derkach's out there --

Q Right.

A -- being accused by the Trump administration of creating false information about corruption. The laptop had information about corruption. So --

Q Right.

You're not aware of anything on the laptop that was doctored or inserted by the Russians, correct?

A No. We didn't -- what we were saying was that the Russians are playing a role in some way, and we don't know what way. They could've just been spreading the news story.

Q Okay.

Were you surprised by the censorship effort that was implemented on the laptop story?

A I don't know about "surprised," because the media was doing quite a kick in their own behind after 2016. I know there was a lot of handwringing about whether they should've published a lot of the stories about the hacked emails. So I think they were probably being careful this time.

Q Do you think facts relating to a potential President's family, you know, getting money from foreign countries, potentially foreign adversaries, is a relevant story for the American people to consider leading up to the election?

A Yeah. And I think the media was trying to figure out where that information came from and whether it was credible or not.

Q So, if there's facts that says Hunter Biden is taking money from China, that that's a story the American people ought to consider en route to the election?

A I would assume that would be a press story. And I think it was.

Q And were you surprised, you know, with the effort by Facebook and Twitter to just wipe that story clean off their platforms?

A Yeah. I was surprised by that.

Q And so you'd acknowledge that that's pretty remarkable, looking back on it?

A I think the tech companies -- I'm no expert in this, but I think they're all trying to figure out what role they play in disseminating media, and they haven't figured it out yet.

Q Just going back to, I think it's exhibit 1, relating to David Kris and Lisa Monaco. The draft, as you understand it, was sent to them by Mr. Morell?

A From that email. He said, I sent it to them. Yeah.

Q Okay. And did you ever have any communications with David Kris even after this time period about the letter?

A In more recent times. I know David Kris is happy he's not involved.

Q Okay. And can you just tell us a little bit more about your -- like, when did you talk to David Kris about the letter?

A Oh, I don't know. Over the last couple -- it's been 3 years?

Q Okay.

A But I know he is someone who is an excellent lawyer. He was the head of National Security Division Law. And when you guys first sent me your letter, I sent it to him, being like, "What is this? Like, do I have to do anything? I don't know what's going on."

Q Uh-huh.

A And I think in that conversation he was like, "Oh, man, I'm glad I'm not part of this."

Q Fair enough.

A No offense to David.

Q How about Lisa Monaco? Have you ever had any conversations with her, communications about the letter, you know, either at the time -- which I think you said didn't.

A Not at the time, no. I think in the years past -- Lisa and I are friends -- I think she's probably made a similar remark, but I couldn't even, like, pinpoint when.

Q Okay.

And did you hear from Mr. Morell about why Ken Wainstein didn't sign on? Did he give you any information about why any of the folks didn't sign on --

A No.

Q -- such as --

A My conversations with Morell were all about, "Hey, send this to the media."

Q Okay.

Did you have any -- after the story went, was published in Politico, did you have any followup conversations with Morell about it?

A I put this all out of my mind at that point. I mean, he might've said, "Thanks for sending it."

Q Okay.

A You know, that was pretty much it.

Q And subsequently to the time period, the relevant time period, did you have any discussions with Mr. Morell?

A As of -- again, same with -- the opposite of David and Lisa, Morell was complaining that we were all involved in this now.

Q Okay. Did he ever apologize to you for maybe getting you in this mess?

A He has not.

██████████ I think we're --

██████████ I have no further questions at this time.

██████████ -- done for this hour. We might have more questions.

Mr. Shapiro. Yeah, yeah.

██████████ But we can go off the record.

[Recess.]

[11:03 a.m.]

EXAMINATION

BY [REDACTED]

Q It is 11:03 in the morning. And again, I'm [REDACTED] I am the Democrat's chief oversight counsel in the Judiciary Committee. I am joined by [REDACTED] [REDACTED] with the House Permanent Select Committee on intelligence.

A Great. Nice to meet you.

Q So we -- at the very beginning of the last hour, we talked through your background a little bit. And you mentioned that you were at the CIA, and you talked through your responsibilities there. But, before that, you were actually in a fairly substantive position at the White House as well, right?

A Two.

Q Can you describe those?

A Yeah. I was the chief of staff senior advisor to the head of counterterrorism and homeland security for a couple years. And, in that role, it was for the same person, for John Brennan, and it was the same role I played at the CIA; it was basically helping make sure he had everything he needed to do his job, helping make sure that every decision was teed up to him in the most functional way where he had all of his questions answered. Typically, he would kind of ask me a question. Then I would go work with people across the government to find the answer and get back to him, and ensuring keeping that he's fulfilling his priorities.

Before that, I was assistant press secretary in the White House with national security and homeland security as my portfolio. So I would advise the President of the United States what he should say in matters of homeland security and national security. I would help ensure the rest of the Federal Government was using a consistent message

regarding national security and homeland security, and work with the media to answer their questions about homeland secure and national security.

Q So it's fair to say you developed some amount of expertise in both national security and intelligence matters?

A For sure.

Q Okay. And, in those roles, you -- I believe you probably had exposure to a pretty wide variety of national security and intelligence professionals?

A Absolutely.

Q Did you -- and that's how you crossed paths with Mr. Morell?

A Yes.

Q What was -- in your opinion, when you interacted with him and the period when you're at the White House and the CIA, was he well respected in the intelligence and national security world?

A Absolutely. One of most respected.

Q Can you say more about that?

A I mean, Michael is a legend. He is a career CIA officer, wound up being the head of the analytic branch, was twice Acting Director, Deputy Director for many years, one of the smartest analytical minds I've ever met, and you know, beloved in the intelligence community and the CIA.

Q Okay. So you'd agree that he had the expertise to identify potential threats to American national security?

A 100 percent.

Q Okay. What about Mr. Brennan? Would you -- what's your opinion of him?

A I hold him in the highest regard. He's been like a father to me. He is one

of the most incredible professionals I've ever gotten the honor to work with, and I have learned probably more from him than anyone else in my life.

Q Would you agree that he's well respected in the intelligence and national security communities?

A Absolutely.

Q And can you say any more about that?

A That, you know, John Brennan is, again, one of the best leaders I've ever come in contact with. His moral compass is something that sticks out, I think, in front of him more than almost anybody else and all the service he's given to America.

Q And you would agree that he has the expertise to identify potential threats to American national security?

A Absolutely.

Q And so, the fact that Mr. Morell was drafting this letter and taking lead on this letter, and Mr. Brennan was a signatory, was that important to you?

A Yeah. I think, you know, I would -- I was not afraid to sign my name to something that both of those guys signed onto.

Q Because they're so well respected?

A Absolutely.

Q And because you respect their judgment?

A For sure.

Q Were there any signatories that stood out to you as people that were really meaningful for you that were on the list?

A I need to look at the list to remind myself.

Q Exhibit 1.

A Yeah. The fact that you've got -- first, you've got former CIA Directors who

worked in Republican -- I think Mike Hayden was one of the people on the list. I believe Panetta was on the list. John McLaughlin is also a legendary long-time incredible CIA officer. Mike Vickers is incredible. Nick Rasmussen, Russ Travers, Doug Wise, I mean these guys are heavy weights in the largest sense. Rodney Snyder, guy doesn't have a political bone in his body. He's a career national security official who has done incredible work. Andy Liepman. David Buckley, who is a former inspector general. Steve Hall is a -- was an absolute expert on Russia. It says he was the chief of Russian operations. I worked very closely with Steve when I was at the CIA. He had, I believe, these jobs when I was there in every -- we dealt with lot of stuff with Russia. And Steve was the guy who was always briefing me and talking to John about what was happening. David Priess, absolutely fantastic analyst. All of these folks are incredible.

Q Thank you. Earlier today, there was -- the very beginning, there was some discussion about possible legislation related to security clearances and people who hold security clearances after leaving government. And I can't remember if you said that you had a security clearance or not in 2020?

A I'm not sure what you're talking about, the legislation. I did not have a security clearance in 2020, though.

Q Sorry. I was referring to the introduction. That actually might have been before we were rolling.

A Gotcha.

Q And so you didn't have a security clearance in 2020?

A I left government in 2015, and have never seen, needed to see, or have any access to classified information since then.

Q Okay. And you personally didn't have any access to any of the Hunter Biden emails or the laptop?

A No.

Q Okay. You didn't have access to any intelligence products or documents that were analyzing the laptop or anything like that?

A Just press reports.

Q Okay. And you didn't have any personal interactions with anybody at FBI, for example, regarding whether there was an investigation?

A No.

Q Okay. And, to your knowledge, none of the other signatories had any interactions with the FBI or any access to classified information?

A To my knowledge, no.

Q Okay. So it was kind of irrelevant whether or not you had a security clearance because to your knowledge, nobody actually had access to classified information or even law enforcement sensitive information for that matter?

A Correct.

Q Okay. And you actually made this clear in the text of the letter itself, right?

A Yep.

Q I think there was some discussion earlier about on the record versus off the record and on background and what all of that might mean?

A Yep.

Q But I want to look at the actual Politico article, which I think is the actual record, right?

A Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

██████████ Okay. We're going to introduce that as exhibit 7.

[Shapiro Exhibit No. 7

Was marked for identification.]

BY [REDACTED]

Q And, actually, I'm sorry. Before we get there, I want to look at the public letter again, and then go to the Politico article. So the public letter was exhibit No. 1.

So, in the letter, you -- in the fifth paragraph of that letter, reads: We want to emphasize that we do not know if the emails provided to the New York Post by President Trump's personal attorney, Rudy Giuliani, are genuine or not, and we do not have evidence of Russian involvement.

So this is an example of it being plain on the face of the letter that you didn't have any information about the emails being genuine or not?

A Correct.

Q And the very next sentence begins, quote: If we are right.

Correct?

A Yes.

Q So that suggests that you could, in fact, be incorrect?

A Yes. Yeah.

Q And the following paragraph reads: There are a number of factors that make us suspicious of Russian involvement.

A Yes.

Q And suspicion is different than proof, right?

A Absolutely.

Q On the next page, the third to last paragraph begins with the phrase: Our view is that the Russians are involved -- and you specifically used the phrase "our view," right?

A Yes.

Q So that shows that it's a subjective opinion and not an objective fact?

A For sure.

Q Okay. And then, finally, the second to last paragraph of the letter describes some press reports about the FBI opening an investigation. And then, in the final paragraph, it says: We do not know whether these press reports are accurate, right?

A Yes.

Q So this is another instance this which letter makes clear that this is all based on your understanding of public information, that you have no access, that you're not making a call on it either way if the information is accurate?

A Correct.

Q So we just went through five different instances of that. And would you agree that it makes it -- it's caveated to make it abundantly clear that this was the letter signatories' subjective evaluation of various factors and not an objective --

A One hundred percent. That was the point.

Q Okay. And there's obviously nothing in there that says you had access to nonpublic information?

A Correct. We even say that we didn't, I believe.

Q So let's turn to the Politico article now, which is exhibit 7. And this is a printout. So it's all -- so I'm going to refer to pages, but obviously, on the internet, it's all one giant block.

The very first paragraph of this letter, which is on the top of the next page, the top of the second page as printed, there's a blue hyperlink there to -- signed onto a letter.

Is it your understanding that that links to the actual letter?

A I assume so, yeah.

Q Okay. So anyone reading this article and the very first thing they see is the actual letter, which has all of the caveats we just talked through. They could easily just

click through and see that?

A Yep.

Q And the third paragraph of the Politico article plainly states that the letters signatories presented no new evidence, right?

A Yep.

Q So that's in there as well.

And then, further down, it's the 10th paragraph. So it's -- it's actually on the fourth page as printed. It's right underneath the block of text that says: Politico Dispatch.

It reads: We want to emphasize that we do not know if the emails provided to the New York Post by President Trump's personal attorney, Rudy Giuliani, are genuine or not, and we do not have evidence of Russian involvement.

So you said earlier that your goal was to make sure that that information got into the article?

A Yep.

Q And the information got into the article?

A It did.

Q Okay. Moving on from that, there was some discussion earlier -- and I think you said there was a lot of confusion around information operations versus disinformation operations versus other influence operations.

What is your understanding of the difference between an information operation and disinformation operation?

A Yeah. First, normally what we call them is influence campaigns. Like, you know, covert influence campaigns is what foreign countries do all the time. The difference between information operation and disinformation operation is disinformation

is typically creating fake information and spreading it. And information operation could be as simple as getting access to real information, damaging information, and helping spread it.

Q And so would an example of that be, in 2016, nobody denied that the emails that were hacked from the Democrat Congressional Campaign Committee and the Democratic National Committee were genuine, but the concern was that the emails were being weaponized to sow chaos and influence the election, correct?

A Absolutely.

Q Okay. So is this known as a hack-and-leak or a hack-and-dump operation?

A I've heard the term "hack-and-dump." But it's basically a covert influence campaign where they're taking real information that they've gotten through illegal means, hacking, and then are spreading it.

Q Okay. And, even if there's no hack, it could be just an influence operation to spread information?

A Absolutely, just you know, bots and accounts on social media spreading a story, whether that story is fake or real, is an influence operation.

Q And this actually isn't just -- Russians don't do this just with respect to the United States, right?

A Correct.

Q So, for example, we have -- sorry. Hold on one second.

I'm actually going to move on. So information operations, you described them as covert influence operations. They involve a government hiding its hand entirely or hiding behind someone else, correct?

A At least for some of it.

Q And sorry, what do you mean by that?

A Like sometimes governments also want it to be known they did do it. You know, the hacking was clearly covertly done. The Russians didn't want us to know, the U.S. government, to know they were hacking into a political campaign of someone running for President and then putting it out there. And, at the time, if I remember, they were doing it all covertly, and it took some unraveling to find that it was the Russians.

Q In 2016?

A Yeah.

Q So do you agree that Russian information operations pose a threat to American democracy?

A Absolutely.

Q So there are some who would claim that Americans who participate in disinformation or perhaps are used by Russians in information operations are exercising their free speech rights, and do you agree that it's a problem if Americans got involved in information operations?

A Absolutely.

Q I want to turn back to the text of the letter itself. I think you were asked earlier, you know, you didn't have any evidence to support this, and you said that there was news articles you were relying on. So I want to talk through some of the evidence that was in the public sphere you might have had access to?

A Sure.

Q So the 8th paragraph of the letter itself, the last paragraph on the bottom of page 3 reads: Such an operation, which means the Russian cyber operation or influence operation, would be consistent with Russian objectives as outlined publicly and recently by the intelligence community to create political chaos in the United States and to

deepen divisions here but also to undermine the candidacy of former Vice President Biden and thereby help the candidacy of President Trump?

A Yep.

Q Can you explain, briefly, in your experience why it would have been consistent with Russian objectives to create political chaos in the United States and deepen divisions here?

A Yeah. And that came, I believe, directly from Bill Evanina, who was the head of counterintelligence at that time in the intelligence community. You know, their goal -- Russia sees the world still as a zero sum game with America. So, if they can create division in America, and we're fighting each other, in their opinion, that's a win for them. It shows that democracy is mean and nasty, and they don't like democracy.

██████████ And I actually want to introduce into the record the statement from Mr. Evanina. This is going to be exhibit 8.

[Shapiro Exhibit No. 8

Was marked for identification.]

BY ██████████

Q So, on the second page, there's a paragraph highlighted. I'm going to read that into record quickly. It read: We assess that Russia is using a range of measures to primarily denigrate former Vice President Biden and what it sees as an anti-Russia establishment. This is consistent with Moscow's public criticism of him when he was Vice President for his role in the Obama administration's policies on Ukraine and its support for the anti-Putin opposition inside Russia. For example, pro-Russia Ukrainian Parliamentarian Andrii Derkach is spreading claims about corruption, including publicizing leaked phone calls to undermine former Vice President Biden candidacy and the party. Some Kremlin-linked actors are also seeking to boost President Trump's candidacy on

social media and Russian television.

A Yep.

Q So this statement was released in August 2020, August 7th, 2020, and it made clear that this assessment found that Russia was working to denigrate then Vice President Biden, consistent with Russia's prior criticism of him, correct?

A Specifically about corruption.

Q So this is actual evidence of concern in the intelligence community, and actual evidence of, you know, an assessment that that was the case?

A Yep.

Q Okay. And you would agree that this statement is accurate --

A Yeah.

Q -- in your view?

So, moving on, the ninth paragraph of the October 19th letter, and I think it's the top of the next page, top of the second page states that: Such an operation would be consistent with some of the key methods Russia has used in its now multiyear operation to interfere in our democracy, the hacking via cyber operations, and the dumping of accurate information or the distribution of inaccurate or misinformation. Russia did both of these during the 2016 Presidential election, a judgment shared by the U.S. intelligence community, the investigation into Russian activities by Special Counsel Robert Mueller, and the entirety of all Republicans and Democrats on the current Senate Intelligence Committee.

A Yeah.

Q So I'm going to go through those latter assessments one by one.

A Great.

Q Are you familiar with the January 2017 CIA, FBI, and National Security

Agency joint assessment detailing a Russian campaign to influence the 2016 election?

A Vaguely, yeah.

Q Okay. I'm going to introduce as --

A Is this the ICA.

Q Yeah.

██████████ We'll introduce it as exhibit 9.

[Shapiro Exhibit No. 9

Was marked for identification.]

BY ██████████

Q We're going to look at -- it's marked as Roman numeral pages II to III of the report, listed as key judgments -- I think it might actually be page 4 of the printed copy. It little Roman numeral -- yeah. Roman numeral II.

So this -- I should say the classified version of this report was released in January. In this setting, we're using the unclassified version, which was released in March of that year publicly, and it's available online.

So the key judgment section on pages -- Roman numeral II to III says that: The intelligence agencies assessed that Russian intelligence conducted cyber operations against targets associated with the 2016 election, including targets associated with both political parties, gained access to the Democratic National Committee computer networks and publicly released materials via WikiLeaks.

So, to the extent that paragraph 9 refers to the U.S. intel community assessments of 2016, this was an accurate assessment. That is what assessment found, right?

A Sure, yeah.

Q And that actually would be evidence that you would -- that's actual hard evidence from the intel community?

A Yep.

Q Okay. Paragraph nine refers to the investigation by Special Counsel Robert Mueller. I'm not going to introduce the entire Mueller Report into the report because it's lengthy.

██████████ But we're going to introduce as exhibit 10 the cover page, and what's page 36 of volume one, which is the first page of the section entitled "Russian Hacking and Dumping Operations."

[Shapiro Exhibit No. 10

Was marked for identification.]

BY ██████████

Q Are you familiar with the Mueller Report?

A Yes.

Q So this report determined that the Russian government hacked into the networks of the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee and the Democratic National Committee and then released stolen Clinton campaign and DNC documents using various personas to interfere in the 2016 election, right?

A Yep.

Q So this is -- this does -- this supports what you said in the ninth paragraph or what the signatories said in the ninth paragraph of the letter?

A Absolutely.

Q And would you consider this evidence to support your assertions?

A Yep.

Q And, finally, the last assessment in there, it's paragraph 9 refers to the findings of the Senate Intelligence Committee report.

Is this -- to your knowledge, is this a reference to the Senate Select Committee on

Intelligence report on Russian active measures, campaigns, and interference in the 2016 U.S. election?

A Yep.

Q Okay. And the final version of that was released in August of 2020, which would have been two months, roughly, before the October 19th letter?

A Yep.

██████████ So I want to introduce as exhibit 11 the cover page and just the findings section of that report.

[Shapiro Exhibit No. 11

Was marked for identification.]

BY ██████████

Q Again, I think the full report is several thousand pages long.

A That was I think the first -- so there had been work in the intelligence community in Mueller. This was the first bipartisan work where everyone could agree the Russians interfered in the election.

Q So just the -- on page Roman numeral VII, I believe it's highlighted, it reads: The committee found that Russian President Vladimir Putin ordered the Russian effort to hack computer networks and accounts affiliated with the Democratic party and leak information damaging to Hillary Clinton and her campaign for President.

A Yep.

Q So this is another assessment mentioned in here -- the letter, and it does -- it is evidence that supports your statement there?

A Yes.

Q Okay. So you would agree that there's widespread evidence -- or widespread agreement, rather, among United States intelligence and national security

experts that Russia did interfere in 2016?

A Absolutely.

Q The 10th paragraph -- going back to the October 19th letter, the 10th paragraph states that: The Russians, according to media reports and cybersecurity experts, targeted Burisma late last year for cyber collection and gained access to its emails.

██████████ I want to introduce as exhibit 12 a January 13th, 2020, New York Times article entitled "Russians Hacked Ukrainian Gas Company at Center of Impeachment."

[Shapiro Exhibit No. 12

Was marked for identification.]

BY ██████████

Q Have you seen this before?

A Probably.

Q I'll give you a second to review, if you want?

A Okay.

Q So this article states that: The Russian intelligence director used phishing emails to target Burisma and gain access to their computer systems, right?

A Yep.

Q And do you have any reason to doubt the voracity of this reporting?

A No.

Q Okay. So this tends to also provide evidence to support the statement in paragraph 10 about Burisma being hacked, right?

A Yep.

Q And then, moving on, paragraph 10 also states that: Ukrainian politician

and businessman Andrii Derkach, identified and sanctioned by the U.S. Treasury Department for being a 10-year Russian agent interfering in the 2020 election, passed supportive materials on Burisma and Hunter Biden to Giuliani.

A Yep.

Q Are you familiar with the Treasury Department's sanctions on Mr. Derkach?

A Yep.

██████████ I'm going to introduce the press release that announces those sanctions.

[Shapiro Exhibit No. 13

Was marked for identification.]

Mr. Shapiro. Great.

BY ██████████

Q So the in-relevant part of the press release says that: Treasury designated Andrii Derkach, pursuant to Executive Order 13848, for his efforts to influence the 2020 U.S. Presidential election. Derkach, a member of the Ukrainian Parliament has been an active Russian agent for over a decade, maintaining close connections with the Russian intelligence services.

A Yep.

Q Derkach has directly or indirectly engaged in, sponsored, concealed, or otherwise been complicit in foreign interference in an attempt to undermine the upcoming 2020 U.S. Presidential election.

A Yep.

Q Okay. So this directly supports the statements made in the letter that Derkach was sanctioned for being a 10-year Russian agent interfering in the 2020 election, right?

A Yes.

Q And so this was a true statement in the letter?

A Yes.

Q And Rudy Giuliani was known to associate with Mr. Derkach, correct?

A Yep.

Q Who was Rudy Giuliani?

A Besides the former mayor of New York after 9/11, he was a close Trump confidante, advisor, lawyer I think at some point.

██████████ I want to introduce as exhibit 14 a Daily Beast article that was published on October 17th, 2020. It's entitled "Rudy: Only 50/50 chance I worked with a Russian spy to dig dirt on Bidens and Ukraine."

[Shapiro Exhibit No. 14

Was marked for identification.]

BY ██████████

Q Have you seen this before?

A I think so, yeah.

Q If you want a minute to scan, I can give that to you.

So this article reports on an hour-long interview that the Daily Beast had with Rudy Giuliani. And, at the top of the last page of the article, Giuliani is described as saying that he, quote: Used his latest leak to the New York Post as an extension of his years-long efforts to work with the Ukrainians to dig up dirt on the Bidens.

A Yep.

Q So there was actual evidence that Giuliani worked to dig up dirt on the Bidens, and he described the laptop leak as an extension of those efforts, right?

A Yep.

Q So this actually is evidence that supports your concerns expressed in the letter?

A Yep.

Q And the article continues that: Derkach has for years -- for years has tried to pass damaging and largely false information about the Ukrainian Government's supposed attempts to undermine Trump and the Bidens' supposed dirty dealings in Kyiv. Derkach dispatched packets of disinformation about the Obama administration and the Bidens to lawmakers on Capitol Hill throughout 2019, and finally met with Giuliani in December 2019 in Kyiv during the middle of the House impeachment process.

A Yep.

Q Derkach and Giuliani appeared together in an anti-Biden television series produced by the Trumpist network OAN, and Giuliani has interviewed Derkach about the Bidens on his YouTube video series "Common Sense."

So this tends to support the concerns raised in the letter about Giuliani's interactions with Derkach, correct?

A Absolutely.

Q Okay. Would you agree that it would be concerning for an individual, Giuliani, who was working at -- would you agree that it would be concerning that Mr. Giuliani, who is an American person, working to influence the election with someone who had deep ties to a Russian agent sanctioned for trying to interfere in the election?

A Absolutely.

Q And is that kind of what you captured -- and why is that?

A Sorry. Why is --

Q Why is it that you find that concerning?

A Because you have a known Russian agent closely working with a Trump

confidante. Everyone is literally saying out in the open that they're trying to dig up dirt on the Bidens. You have Trump's own government saying this guy Derkach is known for creating fake information, pushing false information. You have Derkach and Giuliani together. Giuliani is looking for exactly what Derkach is saying he's providing, and then suddenly you have this laptop story.

Q So we've walked through a number of the factors raised in the letter and kind of talked through the evidence you had to support the statements in there. And you said earlier that there are many ways that the Russians could have interfered here, could have been information, disinformation, pushing out through information, right?

A Yep.

Q So I want to now look at some evidence that suggests that Russia, in fact, did interfere in the 2020 election.

A Great.

██████████ So I want to introduce a January 7th, 2021, intelligence community assessment. It's entitled "Foreign Threat to the 2020 U.S. Federal Elections." We'll introduce it as exhibit 15, and, again, this was a classified report. We're introducing the unclassified report into the record today.

[Shapiro Exhibit No. 15

Was marked for identification.]

BY ██████████

Q Have you seen this before?

A I think so, yeah.

Q Okay. So I'm going to ask you to turn to the page -- the fourth page. It's the fourth page of the document. It's Roman numeral I.

Key judgment two, so it's actually -- it's Roman numeral I. It's under key

judgments. There's a section there that says "key judgment two"; you see that?

A Yep.

Q And it says: We assess that Russian President Putin authorized, and a range of Russian Government organizations conducted, influence operations aimed at denigrating President Biden's candidacy and the Democratic Party, supporting former President Trump, undermining public confidence in the electoral process, and exacerbating sociopolitical divisions in the U.S. Unlike in 2016, we did not see persistent Russian cyber efforts to gain access to election infrastructure. We have high confidence in our assessment: Russia state and proxy actors who all serve the Kremlin's interest worked to affect the U.S. public perceptions in a consistent manner. A key element of Moscow's strategy this election cycle was its use of proxies linked to Russian intelligence to push influence narratives, including misleading or unsubstantiated allegations against President Biden, to U.S. media organizations, U.S. officials, and prominent U.S. individuals, including some close to former President Trump and his administration.

Do you agree that this paragraph is consistent with the type of concerns about Russian interference that you Mr. Morell and the others expressed in the October 19th letter?

A Absolutely.

Q And, in fact, the Treasury Department's sanctions specifically found that Andrii Derkach was a Russian intelligence proxy pushing influence narratives, right?

A Specifically to denigrate Biden specifically about corruption.

Q Would you agree that Rudy Giuliani is an individual who is, quote, close to former President Trump and his administration?

A Yes.

Q I want to turn -- what time did we start?

Mr. Sini. 11:05 I have.

BY [REDACTED]

Q You were asked some of this earlier, but I want to just make sure I have a clean record on it.

A Yeah.

Q You said that you did not have any interaction with any social media company regarding the Hunter Biden emails, correct?

A Correct.

Q To your knowledge, did anybody else who signed the letter have such interactions?

A Not to my knowledge.

Q Okay. Did you have any interactions with any social media company regarding the New York Post story about Hunter Biden's emails?

A Nope.

Q And, to your knowledge, did anyone else who signed the letter have those interactions?

A Nope.

Q You were asked about the Publications Review Board, and you said you never interacted with them about the letter, correct?

A Correct.

Q You don't know if anyone else did other than Mr. Morell you assumed?

A Correct.

Q When the letter was made public -- when it was drafted and made public, October 17th to October 19th, you were a private citizen, correct?

A Yes.

Q And all of the other signatories were private citizens?

A I believe so. Yeah. The point was to be everyone who was a former official.

Q And would you agree that, as a private citizen, you have the right to engage in political process?

A For sure.

Q And to exercise your First Amendment right?

A Yeah.

Q And the letter itself actually doesn't even endorse a candidate on its face, right?

A Correct.

Q In fact, the closing line of the letter states: It is high time Russia stops interfering in our democracy.

A Yep.

Q And you said earlier your goal was to make it clear that Russia needs to stop interfering in our democracy?

A Yep.

Q Why did you feel that it was important to make it clear that Russia could be interfering here?

A Because it's absolutely nuts that we, as America, are sitting here while Russia is interfering with the election. And if we can't get Russia to stop interfering, the American people should know that what they might be seeing or reading might be because the Russians want them to.

Q Would you describe Russia as adversary of the United States?

A Yes.

Q Do you think that by making this information -- making known that Russia is interfering or may be interfering, it could help to counter that influence?

A Yes.

Q And how does that work?

A Well, if people know that they need to be careful because maybe they're reading something that could be because the Russians want them to read it, they should think twice about whether or not it plays a part in how they think about things.

Q You were asked earlier if you have any regrets about signing the letter, and you said you don't have any regrets?

A Correct.

Q But you also said that, you know, you were kind of caught up in this now. What did you mean by that?

A I regret that I had to leave my home, fly across the country away from my clients, which I'm sure they're not happy with. My dog. And I don't like being named in the media for, again, voicing an opinion that everyone across the political spectrum in intelligence community has all shared, which is that Russian is interfering with the election.

Q Do you think that the fact that you are part of this investigation, that you've been named in the media, that your name is out there now, do you think that would chill your willingness to participate in the political process in the future?

A I hate to say it, but probably. You know, I don't want to be someone who doesn't stand up for their values or morals, but I don't want to deal with this.

Q And do you think that, if others see you being treated like this or being investigated, having your name in the media, do you think that might chill others' willingness to participate in the political process?

A Sure. Yeah.

Q I want to turn back to exhibit 6. And this is the email from Mr. Cariens.

You said when you were asked about this you don't know who Mr. Cariens is, right?

A Nope.

Q You never had a conversation with him?

A Not to my knowledge.

Q And, in fact, the addressee in this email is [REDACTED] who's a committee staffer here, right?

A Yes.

Q And this isn't -- it's not a sworn statement. It's just an email, right?

A Yep.

Q It hasn't been subject to cross-examination?

A [Nonverbal response.]

Q I actually want to look at the back of the email, if you turn to the second page. This isn't actually even the complete email chain. Right?

A Yep.

Q If you look at the bottom, it looks like there was one that was cut off. So we don't know --

Mr. Sandweg. Can we pause here? Just say yes.

Mr. Shapiro. Oh, sorry. Yes. Sorry.

BY [REDACTED]

Q So we don't know what interactions there were prior to 4:51 p.m. on March 1st, 2023?

A Correct.

Q And you don't know how old Mr. Cariens is, do you?

A I don't know him. No.

Q He says that he retired in 1997. So he's been retired for at least -- I can't do math.

A Me either.

Q 28 years. Is that right?

A I'll trust your math.

Q Okay. And he's -- he said he doesn't have security clearances. He hasn't had one since at least 2017.

So you don't -- other than the text, the four corners of what's in this email, you have no knowledge about this?

A Correct.

BY [REDACTED]

Q Hi. Nice to see you. [REDACTED] from the House Intelligence Committee.

There are kind of a couple of questions I wanted to focus in on in this particular interaction.

A Sure.

Q So, when the majority was asking you about it earlier, the -- when this exhibit was first introduced, they described it as the PCRB reportedly promoting the letter. Do you remember that?

A Do I remember counsel talking to me about it? Yes.

Q The majority. From my observations of you, you reacted with some surprise of that statement. Is that fair?

A Very surprised.

Q Because it would be at least a little surprising for the PCRB to be behaving that way, right?

A Extremely. Yeah.

Q So the -- turning back to exhibit 6. This is, from your review of the exhibit, at least an initial email exchange between the counsel for the majority and Mr. Cariens, correct?

A Uh-huh. Yes.

Q So you have no specific knowledge of whether or not -- excuse me. Let me rephrase.

You have no knowledge of what the PCRB said to Mr. Cariens other than what's presented in this email, correct?

A Correct.

Q And you have no knowledge of what he said to them, correct?

A Correct.

Q And you have no knowledge of the interactions or atmospherics of that call, correct?

A Correct.

Q Did you have any knowledge of this particular interaction before this email was showed to you today?

A No.

Q So your reaction of surprise came from -- and these will be my words, but I'm curious of what you think -- a place of ignorance and first impression; is that fair?

A Yes.

Q That's all I've got. Thanks.

██████████ I don't think we have any more questions today. Thank you. We might have more questions after the next round.

Off the record at 11:44 a.m.

[Recess.]

[11:50 a.m.]

██████████ It's 11:15, and we'll go back on the record.

Mr. Gaetz. Mr. Shapiro, my name is Matt Gaetz. I'm a majority member with the House Judiciary Committee, and I have a few questions for you this morning. First, how long have you known Hunter Biden?

Mr. Shapiro. I don't know Hunter Biden.

Mr. Gaetz. Never communicated with him about the substance in the letter?

Mr. Shapiro. I have never communicated with Hunter Biden ever.

Mr. Gaetz. When did you first come to learn of Burisma?

Mr. Shapiro. In the media during all of this probably.

Mr. Gaetz. What time period would you say?

Mr. Shapiro. I have no idea. I tend to follow politics in the news. So, whenever Burisma became a news event, I would say then.

██████████ Fall of 2019, during the impeachment?

Mr. Shapiro. I --

██████████ Or before?

Mr. Shapiro. No --

██████████ You didn't know about it before impeachment?

Mr. Shapiro. I have no idea when I first heard of Burisma, but it was in the media, just following current events. I have no non -- information about that until I started hearing it in the media.

Mr. Gaetz. Did you seek a job in the Biden government?

Mr. Shapiro. No.

Mr. Gaetz. And you never communicated with any of the other signatories to the letter?

Mr. Shapiro. I communicated with Michael Morell -- about the letter.

Mr. Gaetz. Yeah. Other than Mr. Morell?

Mr. Shapiro. No.

Mr. Gaetz. Did you speak to Mr. Brennan about it?

Mr. Shapiro. Not at the letter, no.

Mr. Gaetz. Did anyone reach out to you regarding the letter after they saw your signature on it?

Mr. Shapiro. Not that I can remember, no.

Mr. Gaetz. No people in the Biden campaign? No people in the media?

Mr. Shapiro. Because they saw my signature on it?

Mr. Gaetz. Sure. Somebody may have seen that you signed the letter and wanted to follow up with you regarding basis for signing the letter.

Mr. Shapiro. No. I've have had journalist who have reached out to me since then asking me for a comment on the letter, like whether I wanted to sign it or regretted signing or not.

Mr. Gaetz. Has anyone in the government reached out to you about your signature on the letter?

Mr. Shapiro. No.

Mr. Gaetz. So, in Mr. Morell's testimony to us, I'll represent to you that we learned that a principle reason to have the letter was as a talking point for a Presidential debate. Did the two of you ever discuss that?

Mr. Shapiro. No. He might have mentioned it. I saw it in an email that he sent but didn't have any indepth conversation about that at all.

Mr. Gaetz. How did you react to receiving the email indicating that this would be a tool in Presidential debate?

Mr. Shapiro. Without surprise because that's what campaigns do.

Mr. Gaetz. So you understood the letter to be a tool for the Biden campaign?

Mr. Shapiro. Well, I saw Michael's email saying that that's why he wanted to do it.

Mr. Gaetz. So you understood that to be -- did you understand that to be the purpose of the letter, as far as Mr. Morell was concerned?

Mr. Shapiro. I think that it has dual purpose. I think Morell was doing that for whatever conversations he was having for that time period, but I think if you ask most of the signatories, that they wanted to sign it because they wanted to inform the American people that Russians again are interfering with the election.

Mr. Gaetz. But you had no evidence that Russians were interfering with the election at the time, did you?

Mr. Shapiro. No. There were public reports that Russians were interfering in the election again.

Mr. Gaetz. Okay. Did you have any direct evidence that spoke to the Russians' involvement with this Hunter Biden laptop?

Mr. Shapiro. Not with the laptop specifically, no. Just Russian interference.

Mr. Gaetz. So, because Russians were interfering with the elections, you assumed that the laptop was a feature of that interference?

Mr. Shapiro. I assumed that it could be.

Mr. Gaetz. Right. But you had no evidence that it was?

Mr. Shapiro. Correct.

Mr. Gaetz. Why didn't you investigate that more thoroughly before signing the letter?

Mr. Shapiro. Because the letter very caveated to say: We think Russians could

be involved. We don't know if it's real or fake information that they could potentially be spreading.

And I believed that to be the case.

Mr. Gaetz. And do you believe those caveats were sufficient given the likely realization of this letter as a political device in the Presidential debate?

Mr. Shapiro. Absolutely. I think it makes very clear that we have no access to classified information, makes very clear that we have no evidence about the laptop, makes very clear that our judgement is that the Russians could be involved in some way, but we don't even know how.

Mr. Gaetz. But isn't something that's so caveated irresponsible to put out if you don't have a basis for the underlying claim that this laptop is a feature of a Russian information campaign?

Mr. Shapiro. I don't think so. There was already in the press reports that the FBI was saying that they're looking into whether this was a Russian operation. Rudy Giuliani was already in the press saying: I don't know if this was hacked. It might have been hacked. If it's hacked, I could use it.

So there was certainly enough out there already.

Mr. Gaetz. It sounds like you relied heavily on public press reports to justify your signature on the letter. Is that the case?

Mr. Shapiro. That, and my experience.

Mr. Gaetz. But you didn't have any -- none of your experience indicated that the laptop was a feature of a Russian misinformation campaign, did it?

Mr. Shapiro. No. My experience tells me that Russians are probably interfering with the election, and looking at what was being -- happening, I certainly believed that this could have been a Russian operation, still do.

Mr. Gaetz. Right. But as we discussed, you have no evidence that the Russians had anything to do with this laptop?

Mr. Shapiro. Correct. And I think that the reason I was comfortable signing it is because we said that in the letter, that we have no evidence.

Chairman Jordan. What were classic earmarks then? There was no evidence -- you had no evidence Russians involved. What were the classic earmarks? That was a line that was actually changed from the first draft to the final draft -- went from, I think, it has the feel to it went to it has all of the classic earmarks. So could you define what those classic earmarks are?

Mr. Shapiro. Yeah. I don't know about the change in language. I didn't even know that until you just said that or remember that. But all the classic earmarks of Russian operation are potentially hacking a computer and releasing damaging information, which is what Russians did in 2016. So we thought this totally could be that. Also just spreading negative information that they get their hands on, we thought this could totally be that.

Chairman Jordan. So those generalized, kind of, just broad general techniques are classic earmarks?

Mr. Shapiro. They sure are.

Chairman Jordan. Okay. Pretty general.

Mr. Gaetz. Now that we know more about the authenticity about the information that was on the laptop, do these activities -- do these activities concern you that are reflected on the laptop?

Mr. Shapiro. What activities?

Mr. Gaetz. The coordination between the Biden family and foreign governments?

Mr. Shapiro. I think that the President of the United States is -- has not done anything because of anything his family members have or haven't done.

Mr. Gaetz. What's your basis for that belief?

Mr. Shapiro. That I haven't seen anything tell me that President Biden has made a decision on national security or in any way based on his family?

Mr. Gaetz. Do you know why President Biden dissolved the China Initiative at the Department of Justice?

Mr. Shapiro. I didn't even know he did.

Mr. Gaetz. Right. So, if I represent to you that, on the laptop, Hunter Biden is holding the annual dinner for his investment fund at the Chinese Embassy, does that concern you?

Mr. Shapiro. If the Russians are spreading that information, I want the American people to have that information and also know that the Russians want them to have that information.

Mr. Gaetz. Why? First of all, we've covered it pretty extensively that you don't have any evidence that the Russians are involved in this laptop. So I'm asking you about the substantive information. As a national security professional, does the fact that Hunter Biden is having his investment fund's annual meeting at the Chinese Embassy concern you?

Mr. Shapiro. If the President knows about it and has disclosed it, and the government knows about it, then it's less concerning. If it's a secret that is being held over the President of the United States and the President makes a decision based off of that, then that would concern me.

Mr. Gaetz. And, if Hunter Biden, in order to have access to the Embassy, the Ambassador's residence, has to have a private meeting with the Ambassador beforehand,

does that concern you?

Mr. Shapiro. I think children of any President, President Trump's children, President Biden's children, shouldn't be using their access -- shouldn't be using the fact that their father is President for access to anything.

Mr. Gaetz. So it does concern you?

Mr. Shapiro. No child of a President should abuse their access, whether it's President Biden, President Trump. Fortunately, Sasha and Malia did not do that when I was in the White House.

Mr. Gaetz. I'll concede that point for sure.

But you didn't write a letter about that, right? It seems as though --

Mr. Shapiro. About what? Sorry.

Mr. Gaetz. I'll strike that. I think those are my questions. [REDACTED] I'll yield to you.

BY [REDACTED]

Q The -- you would concede that there are a lot of false information regarding the Russians and President Trump, correct?

A I would concede that the Russians are spreading false information on Trump, is that what you're saying?

Q No. That there's a lot of in false information about the Russians' involvement with President Trump, correct?

A I guess I'd ask what do you mean.

Q Like with their Carter Page FISA. You said you followed the news --

A Sure. That there was a FISA -- yeah.

Q FISA that had just a litany of errors --

A I am aware that there was a FISA that should not have been authorized

because there were errors, yeah.

Q And that FISA you know goes onto create this penumbra, this idea that President Trump is colluding with the Russians in advance of 2016 election, correct?

A Yeah.

Q That there's a lot of -- there's a lot of other just elements that, you know, President Trump's political adversaries have tried to tie him to Russia when, in effect, the evidence wasn't there, correct?

A In my opinion, the fact that the Russians keep going out of their way to help President Trump is -- is newsworthy and noteworthy I think. I don't have any evidence of President Trump colluding.

Q But our adversaries do that all the time, correct?

A No. Election interference is something that is a big problem now that was not happening in the past.

Q The Iranians didn't want President Trump to win, correct?

A I don't know. I believe Bill Evanina -- I forgot -- there's a statement in here where Bill Evanina told us who China and Iran and Russia were helping.

Q Right.

A But I don't remember which China and Iran was.

Q I mean, it was represented to us yesterday that the Iranians did not want President Trump to win, that they were big backers of Secretary Clinton and subsequently Vice President Biden --

A Russians are not the only ones interfering in elections. That's for sure. I think other countries saw the benefit after 2016 and said: We should do this too.

Q Right. The Politico story -- I believe it's exhibit 7 -- does the headline concern you?

A Headline is wrong.

Q Did you try to correct it with Ms. Bertrand?

A Not at the time, no.

Q One of the issues with the letter is that 51 former intel officials have this prestige associated with their access to information, their knowledge, their experience. So when 51 former intel officials, especially some of the more marquee names, sign a letter, it creates this impression that they have maybe some inside information; isn't that correct?

A I think that's probably why they went out of their way -- we went out of our way to say we don't have that just in case people thought we did.

Q But the way it works is reporters don't always cover it that way, right?

A Sure. But that's why the letter was the important thing for people to read.

Q Just, I mean, the way Politico presented it isn't -- would you agree it's not consistent with the way the letter read?

A The story is very consistent. The story is a hundred percent accurate. That headline, though, is not. We didn't say disinformation.

██████████ We're all good.

██████████ We're good.

██████████ We'll go off the record at 12:04 p.m.

[Whereupon, at 12:04 p.m., the interview was concluded.]

Certificate of Deponent/Interviewee

I have read the foregoing ____ pages, which contain the correct transcript of the answers made by me to the questions therein recorded.

Witness Name

Date