

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

INTERVIEW OF: JAMES CLAPPER

Wednesday, May 17, 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, Gaetz, Hageman, Johnson of Louisiana, Spartz,

Stewart, and Goldman.

Appearances:

For the COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY:

- ██████████, GENERAL COUNSEL
- ██████████, PRESS ASSISTANT
- ██████████, COUNSEL
- ██████████, CHIEF COUNSEL FOR OVERSIGHT
- ██████████, SPECIAL COUNSEL
- ██████████, SENIOR SPECIAL COUNSEL
- ██████████, PROFESSIONAL STAFF MEMBER
- ██████████, DIGITAL DIRECTOR
- ██████████, MINORITY CHIEF OVERSIGHT COUNSEL
- ██████████, MINORITY INTERN
- ██████████, MINORITY COUNSEL
- ██████████, MINORITY STAFF ASSISTANT
- ██████████, MINORITY OVERSIGHT COUNSEL

For the PERMANENT SELECT COMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE:

- ██████████, STAFF DIRECTOR,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND INVESTIGATIONS

[REDACTED], STAFF DIRECTOR,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

[REDACTED], SENIOR COUNSEL

For JAMES CLAPPER:

HAYDN FORREST

ROBERT S. LITT

MORRISON FOERSTER

2100 L STREET NW

SUITE 900

WASHINGTON, DC 20037

Mr. [REDACTED]: Good morning. This is a transcribed interview of former Director of National Intelligence James Clapper. 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.

Would the witness please state your name for the record?

Mr. Clapper. James Clapper.

Mr. [REDACTED]: I understand you're here with two of your lawyers. Could they please introduce themselves for the record?

Mr. Litt. Robert Litt from Morrison and Foerster.

Mr. Forrest. Haydn Forrest, also Morrison Foerster.

Mr. [REDACTED]: This investigation serves to inform potential legislative reforms within the jurisdictions of our respective committees.

On behalf of both chairmen, I want to thank you for appearing here today to answer our questions, especially that you're here voluntarily.

My name is [REDACTED] with Mr. Jordan's House Judiciary Committee staff. I'm now going to have the staffers in the room introduce themselves, starting with my colleague, Ms. [REDACTED].

Ms. [REDACTED]: [REDACTED], counsel with House Intelligence.

Mr. [REDACTED]: [REDACTED], senior special counsel, House Judiciary Committee, Mr. Jordan.

Ms. [REDACTED] [REDACTED], counsel for the majority staff, House Judiciary Committee.

Mr. [REDACTED] [REDACTED], special counsel for the House Judiciary majority, Chairman Jordan.

Mr. [REDACTED]: [REDACTED], staff for the Judiciary majority.

Mr. [REDACTED]. Ms. [REDACTED]?

Ms. [REDACTED]. [REDACTED], chief oversight counsel for the House Judiciary

Committee Democratic staff.

Mr. [REDACTED]. [REDACTED], House Intel minority general counsel.

Ms. [REDACTED]. [REDACTED], counsel for the Judiciary Committee Democrats.

Ms. [REDACTED]. [REDACTED], House Judiciary minority.

Ms. [REDACTED]. [REDACTED], House Judiciary minority.

Mr. [REDACTED]. [REDACTED], with the majority on House Intelligence.

Mr. [REDACTED]. [REDACTED], subcommittee staff director, CIA Subcommittee,

House Intelligence Committee.

Mr. [REDACTED]. We have some of our members here today. I'll have them introduce themselves as well.

Chairman Jordan. Jim Jordan.

Mr. Gaetz. Matt Gaetz.

Mr. Biggs. Andy Biggs.

Mrs. Spartz. Victoria Spartz.

Mr. [REDACTED]. I'll go over the ground rules and guidelines that we'll follow during today's interview.

Our questioning will proceed in rounds. The majority staff and members will ask questions first for one hour, and then the minority will have an opportunity, both their staff and their members, to ask questions for an hour as well.

We'll alternate back and forth. The staff will physically move around, so we're close to the court reporter. And we can take a short break at the end of each hour. If you'd like to take additional breaks, that's fine too. Please let us know.

Certainly, if you need to confer with your counsel, we'll go off the record and you

can do that whenever you want. You can also go to the other parts of the room if that's interesting or necessary.

As you can see, there's an official court reporter here taking down everything we say to make a written record. We ask that you give verbal responses to our questions. Do you understand that?

Mr. Clapper. Yes.

Mr. [REDACTED]. So the court reporter can capture a complete record, we will do our best to limit the number of people directing questions at you at any given point. From time to time, we will inevitably talk over one another, so we may have to go back and restate a question for you, and we'll try to avoid that.

We want you to answer our questions in the most complete and truthful manner as possible, so we will take our time. If you have any questions or if do not understand one of our questions, please let us know. Our questions will cover a wide range of topics, so if you need a clarification, just say so.

If you honestly don't know the answer to a question or do not remember, it's best not to guess. Please give us your best recollection. And it's okay to tell us if you learned information from someone else. Just indicate how you came to know the information.

The Federal Rules of Evidence aren't applicable here. So if you have some hearsay information, you can tell us, and just tell us how you came to understand that.

You understand that although this interview is not under oath, that by law you're required to answer questions from Congress truthfully. Understand that?

Mr. Clapper. Yes, I do.

Mr. [REDACTED]. Okay. And along those lines, 18 United States Code 1001, the false statements statute, relates to that. Do you understand that as well?

Mr. Clapper. Yes.

Mr. [REDACTED]: And, sir, we mean no disrespect by mentioning that. It's part of our standard welcoming remarks. So thank you.

We'll probably have exhibits here today, and at the end of the process we will collect them, even if they happen to be an exhibit that is a document that you've provided. We would just like to keep the proceedings as confidential as we can.

Ms. [REDACTED], do you have any opening remarks on your end?

Ms. [REDACTED]: No. Just thank you to the witness for joining us today and taking time out of your schedule.

Mr. [REDACTED]: And, Mr. Litt, do you have a --

Mr. Litt. Yes, I do have a short statement. Thank you.

Mr. [REDACTED] Please.

Mr. Litt. I do want to make clear that we continue to believe that this inquiry has no legitimate legislative purpose. Congress has no right of oversight over statements by private citizens on matters of public interest, even if the members may disagree with those statements.

As Chairman Jordan has said, and I have said this before, but I'll repeat it, the most important right we have as American citizens under the First Amendment is our right to speak, our right to communicate in a political fashion, and not be attacked, harassed for doing so.

So long as they do not disclose classified information, former national security officials or individuals with security clearances have the same First Amendment rights as the rest of us. Indeed, the public is entitled to have the benefit of their decades of expertise on matters touching on our national security.

Nonetheless, and without waiving any rights he has, General Clapper is prepared

to answer your questions about the statement he signed in October 2020 concerning the New York Post's reporting about Hunter Biden as requested in the committee's letter of February 26th, 2020 -- sorry, February 6th, 2023.

I do want to mention that General Clapper is a bit hard of hearing because of numerous reconnaissance flights he took in planes without soundproofing. So I would ask that you speak clearly and loudly and understand that he may ask you to repeat questions.

Mr. [REDACTED]: Fair enough.

EXAMINATION

BY MR. [REDACTED]:

Q Director, what was the tenure that you served as the Director of National Intelligence?

A From August of 2010 to January 20th of 2017, six and a half years.

Q And what have you been doing since then?

A Well, I'm retired. I've done speeches. CNN. I have a contract with them. It's about to run out. Appearances at colleges and universities. Consulting. Typical things that retired geezers do.

Q Okay. Going to mark as exhibit 1 the public statement on the Hunter Biden laptop.

[Clapper Exhibit No. 1

Was marked for identification.]

BY MR. [REDACTED]:

Q Did you have any role in creating this statement?

A No. I suggested one minor edit, but I didn't draft it.

Q Okay. Do you know who did draft the statement?

A Michael Morell, I believe, led the effort. I think there were others involved, but principally Michael.

Q And how often do you interact with Mr. Morell?

A Aperiodically. Not frequently.

Q Do you know what --

A We are longstanding colleagues, when we both served in the intelligence community.

Q Okay. Do you know what role Marc Polymeropoulos played in the creation of the statement?

A I do not.

Q What was your reason for agreeing to sign on to the letter?

A For my part, it was simply to sound a warning that the Russians could possibly be involved, and that's all.

Q Okay. Did you have any knowledge that the Russians were involved?

A No, and I believe the letter said that. The statement said that. It just said the characteristics of this episode certainly lend themselves to the potential for the Russians to have been involved. And I say that after living up close and personal in their interference in the election in 2016.

Q But you had no knowledge that the Russians were involved?

A No.

Q Did you have any knowledge of whether the contents of the laptop were authentic?

A No.

Q Since you signed the statement, have you come to learn that the contents of the laptop are authentic?

A Well, some of them are, yes.

Q And some of them are not?

A And I say that -- I've not seen any official pronouncement on -- from the government, DOJ, FBI, or anyone else of an investigatory body about what the content of the -- the laptop's contents are.

Q And have you heard any official pronouncement from the Hunter Biden camp that anything on the laptop is not authentic?

A No, I don't believe I have.

Q If there were inauthentic materials on the laptop and the Biden camp -- Hunter Biden camp -- knew that, don't you think they would point that out publicly?

A I suppose so.

Q I'm going to refer you to the fourth paragraph of the statement.

A Uh-huh.

Q "It is for all these reasons that we write to say that the arrival on the U.S. political scene of emails purportedly belonging to Vice President Biden's son Hunter, much of it related to his time serving on the Board of the Ukrainian gas company Burisma, has all the classic earmarks of a Russian information operation."

Why do you think it had the classic earmarks of a Russia information operation?

A Well, the thing you think about is the capability, intent, the timing, the involvement of Rudy Giuliani, and this Ukrainian businessman who had connections with Russian intelligence services. Certainly the timing just before the election is certainly reminiscent of what I saw the Russians do in the run-up to the election in 2016.

And it was for that reason I signed on to the letter as -- which for me was a warning that the dark hand of the Russians could be involved here.

Q Did you have any communications with any of the signatories of the letter about signing the letter?

A Other than Michael Morell, no.

Q And you just had one email with him? Or how many emails do you recall having?

A Half a dozen or so back and forth.

[Clapper Exhibit No. 2

Was marked for identification.]

Mr. [REDACTED]. This is exhibit No. 2.

BY MR. [REDACTED]:

Q I want to call your attention to your email, it's the second one down in this document, from Sunday, October 18th.

"Michael, I'll gladly sign on. I said as much on CNN Friday evening. I have one editorial suggestion for the letter: I think it would strengthen the verbiage if you say this has all the classic earmarks of a Soviet/Russian information operation rather than the 'feel' of a Russian operation."

Can you help us understand why you suggested that edit?

A I just thought it was better wording.

Q Okay. And did you -- were you -- could you tell us your understanding of the difference between an information operation and a disinformation operation?

A Well, I think that's kind of an arcane definition, for me at least. I think it's any time the Russians or any other adversary nation-state attempt to manipulate data, obtain it, slant it, in the interest of their own -- pursuing their own national interest, that is a form of Russian information operations.

Q And how about disinformation? What would that be?

A Well, to me it's somewhat of a distinction without a difference. I think it's the same general business of manipulating or of tainting, slanting information with a view towards changing opinion.

Q Okay. Going back to the statement, the next paragraph down.

"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. Just that our experience makes us deeply suspicious that the Russian Government played a significant role in this case."

I want to ask you about the use of the word 'significant.' Why did you think the Russian Government played a significant role?

A Again, I don't ascribe a whole lot of gradation to that term. If the Russians were involved at all, that's significant. If a foreign government is involved in our election process or attempting to be involved in the election process, that in itself, in my mind, is significant.

Q Sitting here today, though, we don't have any evidence that the Russians were involved in this, do we?

A Not to my knowledge.

Q Okay. The use of "President Trump's personal attorney, Rudy Giuliani," in this paragraph, do you know if that was used in a pejorative way?

Mr. Litt. What do you mean by pejorative?

Mr. Clapper. Yeah. What do you mean by --

BY MR. [REDACTED]:

Q Were they trying to draw attention that because this is a Trump ally that --

A Well, who had been involved with the Ukrainians, et cetera, yeah. I think that probably raised concerns on the part of many in the group that signed the

statement.

Q And what's your awareness of Mr. Giuliani's involvement with Ukrainians?

A Well, he was in and out of Ukraine. And as I understand it, what I took away from what I read after I left the government, was looking for dirt on political opponents.

Q Were you aware of Hunter Biden's Burisma involvement before this letter was presented to you?

A Not really.

Q Do you recall back in the fall of 2019 news came to light during the impeachment proceedings that Hunter Biden had been placed on the board of Burisma and was paid quite a hefty amount of money to serve on the board? Were you aware of that?

A I think I recall that, yeah.

Q And during that time period it came to light that the duties he was performing on the board weren't specified, and it didn't seem that he was doing anything for that money. Do you remember that?

A No, I don't. And if that's -- I don't know if that --

Mr. Litt. "No, I don't" is enough.

Mr. Clapper. -- is necessarily illegal. But I don't know the specifics of what he did.

BY MR. [REDACTED]:

Q So if the son of a Presidential candidate is being paid a boatload of money for doing nothing, is that something that ought to be fair game for discussing during a Presidential election?

A Well, I guess it depends. I don't know.

Q If a son of a -- or daughter of a Presidential candidate is trading on their parent's name, taking in boatloads of money, I mean, isn't that a problem?

A Well, it could be.

Q It's certainly something worth examining, correct, by the voters?

A I suppose.

Q When the New York Post story first came out identifying the laptop, did you read the story?

A I think I did, yes.

Q And were you -- did you have any other awareness of the story other than the New York Post telling of it?

A I don't think so. Well, other than other media that echoed it.

Q Did you have any communications with anyone outside of the emails that you produced about the Hunter Biden laptop, not specifically about the statement, but about the authenticity of the contents on the laptop?

A I don't recall any such dialogue.

Q Did you do any Google searches, or did you try to educate yourself, research on the issue before deciding to sign on?

A Not other than what I had read in -- I do read a lot of media each day. But I didn't do a Google search, no.

Chairman Jordan. What did you base your -- you said that the Friday before this Sunday email where you agree to sign the letter, you said, you said as much as what was in the letter in an interview on CNN. What did you base that on, just the fact that you read this story?

Mr. Clapper. Well, what I'd -- yes, what I'd read of the story. And I was on Erin Burnett, I think, on CNN the previous Friday for a pretty short interview.

Chairman Jordan. And you said in that interview you thought this was a Russian information operation?

Mr. Clapper. Yes, I did.

Chairman Jordan. Okay.

BY MR. [REDACTED]:

Q Did you have any role in collecting signatories for the letter?

A No.

Q Did you have any communications with Mr. Morell about who would be signing and who ought to be signing?

A Not that I remember specifically. I don't recall pulsing him, asking him about that.

Q Were you aware before Mr. Morell put this plan into place he had received a communication from Tony Blinken?

A Not contemporaneously. I learned that many months later.

Q And at the time, Mr. Blinken was associated with the Biden campaign?

A That's right.

Chairman Jordan. "Many months later," meaning when, Director?

Mr. Clapper. Huh?

Chairman Jordan. "Many months later," meaning when?

Mr. Clapper. Oh, I don't remember, Mr. Jordan, but it was at least a year after.

Chairman Jordan. But prior to the investigation we've been doing where it's become public that Mr. Morell had communicated with Secretary Blinken?

Mr. Clapper. Yeah, I had learned before it became public, yes.

Chairman Jordan. And how did you learn that?

Mr. Clapper. John Brennan told me.

Chairman Jordan. So more than a year ago, Mr. Brennan told you that --

Mr. Clapper. No, I don't -- I'd say it was more than a year after the letter. I don't remember the exact date when he told me that.

Chairman Jordan. Okay.

Mr. Clapper. It was a matter of months ago, I guess. But I don't remember the date, but it was well after.

Chairman Jordan. And what did Mr. Brennan tell you at the time?

Mr. Clapper. He just told me that Tony Bliken had reached out to Michael about putting together a public statement.

BY MR. [REDACTED]:

Q I want to go to exhibit 2 and flip to the second page. And this is the email from Morell and Polymeropoulos. I'll read it.

"Mark 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."

Do you remember that as being one of the reasons you decided to sign on?

A It wasn't one of the reasons. My reason was purely a warning about Russian involvement. And that, I guess, goes to my long experience as a Cold War warrior and again witnessing what they did in 2016. It had nothing to do with talking points.

Q Okay. But you certainly are not a -- are not or were not a supporter of President Trump. Is that correct?

A That's correct.

Q And you were a supporter of then Vice President or the candidate Biden?

A Yes, I was.

Q Okay. So it certainly was a positive thing in your mind, was it not, to give the Vice President a talking point in the debate?

A I didn't seize on that point. I just didn't dwell on it.

Q Were you aware that after the article was published and after the Vice President had that talking point for the debate, a senior campaign official, Mr. Ricchetti, reached out to Morell to thank him?

A Was I aware of that?

Q Yes.

A No.

Q So what we've come to learn is that what Mr. Morell put in place had all the classic earmarks of a classic political operation. Is that a fair characterization, looking back on things?

A Well, it depends on your definition of political, I guess. Was there something wrong with that?

Q Not saying there is. I'm just asking your views on that, whether you think, looking back, this was a political operation.

A I don't have a view on that.

Q Going back to exhibit 1, the statement. The first paragraph sort of establishes the credentials of the signatories. It says, "We are all individuals who devoted significant portions of our lives to national security. Some of us served in senior positions in policy departments and agencies, and some of us served in senior positions in the Intelligence Community. Some of us were political appointees, and some were career officials. Many of us worked for presidents of both parties."

This introduction clearly -- and correct me if I'm wrong -- is trying to make the case

that the signatories have spent significant portions of their careers in national security and have an expertise in identifying things like Russian information operations. Is that fair to say?

A Yes.

Q And is it also fair to say that the list of signatories certainly contains some big names. I mean, yourself, obviously, very well-known individual, former Director of National Intelligence. Former Director of the CIA Mr. Hayden, also very well known. Same with former Director Panetta, former Director Brennan, and Mr. Morell. There's sort of a long list of people here that have well-known and well-understood credentials. Is that fair to say?

A Yes.

Q So when they sign their name to a statement, isn't it also fair to say that readers of this ought to trust them?

A Well, I guess that's the implicit hope.

Q That what they're saying in the statement isn't just likely true, but it's very likely to be true and accurate given their experience?

A All we said, in my mind, was watch out, the Russians could be involved here.

Q The third to last paragraph on the first page of the exhibit 1, "If we are right," it states, "this is Russia trying to influence how Americans vote in this election. And we believe strongly that Americans need to be aware of this."

But as it turns out, you were not right. Is that fair to say?

A Well, from the evidence I have now, that's a fair statement. But again, I have not seen or heard the official outcome of a forensic -- a legitimate forensic analysis of the laptop.

Q Flipping over to the second page, again this is the third to last paragraph

before your signature -- and you're listed first on the letter, aren't you?

A Yes.

Q Third to last paragraph states, "Our view that the Russians are involved in the Hunter Biden email issue is consistent with two other significant data points. According to the Washington Post, citing four sources, 'Intelligence agencies were warned the White House last year that Giuliani was a target of influence operations by Russian intelligence.'"

Mr. Litt. Just to be clear, it says intelligence agencies warned the White House, not were warned.

Mr. [REDACTED]. My apologies.

Mr. Litt. It makes a difference.

Mr. [REDACTED]. That was unintentional.

Mr. Litt. I know.

BY MR. [REDACTED]:

Q Did you share that view, when it said "our view"?

A Yeah, I did.

Q And why did you share that view?

A Well, again, just the general appearance here and the fact that Giuliani was alleged to be a target of influence operations by the Russians. That would be very consistent with what the Russians try to do.

Q Did you have any awareness of how the press operation was going to work from -- I understand that Mr. Shapiro had a role in taking the statement and shopping it to various news outlets?

A No, I did not.

Q Did you have any -- you have no information on that?

A I did not.

Q So you didn't know that he was instructed or suggested by Mr. Morell to go to a particular reporter --

A No.

Q -- at The Washington Post?

Mr. Litt. Let him finish the question.

Mr. Clapper. No, I didn't.

Mr. [REDACTED]: And, ultimately, that reporter at The Washington Post that was referred by Mr. Morell through the campaign decided not to report on it. Did you know that?

Mr. Clapper. No, I did not.

Mr. [REDACTED]: Ultimately, Politico did run the story.

Do we have that?

Mr. Biggs. While you're getting it, can I ask a question --

Mr. [REDACTED]: Of course.

Mr. Biggs. -- of Mr. Clapper about that, the quote that [REDACTED] just read to you?

"According to The Washington Post, citing four sources, quote, 'U.S. intelligence agencies warned the White House last year.'"

Did you have any independent knowledge that U.S. intelligence agencies had warned the White House?

Mr. Clapper. No, sir, I didn't.

Mr. Biggs. Okay.

[Clapper Exhibit No. 3

Was marked for identification.]

BY MR. [REDACTED]:

Q Here's the Politico story. And this is only -- among the reporters that Mr. Shapiro is trying to shop the letter to, this is the outlet that he had success with. And the headline is interesting, and a lot of the witnesses that we've spoken to have said -- have disputed the headline. So I wanted to get your reaction to the headline.

The headline reads, "Hunter Biden story is Russian disinfo, dozens of former intel officials say." I wanted to get your reaction on that.

A Well, that was -- the headline was precisely my problem with this article. The article itself -- the content of the article is pretty good. But the definitive statement, "is Russian disinformation," was not -- does not comport with what I thought the intent of the letter was, which was to say they could be. Big difference.

Q And there was also -- and correct me if I'm wrong -- it was could be a Russian information operation as opposed to disinformation?

A Well, whatever floats your boat on the definition, yeah.

Q Well, you certainly are a respected enough person in this terrain to have a view on the difference between disinformation and information. What some witnesses have represented to us is that disinformation is false or bad or manipulated information that's pushed out, where information may be accurate information that is pushed out by maybe a bad actor.

Mr. Litt. I think he gave you his understanding of the difference before.

Mr. [REDACTED]. Do you have anything to add?

Mr. Clapper. No, I don't.

Mr. [REDACTED]. Okay. Mr. Stewart, I wanted to give you an opportunity to ask.

Mr. Stewart. Just very briefly along these lines of questioning. After -- well, within the last month or so, you said -- and I'm quoting here, I believe -- "Politico deliberately distorted what we said." Is that your belief?

Mr. Clapper. No. That's the headline. That's what I was referring to.

Mr. Stewart. Did that bother you?

Mr. Clapper. Well, sure.

Mr. Stewart. So you felt it misrepresented the intent of the letter?

Mr. Clapper. The headline did, yeah. Not the article itself.

Mr. Stewart. Did you ever make any public comment to try to correct that?

Mr. Clapper. No.

Mr. Stewart. You knew it was picked up by dozens, perhaps hundreds of other media outlets. Again, did you ever try to correct the record on the Politico headline?

Mr. Clapper. No, I did not.

Mr. Stewart. Did you watch the Presidential debate that took place a few days after the release of your letter?

Mr. Clapper. I did not actually see that debate. No, sir.

Mr. Stewart. You've surely seen reference to it or clips of it, I would imagine, when President Biden --

Mr. Clapper. Yes.

Mr. Stewart. He said, referring to your letter, your letter gave him the credibility to say that the Hunter Biden laptop story was, quote, "a bunch of garbage, a Russian plan, a smear campaign."

Did you ever try to correct the record that that wasn't accurate either?

Mr. Clapper. No, I did not.

Mr. Stewart. How come?

Mr. Clapper. I just -- well, if I were to spend my time correcting headlines in the news, I'd be spending a lot of time doing that.

Mr. Stewart. But this is a headline directly attributable to your and your efforts.

It reflected your view on things, and you didn't feel it was accurate. And it clearly had a political intent or purpose or an outcome to it. Why would you not correct in that case?

Mr. Clapper. I just didn't, Mr. Stewart. I just didn't.

Mr. Stewart. But I'm asking why.

Mr. Clapper. I don't have an explanation. I just didn't bother.

Mr. Stewart. Did you feel -- were you pleased that the President could call the Hunter Biden laptop story a bunch of garbage and a Russian plan? Was that, did you feel, a benefit?

Mr. Clapper. Well, I think the Politico article misrepresented -- I think there was some misrepresentation in there too. Again, the definitive statement is quite different from the import -- the intent that I had, at least, which was they could be involved.

Mr. Stewart. Okay. Just a couple of things I'd like to follow up on.

Earlier in your comments here, you said you believe there were some things on the laptop that were actually authentic. Do you have examples of that?

Mr. Clapper. I'm sorry?

Mr. Stewart. Unless I misheard you, I think you said that you believe there were some things on the laptop that were actually authentic, some information was actually authentic.

Mr. Clapper. I don't have any way of assessing what's on the laptop and whether it's valid or not. I never had access to the laptop. Never seen a case report or statement about it.

Mr. Stewart. I just want to make sure I understand what you're saying. Maybe I misheard, or maybe you misspoke.

So you don't believe you have any evidence or examples of anything on the laptop that's actually proven to be authentic?

Mr. Clapper. No, I don't, one way or the other, either valid or invalid.

Mr. Stewart. Okay. You've spoken at great length and referenced here a couple times about your experience, which is, I have no question or doubt about, in Russian interference and their malicious intent.

In particular in 2016, in the U.S. election, give us an example of something Russia did to interfere with the U.S. election in 2016.

Mr. Clapper. Well, they had a very aggressive and in-depth campaign to influence opinion to sow doubt, discord, and distrust among the American people. And I believe they clearly favored one candidate, Mr. Trump, and wanted to do all they could to help him win, and they disfavored the other candidate, Hillary Clinton, and wanted to do all they could to hurt her.

And the intelligence information, as you know, from our intelligence community assessment, I thought laid it out fairly well, particularly the highly classified version?

Mr. Stewart. Okay. So one thing. The ICA has been cast into doubt. I'm sure you know that. But putting that aside, because we can't discuss that here, I'm asking if you have examples, specific things that Russia did to interfere in our 2016 election?

Mr. Clapper. Well, they had -- the efforts they made to influence opinion and to cast doubt on the efficacy of the election to discourage people from voting, and they focused on three key States where the margin was, like, 80 votes. And they did a very good job of analyzing and assessing our political landscape and tried to exploit it.

Mr. Stewart. What did they do in those three key States?

Mr. Clapper. Well, they tried to discourage minority voting.

Mr. Stewart. How?

Mr. Clapper. By casting doubt on the sanctity of the election process and

discouraging people from voting.

Mr. Stewart. But how?

Mr. Clapper. By putting out social media. They're very good at it.

Mr. Stewart. Do you know how much Russia spent on social media, the IC's assessment on how much Russia spent on social media?

Mr. Clapper. I don't recall. I don't know if we had a number --

Mr. Stewart. Would it surprise you if I told you that out of a campaign that spent more than a billion dollars, the entire Russian budget on social media across the entire country, across the entire campaign, was less than \$180,000?

Mr. Clapper. Well, they were very effective.

Mr. Stewart. So in a billion-dollar budget, you would argue that \$180,000 persuaded 80,000 people to change their vote?

Mr. Litt. I don't think he said that.

Mr. Clapper. I don't believe I said that.

Mr. Stewart. That's a question. I'm not saying you said that. It's a question.

Mr. Clapper. Well, there's no way to know that, the answer to that, unless we go back and query, interrogate the 80,000 voters --

Mr. Stewart. There is no way to know that.

Mr. Clapper. -- [crosstalk] affected your vote? And there's no way to do that.

Mr. Stewart. You're right. I agree with you. There is no way to know that.

But you said in a statement, again, about the time, "I would call my informed opinion that, given the massive effort the Russians made, and the number of citizens that they touched, and the variety of multidimensional aspects," of which we've only been able to name one and that's a social media campaign, of which they spent some tiny fraction of 1 percent.

Mr. Clapper. Well, they --

Mr. Stewart. If I could just complete your statement.

"And given the fact that it turned on less than 80,000 votes in three States, to me it just exceeds logic and credulity that they didn't affect the outcome. And it's my belief they actually turned" the outcome.

But you just said a minute ago that you didn't believe we could know that.

Mr. Clapper. That's my opinion, but I can't prove it empirically.

Mr. Stewart. All right. Last question.

Do you believe to this day that the Russian -- it was a Russian disinformation campaign to affect the election, that they tried to do that through the Hunter Biden laptop and release the information on it?

Mr. Clapper. I believe they could have.

Mr. Stewart. But do you believe they did?

Mr. Clapper. Well, I don't know. I'd just say -- all I was suggesting and the reason I signed on the letter is just to introduce the possibility.

Mr. Stewart. But again, I'm not asking a reference to the time you signed the letter. We can understand there was confusion at times. I'm asking, with what you know now and the information you've surely read and been exposed to in the last 2 years, do you believe that this was a Russian disinformation campaign?

Mr. Clapper. I don't know, Congressman. I honestly don't.

Mr. Stewart. You can't make a conclusion about that?

Mr. Clapper. No, I can't.

Mr. Stewart. So you have -- and I want to say this gently and respectfully -- but you have cited your background and your experience in Russian disinformation, you've had 2 years to evaluate the evidence, and you still have no conclusion as to whether this

was a Russian disinformation campaign?

Mr. Clapper. I have not had access to the laptop, myself, and I don't know any results of a legitimate forensic analysis of it. Again, all I was suggesting of the possibility that Russians could be involved. I didn't say they were.

Mr. Stewart. So at this point, you would think it would be valid for us to continue to investigate the Hunter Biden laptop as possible Russian disinformation?

Mr. Clapper. Certainly.

Mr. Stewart. Okay. And do you regret signing the letter?

Mr. Clapper. No.

Mr. Stewart. Still not. With all the information available to you now, you still don't regret it?

Mr. Clapper. No. This is two and a half years ago.

Mr. Stewart. But with the information available to you now, do you wish you could go back and say, you know, I wish I wouldn't --.

Mr. Clapper. No, I don't. I do wish we added a statement in the letter that said something along the lines of, "We will of course abide by the results of a legitimate forensic analysis of the laptop." I think that would have strengthened the letter.

Mr. Stewart. Okay. I'll conclude.

You were the Director of National Intelligence, DIA, and others. You had to make decisions about the authenticity of information and intelligence every single day. And I got to tell you, it stuns me that you won't make an analysis or a conclusion on two years of being able to evaluate this information --

Mr. Clapper. I don't have any way of making an analysis, Congressman. I don't have any inside baseball access to that.

Mr. Stewart. I yield, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. [REDACTED]. Mr. Biggs, sir.

Mr. Biggs. Before we leave the Politico article, if I understand you right, the problem that you had with the article was that the Hunter Biden story is Russian disinfo, and you thought that was too direct and emphatic.

Mr. Clapper. That's right.

Mr. Biggs. And did that make you comfortable with the rest of the article?

Mr. Clapper. Well, I thought it was pretty good.

Mr. Biggs. And so I'm just asking for clarification, I'm not trying to put you on the spot, except for the second to the last paragraph of this article, which talks about Biden advisers during his vice presidency who said that basically they've rejected the suggestion that Biden ever met with a representative of Burisma in 2015 or has otherwise been involved in Hunter Biden's business interests.

Mr. Clapper. I'm sorry, sir, which --

Mr. Biggs. The second to last paragraph.

Mr. Clapper. Okay.

Mr. Litt. Take a second to read it.

Mr. Biggs. I'll let you read it.

Mr. Litt. Just read that paragraph to yourself.

Mr. Clapper. Okay.

Mr. Biggs. Yeah. So I guess my question is, you didn't have any direct evidence as a former intelligence official about Biden going to Burisma at all in the -- I mean, going to Ukraine at all in 2015 and meeting with Burisma? You had no intel information about that at all? You had nothing corroborating or --

Mr. Clapper. In 2015 you're talking about?

Mr. Biggs. Yeah, at all, ever.

Mr. Clapper. No.

Mr. Biggs. Okay. And you were comfortable with this paragraph?

Mr. Clapper. No information one way or the other.

Mr. Biggs. Okay.

Mrs. Spartz. So the Hunter and Burisma situation never was brought up to you as the Director of National Intelligence, never brought up internally --

Mr. Clapper. I can't hear her.

Mr. Litt. She's asking you whether the Hunter Biden Burisma situation was never brought to your attention when you were Director of National Intelligence.

Mr. Clapper. No.

Mrs. Spartz. Have you ever actually noticed that Natasha Bertrand, were you aware, was actually the same person who planted the Steele Dossier, which happened to be a hoax? Were you aware of that, the same reporter?

Mr. Clapper. The same?

Mrs. Spartz. Natasha Bertrand.

Mr. Clapper. I apologize for the hearing.

Mr. Litt. She's asking you whether you knew that Natasha Bertrand of Politico, who wrote this story here, was the same reporter who broke the story about the Steele Dossier.

Is that what you were asking?

Mrs. Spartz. Yes.

Mr. Clapper. No, I didn't know that.

Mrs. Spartz. So you wanted to strengthen the verbiage, use the credibility of your office. What kind of due diligence did you do?

Mr. Litt. On what?

Mr. Clapper. On what?

Mrs. Spartz. Signing this letter. What due diligence did you do at all?

Mr. Clapper. Well, the only due diligence I could do was what I was aware of in the media and my concerns that the Russians could be involved.

Mrs. Spartz. So you never checked anything? What you did? Did you google something? Did you do anything?

Mr. Clapper. I'm sorry.

Mrs. Spartz. What type of diligence? You put your name on the letter.

Mr. Litt. She's asking what kind of due diligence you did before signing the letter. Fair?

Mrs. Spartz. Yeah.

Mr. Clapper. Well, I thought that the letter was a fair warning of potential Russian involvement. That's all it was.

Mrs. Spartz. So you did none?

Mr. Clapper. Well, I didn't present it, nor did I think it was a fact that the Russians were involved. I was just concerned that they might have been. I don't know how much due diligence you need to do for that. It certainly rang familiar bells for me from what I saw them do in 2016.

So I simply wanted to join in the warning that, watch out, this could be the dark hand of the Russians. That's all it was for me.

Mr. Gaetz. Mr. Director, you specifically drafted the language that the Hunter Biden laptop endeavor had all the classic earmarks of Soviet Russian information operations. Would you list those earmarks for the committee?

Mr. Clapper. Would I what?

Mr. Gaetz. Will you list those earmarks?

Mr. Clapper. Well, again, starting with Russian capability, intent, experience, what they did in 2020 to influence the outcome of our election.

Mr. Gaetz. I'm sorry, sir. Did you mean 2020 or 2016?

Mr. Clapper. 2016, excuse me.

Mr. Gaetz. There's what they did in 2016. What's the next one?

Mr. Clapper. The timing.

Mr. Gaetz. Okay.

Mr. Clapper. The involvement of -- what's the Ukrainian businessman's name, slips my mind right now, with Rudy Giuliani, who was the subject of Russian information operations influence.

So I thought there was enough there. And based on the long history of the Russians' involvement -- attempts to involve themselves in our elections, I thought it was fair to warn people about it.

Mr. Gaetz. Just so the committee fully understands how you think about the classic earmarks of a Russian information operation, would you consider the Steele Dossier a Russian information operation?

Mr. Clapper. Could have been, yes. That's why we didn't use it in our intelligence community assessment.

Mr. Gaetz. So, I mean, the Steele Dossier had similar timing to the Hunter Biden laptop with proximity to an election.

Mr. Clapper. Well, again, some thought that the Steele Dossier was a valid source. So there's always a debate about the fidelity and history of such documents.

Mr. Gaetz. Mr. Director, I appreciate your eagerness to answer my questions, but it makes it hard for the court reporter if we talk over each other. So I'm going to give you a chance to respond, and I just want a chance to get my questions out.

But I want to take these three criteria that you've laid out -- prior activity of the Russians, timing of the information, and involvement of shady characters who are the target of Russian intelligence operations -- I'm going to take those three criteria that you've applied to this letter in thinking about classic Russian information operations, and I'm going to apply each of those to the Steele Dossier and test whether or not your criteria are applied equally to everything or whether maybe you applied them differently based on the intent of the operation.

So as to timing, is it safe to say that the Steele Dossier merges with a similar proximity to a Presidential election as the Hunter Biden laptop?

Mr. Clapper. I think the difference, Mr. Gaetz, is I was in a responsible position at the time and had access to classified information and other information that helped us judge the credibility of the Steele Dossier.

I'm a private citizen now. I didn't have any access to classified information, which I did have at the time of the Steele Dossier when that was an issue as to whether we should draw on it or not as a valid intelligence source, and the judgment was not to. But that was a different context than this.

Mr. Gaetz. But that's an answer --

Mr. Clapper. I was out of the government for 6 years when -- or 4 years, I guess -- when this came up.

Mr. Gaetz. Mr. Director, that was an answer to a question, just not mine. My question is for you to help me delineate the distinction between the timing of the emergence of the Steele Dossier and the Hunter Biden laptop.

Mr. Clapper. Well, they're very similar.

Mr. Gaetz. Okay. Very similar.

Mr. Clapper. Yeah.

Mr. Gaetz. I appreciate that.

You made mention of also the involvement of entities that are the targets of Russian intelligence. You're aware that the subsources for the Steele Dossier were, in fact, targets of Russian intelligence, right?

Mr. Clapper. Yes, I did know that.

Mr. Gaetz. So another similarity.

Mr. Clapper. Yeah. I didn't know that in this case. I didn't know any inside baseball, any classified information whatsoever with respect to this matter.

Mr. Gaetz. You hold a --

Mr. Clapper. I did in the case of the Steele Dossier.

Mr. Gaetz. You hold a security clearance now, correct?

Mr. Clapper. I do.

Mr. Gaetz. And you held a security clearance when you signed the Hunter Biden letter, right?

Mr. Clapper. I'm sorry?

Mr. Gaetz. And you held a security clearance when you signed the Hunter Biden letter, right?

Mr. Clapper. Yes.

Mr. Gaetz. So how is the public -- I mean, I appreciate here, as you're sharing information to the committee, well, you signed the Hunter Biden laptop when you were just a private citizen holding a security clearance, but when the Steele Dossier, the basis of the Russia hoax, you were on the inside, so you had this whole different suite of information available to you.

Don't you think it's misleading to the public that 51 people who hold or have held security clearances sign a document in the throes of a Presidential contest with the

imprimatur of those clearances, isn't that confusing to the public?

Mr. Clapper. Well, I think the fact that people had extensive backgrounds in national security and some had clearances, some didn't, that sure, that would carry weight with the American public.

The fact that I or other formers have clearances doesn't mean we have access, day-to-day access, which we don't. It's used as -- if currently serving officials care to draw on our experience, which has happened to me occasionally, not very often, since I left government.

Mr. Gaetz. You work for CNN now?

Mr. Clapper. I do.

Mr. Gaetz. How long have you worked for CNN?

Mr. Clapper. I'm sorry?

Mr. Gaetz. How long have you worked for CNN?

Mr. Clapper. Since 2017.

Mr. Gaetz. So you understand the media, it's safe to say?

Mr. Clapper. Yeah. Yeah. I do now.

Mr. Gaetz. Well, would a reasonable person understand that this letter would be used in the media to try to get the public to believe that this was a Russian disinformation campaign regarding the Hunter laptop?

Mr. Clapper. My purpose was to warn the public that the Russians could be involved, a big difference. I didn't say they were. I said they could be.

Mr. Gaetz. And several of my colleagues have asked you whether or not, as you sit here today, you believe the Russians were involved, and you testified that you don't know because you have not seen an official pronouncement. Is that a correct understanding of your testimony?

Mr. Clapper. Well, I don't know that.

Mr. Gaetz. What type of official pronouncement --

Mr. Clapper. Well, if the --

Mr. Litt. Let him finish his question.

Mr. Gaetz. What is an official pronouncement?

Mr. Clapper. Well, if the Department of Justice or the FBI or some other legitimate credible source of -- who had done a credible forensic analysis -- certainly I would accept that. That's why I suggested that would be a good -- would have been a good fix -- a good addition to the letter had we said that.

Mr. Gaetz. Are you aware of Director Ratcliffe, the DNI at the time, contradicting the thrust of this letter you signed?

Mr. Clapper. Well, okay. He said that statement before, I think, an investigation had begun of the laptop. So I don't know where he's coming from making a statement like that.

Mr. Gaetz. Well, wait a second. Does there -- you defined an official pronouncement as a statement coming from the government. So why --

Mr. Litt. I think he said --

Mr. Clapper. Credible source.

Mr. Litt. I think he said more than that.

Mr. Gaetz. Okay. Let me ask the question this way.

Why was the statement from DNI Ratcliffe, someone who held the position that you previously held, insufficient to be an official pronouncement?

Mr. Clapper. Well, I don't consider him a credible source, a credible authority on intelligence matters.

Mr. Gaetz. Even though he was the Director of National Intelligence?

Mr. Clapper. That right.

Mr. Gaetz. Even though he held the same position you did?

Mr. Clapper. That's right.

Mr. Gaetz. And so an official pronouncement, according to James Clapper, is a statement from a government official who you put credibility in, not just a statement from a government official who held the position you held? Is that how we are to understand it?

Mr. Litt. You're mischaracterizing what he said before because he also talked about after a credible investigation as part of what he meant by an authoritative statement.

Mr. Gaetz. I'm trying to understand, Director Clapper, how you go about formulating what is sufficiently official. And so what is the test you use to determine whether or not something is official?

Mr. Clapper. Well, the credibility of the source. And I would consider an actual investigatory body, such as the FBI, who can do forensic analysis of computers and laptops, which the DNI cannot, I can attest. I would consider that credible.

Mr. Gaetz. So the credibility of the source is how you view it? Don't you think it's confusing when 51 presumably credible sources sign a letter saying something that we now have no evidence to --

Mr. Clapper. All we said was, in my view, that the Russians could -- again, in October of 2020 -- beware, the Russians could be involved here. That's all the letter was to me.

Mr. Gaetz. Well, wasn't the assembly of these 51 people the attempt to try to present a credible source to try to give Joe Biden a talking point in a debate?

Mr. Clapper. Well, that wasn't my intent. My intent was simply to warn of

potential Russian involvement.

Mr. Gaetz. You made mention --

Mr. Clapper. It wasn't to give anybody a talking point.

Mr. Gaetz. I'm sorry. You made mention earlier of a discussion you had with Secretary Blinken regarding the assembly of this letter?

Mr. Clapper. No, I didn't have any discussion with --

Mr. Gaetz. With John Brennan.

Mr. Clapper. Well, he -- John told me much later of the contact between Tony Blinken and Michael Morell.

Mr. Gaetz. Okay. And was that a phone conversation?

Mr. Clapper. Yes.

Mr. Gaetz. And who's your cell phone provider?

Mr. Clapper. I'm sorry?

Mr. Gaetz. Who's your cell phone provider?

Mr. Clapper. What?

Mr. Litt. Who is your cell phone provider, he wants to know.

Mr. Clapper. AT&T.

Mr. Gaetz. And how was the duration of that call?

Mr. Litt. If you recall.

Mr. Clapper. I don't remember. It wasn't very long.

Chairman Jordan. Do you know what prompted Mr. Brennan to tell you a year after this letter, to tell you the involvement of Tony Blinken and the Biden campaign with the assembling of the letter?

Mr. Clapper. I'm sorry, sir?

Chairman Jordan. What prompted Mr. Brennan to call you up and tell you that:

Hey, you know that letter we signed a year ago? Tony Blinken and the Biden campaign were involved in putting that together.

Mr. Clapper. Well, your interest and the letters you sent out, I think is what prompted.

Chairman Jordan. Oh, so that wasn't -- that wasn't -- that first happened here a couple months back.

Mr. Clapper. Yeah.

Chairman Jordan. Okay.

Mr. Biggs. Sir, can I ask a question? I want to link what Mr. Stewart asked you about and also what Mr. Gaetz asked you about.

Mr. Stewart was asking you about what happened in 2016, what were the experiences that led you to understand Russian interference. And what you specifically iterated was that there was 185,000, something like that, dollars in social media, and you really emphasized social media. Is that fair to say?

Mr. Clapper. Yeah. I don't remember that number, a dollar number being ascribed to the magnitude of the Russian effort in social media.

They also had a very aggressive campaign in RT, the radio/television network they run, which has a wide following in the United States.

Mr. Biggs. Okay. So -- but when you answered Mr. Stewart, you didn't mention RT. You mentioned social media.

Mr. Litt. I think Mr. Stewart asked him for an example and he gave an example. I don't think he was asked to exhaustively go over every fact that he relied upon. If you want him to do that, he can do the best he can several years later.

Mr. Biggs. I think he did ask that, and what he came up with was social media. So you and I can differ, and we'll go back on that.

But I'm curious about the social media vis-a-vis a laptop that has come into the hands of the Federal Government. How are those even remotely --

Mr. Clapper. Well --

Mr. Biggs. -- the same to your indicia of Russian interference?

Mr. Clapper. What I had in mind was potential manipulation of data, either infiltrating or exfiltrating data onto the laptop if the Russians had either direct or indirect access to it. It wasn't necessarily a social media thing.

Mr. Biggs. Okay. So you then undertook no action whatsoever, you didn't use any of the authorities that you have to do research, you didn't do any background research, and you've said that.

Mr. Clapper. Other than what I normally read day to day, and I try to stay up on current events. But I didn't specifically do a Google search, if that's what you mean.

Mr. Biggs. Or beyond, you didn't do anything more than a Google search.

Mr. Clapper. No.

Mr. Stewart. Can I follow up on that?

You have your classification, your security clearance still.

Mr. Clapper. I'm sorry?

Mr. Stewart. You still have your security clearance, you've already said.

Mr. Clapper. I believe so.

Mr. Stewart. If you had, previous to signing this letter, called any official who had access to classified information and said, "I'm considering signing a letter which says this is Russian disinformation, will you brief me on whether that is true or not?" do you think they would have briefed you?

Mr. Clapper. I don't know.

Mr. Stewart. Did you ever think about asking them?

Mr. Clapper. No, I did not.

Mr. Stewart. Why not?

Mr. Clapper. Because I didn't -- I wanted to do this strictly based on what I had seen in open -- open source, open media, and I didn't think it was appropriate, frankly, to do that.

[11:02 a.m.]

Mr. Stewart. Well, you're the former Director of National Intelligence, who's about to make a very public statement about a very specific thing that you were claiming is likely Russian disinformation, you had the clearance.

You could have requested a briefing on it. Why did you not even consider doing that?

Mr. Clapper. I didn't do it because I didn't think it was appropriate.

Mr. Stewart. Why?

Mr. Clapper. Because I didn't want to be tainted by or -- this, in any way, involved access to classified information.

Mr. Stewart. But why would it be tainted to try to find the truth before you signed --

Mr. Clapper. Bad choice of words. I didn't want -- I wanted only to go on what I had seen publicly. That's all. I didn't want any connection with classified information in any -- in any way.

Mr. Stewart. Well, it confuses me why you would be willing to sign a letter like this, and you had access to agencies who could have clarified it, and you didn't consider even nor make an effort to find out if what you were about to say was true or not.

Mr. Clapper. I thought it was proper and appropriate to sound a warning that the Russians could be involved. That's all.

Ms. Hageman. Can I ask a few questions?

Mr. [REDACTED]. Ms. Hageman.

Ms. Hageman. Yes. Mr. Clapper, you're aware that Hunter has conceded that the laptop is his, aren't you?

Mr. Clapper. Yes.

Ms. Hageman. And you're also aware that he's never denied that the information included on that laptop is his.

Mr. Clapper. Well, some of it, yeah, is his.

Ms. Hageman. What isn't his?

Mr. Clapper. I don't know. I don't know that I've seen the statement that says everything on the laptop is his.

Ms. Hageman. So in terms of this statement about you would need to see a report, say, from the FBI to conclude that it wasn't Russian misinformation --

Mr. Clapper. Well, if --

Ms. Hageman. -- we have -- we have the information from Hunter Biden pretty much confirms that, don't we?

Mr. Clapper. Okay.

Ms. Hageman. Okay. Why did you believe that the Hunter Biden laptop would pose a problem for Joe Biden in his quest to become President?

Mr. Clapper. I, frankly, didn't consider that.

Ms. Hageman. You didn't consider the contents of the laptop?

Mr. Clapper. No, I didn't, not in the content -- in connection with the campaign.

Ms. Hageman. Okay. There's a lot of information on that laptop that's very damaging to the Bidens, isn't it?

Mr. Clapper. I gather.

Ms. Hageman. Yeah. So if they there were heart emojis and photographs of tulips and skies and ponies and things like that, you probably wouldn't have bothered signing the letter with these other 50 folks who signed that letter, would you?

Mr. Clapper. Well, unless the possibility, I suppose, that Russians could have inserted some of this.

Ms. Hageman. So what you were concerned about, and the other 50 folks who signed that letter, you were concerned about the contents of the laptop and how that would affect Joe Biden as he was running for President.

Mr. Clapper. No.

Ms. Hageman. Isn't that right?

Mr. Clapper. No, that's not right.

Ms. Hageman. Okay. So if it just did heart emojis and a few things like that, you would -- you still would have signed the letter, claiming it was Russian misinformation?

Mr. Clapper. I'm sorry?

Ms. Hageman. If it had heart emojis and photographs of ponies and a few things like that, you still would have signed the letter, claiming that it was Russian misinformation?

Mr. Clapper. Well, it could have been.

Ms. Hageman. But would you have signed the letter? That's the question that I have.

Mr. Clapper. Yes, I would have.

Ms. Hageman. Okay. Interesting.

You now know and you've had an opportunity to review some of the materials that were included on that laptop, haven't you?

Mr. Clapper. Well, not in depth.

Ms. Hageman. I didn't ask in depth. I asked if you were aware of some of the information that's included on that laptop.

Mr. Clapper. I'm aware of what has been reported in the media about it, yes.

Ms. Hageman. Okay. And that information that has been reported in the

media is pretty damaging to the Biden family, isn't it?

Mr. Clapper. I would guess.

Ms. Hageman. You're not guessing. It, in fact, is a problem for the Biden family, isn't it?

Mr. Clapper. I suppose.

Ms. Hageman. Okay. Do you -- you have indicated you know Rick Grenell. Or do you know Rick Grenell, who he is, Rick Grenell?

Mr. Clapper. No, I don't.

Ms. Hageman. Do you know who he is?

Mr. Clapper. Well, he served briefly as the Director of National Intelligence, former Ambassador to Germany.

Ms. Hageman. Okay. And you know who John Ratcliffe is.

Mr. Clapper. I do.

Ms. Hageman. Do you think that either one of them should have engaged in any activities that could have interfered with the 2020 election?

Mr. Litt. Do you mean when they were in office?

Ms. Hageman. In office or out of office, either one.

Do you believe that either one of them should have engaged in any activities that would be considered to be interference in the 2020 election? Do you think they should have done something like that?

Mr. Litt. I'm sorry. I have to ask again. What do you mean by interference?

Mr. Clapper. I don't understand the question.

Ms. Hageman. If they took any position, if they issued any letters, if they made any public statements that could have been considered interference in the 2020 election? Do you think they should have engaged in any behavior that could be considered

interference in the 2020 election?

Mr. Clapper. I don't understand the question. I'm sorry.

Ms. Hageman. Okay.

Mr. Litt. Well, you have to explain what you mean by interference. Are you asking about whether they could make any political statement relating to the election?

Ms. Hageman. Sure.

Mr. Litt. Do you think it's --

Mr. Clapper. Well, they probably shouldn't.

Ms. Hageman. They probably shouldn't.

They shouldn't have engaged in activities that could be considered interference in the 2020 election, right?

Mr. Clapper. Right.

Ms. Hageman. So then why did you do it 1234.

Mr. Clapper. Because I wasn't active.

Ms. Hageman. So it was okay --

Mr. Clapper. I was -- I was a former.

Ms. Hageman. So --

Mr. Clapper. They were in a position. Big difference.

Ms. Hageman. Okay. So it was okay for you to interfere in the 2020 election because you were a former head of the NDI. Is that your answer?

Mr. Clapper. No. What's your definition of "interference"?

Ms. Hageman. Exactly what you, did signing the letter with 50 other --

Mr. Clapper. That's not interference.

Ms. Hageman. Okay.

Mr. Clapper. I was exercising my First Amendment rights.

Ms. Hageman. So it was okay for you to interfere in the 2020 election.

Mr. Clapper. I don't subscribe to interfering.

Ms. Hageman. You did no independent investigation into the laptop.

Mr. Clapper. No, nor could I.

Ms. Hageman. You did no independent investigation to determine whether the laptop was accurate, whether it was Hunter Biden's, or the information contained on there.

Mr. Clapper. No, I did not.

Ms. Hageman. Okay.

Mr. Clapper. I simply was concerned about the Russian potential for Russian involvement. That's all.

Mr. Jordan. Director, did you know that you were going to be the very first signature on the letter before you signed it?

Mr. Clapper. No.

Mr. Jordan. Okay.

Mrs. Spartz. Was the timing of this letter pretty strange to you, right before the debate? Did you ever consider that it's strange to you, the timing? Talk about timing, right before the debate.

Mr. Litt. She's asking whether you thought it was strange that the timing of the letter was right before the debate?

By the letter, you mean the statement?

Mrs. Spartz. Yeah, the letter that you signed.

Mr. Clapper. The revelation about the laptop, that same timing.

Mrs. Spartz. So it didn't appear to you as strange?

Mr. Clapper. I'm sorry?

Mrs. Spartz. No?

Mr. Litt. So, it -- I'm sorry. What didn't appear strange?

Mrs. Spartz. To release your letter and statement right before the Presidential debate --

Mr. Clapper. Well --

Mrs. Spartz. -- so close.

Mr. Clapper. I --

Mr. Litt. She wants to know whether you thought it was strange to release this letter --

Mr. Clapper. No, it wasn't strange.

Mr. Litt. -- just before the debate.

Mrs. Spartz. It wasn't strange at all?

You're now working for CNN and Natasha Bertrand, too. Did you have any conversation with her about this letter and her --

Mr. Clapper. Not that I recall.

Mrs. Spartz. Not that you recall. Okay.

Did you have any discussions with anyone to be potential nominee for CIA director?

Mr. Clapper. Can you --

Mr. Litt. Did you --

Mrs. Spartz. During the time of what was happening, did you have any discussion on that and be a potential nominee as the CIA director?

Mr. Litt. I'm sorry. I don't understand the question. Are you saying did he have any discussion about --

Mrs. Spartz. Yeah, the campaign, that you could maybe be potential nominee for

CIA Director?

Mr. Litt. Did you have any discussion --

Mrs. Spartz. By Biden.

Mr. Litt. -- that you could be a potential nominee for CIA Director by Biden?

Mr. Clapper. Who? Me?

Mrs. Spartz. Yes.

Mr. Clapper. No.

Mrs. Spartz. For Presidential nominee.

Did you have any communications, private, with active FBI or CIA agents at that time?

Mr. Litt. About this?

Mrs. Spartz. Yes, about --

Mr. Litt. Did have you any conversations with active CIA or FBI agents around this time about this?

Mr. Clapper. No.

Mr. [REDACTED]. All right. Thank you. Our hour's up.

Say we can take a little break.

We'll go off the record, please.

[Discussion off the record.]

Ms. [REDACTED]. It is 11:22 a.m., and we can go back on the record.

BY MS. [REDACTED]:

Q General Clapper, thank you again for appearing before the committee today. I want to take a few steps back and walk through some points about your background and walk through how we got here today.

So way back, you've spent most of your career in government service. Isn't that

right?

A Yeah, about 50 years.

Q Okay. And you actually started by serving in the U.S. Armed Forces, starting in 1961, correct?

A That's correct.

Q Can you talk us through broadly your service in the Armed Services?

A I enlisted in the Marine Corps in February in 1961, in the Marine Corps Reserve, and ended up in the Air Force ROTC. I graduated from University of Maryland, 1963, and went immediately into intelligence. Spent 32 years in the Air Force, all intelligence jobs.

I was a J-2 Director of Intelligence for three combatant commands and served as intel -- I was Chief of Air Force Intelligence during Desert Storm. My last job was Director of DIA, Defense Intelligence Agency, for 4 years. I retired in September of '95.

Was out of the government for 6 years but working for the intelligence community as a contractor and serving on various boards. And I was on the NSA Advisory Board for 4 years, for example. Served on commissions.

Came back to the government 2 days after 9/11 and became director of what was NIMA, the National Imagery and Mapping Agency, which became National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency. Did that for about 5 years. Was out for a couple months.

I was asked to come back to the government by Secretary of Defense Gates to be the Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence, which I did for 3-1/2 years and, then following that, 6-1/2 years as the Director of National Intelligence.

Q Thank you for that.

And when you were in the military, you received a couple of awards, didn't you?

A A couple.

Mr. [REDACTED]: Can you talk to us about the Air Medal you earned with an oak leaf cluster?

Mr. Clapper. I flew -- I was commander of 100-man Signal Intelligence detachment that flew on the back end of EC-47s. The basic mission was to fly reconnaissance missions over Laos and Cambodia and try to locate Viet Cong or North Vietnamese army formations, and I flew 73 missions, doing that, while I was the commander of the detachment for a year.

BY MS. [REDACTED]:

Q Thank you for that.

Looking at your career holistically, you've spent most of your time in intelligence work. Is that fair to say?

A Virtually all of it.

Q Okay. Is it fair to say that you are an expert in national security matters?

A Well, some might say that.

Q Is it fair to say --

A The previous group didn't think so, but --

Q Is it fair to say that you're an expert in intelligence?

A Well, I guess you could say that. I've lived through a lot of it, yeah.

Q Thank you for that.

We walked through the October 19th letter a little bit in the last hour. And I want to, again, walk through it with a little different eye this time.

The very first sentence of the second paragraph of that letter -- and that's exhibit No. 1, I believe. It says: We are also individuals who see Russia as one of our Nation's primary adversaries.

Was this an accurate statement at the time that the letter was written?

A Oh, yeah.

Q And --

A Still is.

Q That was my next question. And you believe that's still an accurate statement today?

A Yes.

Q And so, again, based on your long career in intelligence, can you explain why you believe Russia is a primary adversary of the United States?

A Well, Russia and, before it, the Soviet Union is bent on instruction by one form or another of the United States and everything for which it stands.

And that was the nature of the Cold War, the ideological struggle that I lived through for about 30 years. And from an intelligence perspective, you know, learned a lot about the Russians. Dealt with Russians a good bit during the course of my career.

And I'm extremely suspicious of anything the Russians do. They are out to get us. They're out to destroy the United States and our system.

Q Would you agree that there is widespread agreement among intelligence and national security professionals that Russia is, as you say, an adversary of the United States, it's out to get us?

A Absolutely. And they are a mortal enemy of the United States. They can wreak more havoc and destruction and kill more people than any other Nation.

Q Okay. In 2017, you appeared on -- for an interview on Meet the Press. Do you recall that?

A I do.

Q And during that interview, you were asked about Russian interference in the

2016 election.

A Right.

Q And you said, quote: "If you put that in context with everything else we knew the Russians were doing to interfere with the election and just the historical practices of Russians" -- "of the Russians, who typically are almost genetically driven to co-opt, penetrate, gain favor, whatever, which is a typical Russian technique, so we were concerned, meaning we, the intelligence community, was concerned in 2016."

Do you recall saying that?

A I think I said something like that, yeah.

Q Okay. If you recall, what did you mean when you used the terms co-opt, penetrate, gain favor?

A Well, if they can influence -- if they can recruit someone whom they can influence either to be sympathetic or to provide them information, they will. And they look for every opportunity to do that.

Q The final sentence of the October 19th, 2020, letter reads, quote: It is high time that Russia stops interfering in our democracy.

Is it fair to say that the primary focus or purpose of the letter was on stopping Russian interference in our elections?

A Absolutely.

Q And just for the record, again, could you explain why, based on your long career, you believed it was so important that people know that the Russians were attempting to interfere in the 2020 elections?

A Let me put it this way: In the 50-plus years I spent in the government in one intelligence capacity or another, I saw a lot of bad stuff. Nothing that bothered me viscerally as much as what I saw the Russians do in 2016, what they did to our political

system, and how they influenced public opinion in this country.

And I vowed then that I would do my little part after I left the government, whatever bully pulpit I could occupy, to try to educate people, the public about the threat posed by the Russians.

Q And you --

A If you want to say I'm consumed with it, yeah.

Q Thank you for that.

You referenced what happened in 2016. Is that a reference to Russia hacking the emails of the Clinton campaign and Democratic political organizations and then leaking them?

A Yes, thanks for the question, as I used to say on the Hill.

I forgot to mention that in the earlier session about some of the other things they did, which, you know, the hacks, the WikiLeaks, and the Russians are extremely clever and they very -- have a very sophisticated understanding of our political landscape in order to exploit it.

And that's what -- that concern is what prompted me to sign onto the letter which I considered simply a warning to people that watch out. You know, the Russians don't give up. And they could -- they could be involved here, as well.

Q And you just said a minute ago that nothing has bothered you as viscerally as what happened in 2016.

Why was that so troublesome to you?

A Because of what the Russians were doing to attempt to destroy our very political system. Institutionally, they were attacking us. And the reason is because all the other manifold weaknesses they have, this is a way they can compensate for their weaknesses, by exploiting our weaknesses.

And, unfortunately, the United States is a ripe target for exploiting the distrust and doubt about the institutions of this country. And I was very concerned they were going continue to try to do that in 2020.

Q And speaking of 2020, Russians, the Russians, sometimes they do manipulate information. And sometimes they also take information that's authentic, which is has happened in 2016 with the hacked emails, right, and they amplify it and try to put a spin on it, correct?

A That's right, amplify it, distort it, slant it, whatever they can to gain their ends, yes.

Q And is that referred to as a Russian information operation?

A I guess so, yeah.

Q Okay. Do you think that making sure that Americans know that the Russians are attempting to do this is a key way to help counteract Russians' effectiveness in doing so?

A Yes. In fact, I think it's crucial that the public be as well-versed and well-educated about what the Russians will attempt to do, what their tactics, techniques are, and what their goals and objectives are. I think it's very important that people be educated about that.

Q There are some people who have said that it doesn't really matter where information comes from, whether it's true or it's false. It's that, for example, in October 2020, Rudy Giuliani was told that information on the laptop might be linked to Russian intelligence hacking.

And his response was, quote: It wouldn't matter. What's the difference?

A It does matter. It makes all the difference if the Russians are involved and are trying to manipulate data and information. So it's hugely important.

Q And why is that?

A Well, it's the Russians are generating information or -- either generating it or taking information and manipulating it that's already published or already out there, and trying to put a different spin on it and, again, to sow doubt, discord in this country, which these days is pretty easy.

And so I think that's extremely important, because that's an insidious threat to this country. It's, you know, bad for our democracy.

Q Thank you.

The October 19th letter says, quote: There are a number of factors that make us suspicious of Russian involvement.

And I want to go through the factors as they're laid out in the letter and understand why each was concerning and also talk about the evidence that supports the facts as laid out in the letter.

Does that sound okay?

The eighth paragraph of the letter, which is the last paragraph on the bottom of this letter --

Mr. Litt. On the bottom of the first page?

Ms. [REDACTED]: On the first page. Sorry.

BY MS. [REDACTED]:

Q It says: Such an operation, meaning a Russia cyber hacking 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.

Did I read that correctly?

A Uh-huh.

Q Could you explain why based on your experience it would have been consistent with Russian objectives to, quote: "Create political chaos in the United States and deepen divisions here"?

A Well, it's exactly what they did in 2016 and, again, I -- which I saw pretty intensely, watched what they did over the course -- well, '15 and '16, leading up to the election. And they were trying to undermine in that, in the '16 election, undermine Hillary Clinton. They did all they could to hurt her candidacy.

And they wanted -- they made a conscious judgment, once Mr. Trump became the nominee of the Republican Party, wanted to do all they could to help him because they saw him as a better choice.

Q And --

A And my concern was a reprise of that in 2020.

Q Why do you -- why do you say that the Russians saw Donald Trump as the better choice?

A Well, I think they thought he was business guy, wouldn't beat them up for human rights abuses, easier to deal with. And there was a very strong animus, starting with Putin himself, about the Clintons, and particularly Hillary Clinton, whom he held responsible for fomenting a Cold War revolution in 2011.

Q Are you familiar with who Bill Evanina is?

A I am.

Q Okay.

A He's an appointee of mine.

Q Could you explain for the record who he is?

A He was the Director of the National Counterintelligence and Security Center,

which is a subordinate organization of the Office of Director of National Intelligence. Bill was the director of it. He's an FBI employee but on rotation to the DNI.

Ms. [REDACTED]. Thank you.

I want to introduce for the record as exhibit 4 -- sorry. I want to introduce into the record as exhibit 4, a statement from Mr. Evanina. It's dated August 7th, 2020. And it's entitled: Election Threat Update for the American Public.

[Clapper Exhibit No. 4

Was marked for identification.]

BY MS. [REDACTED]:

Q And I'm going ask you about -- there's a paragraph in the middle of the second page that starts "Russia" in boldface, all caps.

A Just see it here?

Q Yeah. And let me know when you're ready to continue.

A I read it.

Q Okay. So the paragraph that's in the middle of the second page, begins all caps, boldfaced, Russia, it reads:

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 parliament taken Andrii Derkach is spreading claims about corruption, including through publicizing leaked phone calls to undermine former Vice President Biden's candidacy and the Democratic Party. Some Kremlin-linked actors are also seeking to boost President Trump's candidacy on social

media and on Russian television.

Did I read that correctly?

A Uh-huh, yes.

Q Is this statement from Bill Evanina consistent with the concerns that are expressed in the October 19th letter?

A Yes.

Q And do you -- do you find the statement to be reliable?

A I do.

Q And do you believe that Mr. Evanina is a reliable source for this type of statement?

A Yes.

Q Okay. And this was released in August 2020, which was actually 2 months before the October 19th, 2020, letter, correct?

A Yes.

Q Okay. So moving on, the ninth paragraph, which is -- sorry -- the ninth paragraph of the October 19th letter, yeah, it's exhibit No. 1, the ninth paragraph is at the top page of -- the top paragraph on the second page.

This paragraph says that a Russian cyber 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.

So that sentence refers to what we were talking about a couple minutes ago, right --

A Yes.

Q -- the 2016 efforts. So this sentence is a fully accurate sentence in this

letter, correct?

A I believe it is.

Q Okay. And then it continues on:

Russia did both of these during the 2016 Presidential election -- judgments shared by the U.S. intelligence community, the investigation into Russian activities by Special Counsel Robert Mueller, and the entirety, all (Republicans and Democrats) on the current Senate Intelligence Committee, right?

A Uh-huh, yes.

Q So to your knowledge, does the report by Special Counsel Robert Mueller support the idea that the Russians did interfere in the 2016 election?

A Yes, absolutely. In fact, I was taken aback by the degree of technical detail that was included in the Mueller report, which we did not include in the Intelligence Community Assessment in 2016. But it certainly buttressed in a big way what the Russians did.

Q And what about the Senate Intelligence Committee report? Are you familiar with that?

A I am.

Q And what's your opinion of that report?

A Well, I -- actually I liked it. It validated the findings of the Intelligence Community Assessment. I think it took them 16 months for something we did in 2 weeks. But they validated the Intelligence Community Assessment findings, as well as the tradecraft underlying those findings. And that was on a bipartisan basis, unlike the House Permanent Select Committee for Intelligence.

Q So to the extent there were comments raised in the earlier hour, suggesting that the Russians maybe did not interfere in 2016, do you think there's actually broad

consensus among the intelligence community that the Russians did interfere in 2016?

A Absolutely.

Q Okay. The next paragraph in the October 19th letter, it says: Such an operation is consistent with several data points.

And it says: The Russians, according to media reports and cybersecurity experts, targeted Burisma late last year for cyber collection and gained access to its emails.

Do you recall hearing about reports that the Russians had hacked Burisma and gained access to its emails?

A I did, only through the media, yeah.

Ms. [REDACTED]: I'm going go ahead and introduce a media article to that effect. We'll introduce it as exhibit 5.

[Clapper Exhibit No. 5

Was marked for identification.]

BY MS. [REDACTED]:

Q This is a January 13th, 2020, New York Times article. It was updated on October 19th, 2020. And it's entitled, "Russians Hacked Ukrainian Gas Company At Center of Impeachment."

And I'll give you a minute to look it over.

A You want me to read the whole thing?

Q No. If -- do you recall seeing this before? Is this the type of --

A I don't specifically recall this article.

Q If you want to skim it, go ahead.

A Okay.

Q Okay. So this article does tend to support the statement in the letter that the Russians did hack Burisma and gained access to its emails, correct?

A Yes.

Q So that's another statement in the letter that's fully accurate. Fair to say?

A Well, it's accurate based on --

Q Right.

A -- other media reports, yes.

Q And I think the statement actually says the Russians, according to media reports and cybersecurity experts.

So and then that paragraph continues on and it references Ukrainian politician and businessman Andrii Derkach, who's been identified and sanctioned by the U.S. Treasury department for being a 10-year Russian agent, interfering in the 2020 election, passed purported materials on Burisma and Hunter Biden to Giuliani.

I think you referenced in the prior hour a Ukrainian businessman. Is that -- was that a reference to Andrii Derkach?

A Yes.

Q What's your understanding of who he is?

A Well, pretty much as you described him. That's about, you know, based on what I'm told, my knowledge of him, other than a longtime contact with Russian intelligence services.

Q And I want to -- are you familiar with the fact that he was sanctioned by the Treasury Department?

A By virtue of the media reporting, yes.

Q And I want to introduce into the record the actual document sanctioning him.

A Okay.

Ms. [REDACTED]. Or -- sorry. I shouldn't say the -- it's the Treasury Department press

release, reporting on the sanctions.

[Clapper Exhibit No. 6

Was marked for identification.]

Mr. Clapper. Yeah, I have not seen this previously.

BY MS. [REDACTED]:

Q Okay. This is dated September 10th, 2020. And I said -- I know you said you've not seen this document previously. But you're familiar with the fact that Derkach had been sanctioned. Right?

A Uh-huh.

Q And according this document, he was actually sanctioned specifically for attempting to -- I'm sorry. He was 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.

Why would it have been concerning that Mr. Giuliani was working with Andrii Derkach at this time?

A Well, I think it's fairly obvious that this guy's a known Russian agent. And trying to engage Rudy Giuliani, the personal attorney for Donald Trump, I think that -- that would raise a concern.

Q And why would it be concerning specifically --

A Well --

Q -- that he targeted the personal attorney?

A Again, to try to influence -- either indirectly influence Trump or try to plant information or feed it -- feed Giuliani bad information, that would, you know, make the Bidens look bad, for example.

Q And the fact that Derkach was sanctioned and that the sanctioning

document says that he has had close connections with the Russian intelligence services, would that suggest that, in fact, Derkach's efforts could be part of a Russian intelligence plot?

A Oh, I think so. I think clearly trying to influence, trying to gain influence with Giuliani, use him either wittingly or unwittingly as a tool.

Q Are you familiar with the fact that Rudy Giuliani claimed that the leak of the laptop was, quote, "an extent of his years' long efforts to work with Ukrainians to dig up dirt on the Bidens?

A I heard that, or read it, but I don't remember when. I can't -- I don't remember a date connected with that.

Ms. [REDACTED]: I want to introduce the article that reports on that. It will be exhibit No. 7.

[Clapper Exhibit No. 7

Was marked for identification.]

BY MS. [REDACTED]:

Q This is a October 17th, 2020, Daily Beast article. It's reporting on an hour-long interview the Daily Beast had with Mr. Giuliani. It's entitled, "Rudy, only 50/50 Chance I Worked With a Russian Spy to Dig Dirt on Bidens and Ukraine."

A Okay.

Q And the language that we're going to be looking at is highlighted on the last two pages of the article.

A Only a 50/50 chance, huh? I guess that makes it better.

Q And in this article, it does say directly that Giuliani said he viewed his latest leak on The New York Post as an extension of his years' long effort to work with Ukrainians to dig up dirt on the Bidens.

Mr. Litt. Last page. On the last page.

Ms. [REDACTED]: Next page.

Mr. Litt. Very last page.

Mr. Clapper. Am I supposed to read this whole thing?

Ms. [REDACTED]: No.

Mr. Litt. She's reading you just the top sentence there.

Mr. Clapper. Okay.

BY MS. [REDACTED]:

Q So this came out on October 17th, 2020. The New York Post article was published on October 14th, 2020. So within 3 days of the publication of that -- of that article, Rudy Giuliani said that he was responsible for it and it was part of his efforts to dig up dirt on the Bidens, correct?

A Yeah.

Q Would that have been something of concern to you as --

A It sure would have.

Q And why was it concerning that Giuliani specifically viewed this leak as part of his ongoing efforts to dig up dirt?

A The appearance, if not the substance, is that he was either wittingly or unwittingly a participant in a Russian information operation because clearly the Russians would see this as in their best interests and in their favor.

Q And the October 19th letter refers to a Washington Post article that says: U.S. intelligence agencies warned the White House last year that Giuliani was the target of an influence operation by Russian intelligence.

Is it also concerning to you that the White House was apparently warned about Giuliani being used in this way and apparently took no action?

A Well, yeah. I mean, intelligence agencies, again, based on the immediate, did the right thing by conveying their concern to the White House. If the White House chose not to do it -- do anything about it, that's -- policymakers always have the prerogative of ignoring what they're told by intelligence.

Q But in this situation the policymakers were told by intelligence that Rudy Giuliani had this connection to Russian intelligence and did nothing about it?

A Well, that's -- from an intelligence perspective, speaking as an intelligence, a career-long intelligence officer, that's bad. Should -- you know, to ignore information like that is potentially quite dangerous.

Q And dangerous to our national security?

A Yes.

Q Why is that?

A Well, you have Giuliani, essentially, acting as a foreign agent, apparently attempting to influence the outcome of the U.S. election on behalf of the Russians.

Mr. Goldman. You said unwittingly or wittingly.

If you learned that Giuliani was provided with a defensive briefing about Andrii Derkach and his association with him, and continued to engage with Mr. Derkach, would that inform your view about whether it was witting or unwitting?

Mr. Clapper. It was -- it would appear it was wittingly in that case. If he were given a defensive briefing specifically about this character and chose to engage with him, because of his apparent intent or desire to obtain dirt on the Bidens, that would make it witting clearly.

Mr. Goldman. And so, just to summarize, if Mr. Giuliani was, for over a year, coordinating and working with a known Russian agent, who he knew to be a Russian agent, to try to influence the election in 2020, would that, in your view, make Mr. Giuliani

the equivalent of a Russian agent?

Mr. Clapper. Yes.

Ms. [REDACTED]. So we just walked through a number of the factors that led to the concerns that led to the October 19th letter.

I want to move on to evidence that suggests that Russia, in fact, did interfere in the 2020 election.

And I think in the earlier hour the comment was made that there's been no official pronouncement on that.

I want to introduce into the record a January 7th Intelligence Community Assessment -- sorry -- 2021 Intelligence Community Assessment entitled, "Foreign Threats to the 2020 U.S. Federal Elections."

And I should say the classified version was released in January 2021. We're introducing the unclassified version which was unclassified on March 15th, 2021.

This will be exhibit 8.

[Clapper Exhibit No. 8

Was marked for identification.]

BY MS. [REDACTED]:

Q And I'm going to ask you to turn to the fourth page of the document. It's Roman Numeral, small Roman Numeral I. And we're going to look at Key Judgement 2 on that page.

Mr. Litt. This is the right page.

Mr. Clapper. What?

Mr. Litt. This is the page right here.

Mr. Clapper. She said the last page.

Mr. Litt. No, she didn't.

Mr. Clapper. Okay.

BY MS. [REDACTED]:

Q Are you ready to continue?

Key Judgement 2 reads: 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. Russian state and proxy actors, who all serve the Kremlin's interests, worked to affect 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.

Did I read that correctly?

A It's almost a reprise of the Intelligence Community Assessment from 2016.

Q Interesting.

In the middle of this paragraph, it says: We have high confidence in our assessment.

What does "high confidence" mean in this context?

A High confidence means that the -- the analysts who prepared this, as well as in this instance, since this is a NIC document that would have been approved, IC-wide,

that if you're ascribing numerical ascription, it would be, like, 90 percent sure that what they're saying is accurate and correct.

Q Does the --

A So that's -- that's -- that's pretty -- you could, you know, you can trust that, I think --

Q Okay.

A -- with an expression of high confidence.

Q The intelligence community doesn't use the level "high confidence" lightly. Is that fair to say?

A No, it doesn't. And it's typically because of multiple sources that they're drawing on to reach that conclusion that are pretty much internally corroborative.

Q This report, just looking at the very front page of it, the cover page of it, it says: The -- this Intelligence Community Assessment was prepared by the National Intelligence Council under the auspices of the National Intelligence Officer (NIO) for Cyber. It was drafted by the National Intelligence Council and the CIA, which is the Central Intelligence Agency, correct?

A Yes.

Q The DHS, which is the Department of Homeland Security, correct?

A Correct.

Q FBI, which is the Federal Bureau of Investigation, correct?

A Yep.

Q INR which can you remind me what INR is?

A That the Bureau of Intelligence and Research in the Department of State.

Q And NSA which is the National Security Agency, correct?

A Correct.

Q And coordinated with CIA, again, the Central Intelligence Agency, DHS, Department of Homeland Security, FBI, the Federal Bureau of Investigations, INR, the Intelligence and Research Agency.

A As well as the Department of Treasury apparently, apparently according to the logo.

Q Yeah, Treasury Department and the National Security Agency.

So if this report was prepared in coordination with all of those entities and it says that they have high confidence in that assessment, that means every agency listed that I just read off had high confidence in this assessment, right?

A Yes.

Q And there's nothing in here --

A In the --

Q Yeah.

A -- absence of any dissent and I don't see any.

Q Right. Right. There's no -- no dissent is listed here, right?

A Right.

Q So the Key Judgment 2, this is pretty consistent with the concerns that were the outlined in the October 19th letter, isn't it?

A Yes.

Q And the last sentence of the --

A These are the concerns, as all of this doesn't obviously specifically address the laptop.

Q Right.

A It's just that, because of these factors, that's why I believe such a high number of national security officials signed onto that letter, for exactly those factors, that

the Russian dark hand could be involved here in the case of the laptop, ergo, a warning.

Q And the warning to make the American public aware, correct?

A Of the potential for Russian involvement, given their history and their practice.

Q And again, the goal of making Americans aware was to help counteract the Russians efforts, correct?

A Exactly.

Q Okay. The intelligence -- the Key Judgement 2 specifically references proxies linked to Russian intelligence. We just talked through Andrii Derkach having been sanctioned. Would you agree that he is a Russian intelligence proxy who was pushing an influence narrative?

A I would.

Q And then the sentence says that: These Russian intelligence proxies pushed these unsubstantiated allegations with the help of -- I'm sorry -- to U.S. media organizations, U.S. officials, and prominent U.S. individuals including some close to former President Trump and his administration.

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

A Yes.

Q Okay. So this actually does fit the narrative of Rudy Giuliani working with Derkach to push out misinformation.

A It does.

Q Okay. So to the extent that you were asked earlier about there being no official pronouncement about Russian interference, this is pretty close to an official pronouncement.

A Well, yeah, it is. And I, frankly, wasn't aware of this but it certainly substantiates the letter.

Q Thank you.

A The public statement.

Q Okay. Move on a little bit.

You were asked earlier about the -- your maintaining a security clearance and what kind of access you had. The letter makes it abundantly clear that you didn't have access to any nonpublic information, right?

A That's correct.

Q And you didn't access any classified information.

A I did not.

Q And just going through the letter briefly, at the -- the very last paragraph says, pretty straightforwardly -- I'm sorry. It's not the last paragraph. It's the -- the fifth paragraph on the front page says that:

We want to emphasize that we do not know if the emails are genuine or not.

Right?

A Right.

Q So you didn't try to hide the fact that you didn't have any inside information.

A Absolutely.

Q Okay. And then the very last paragraph says: We do not know whether these press reports are accurate.

Right? So, again, you said -- I'm sorry. You have to say "yes" for this court reporter.

A Yes. We didn't know.

Q And the very last paragraph of the letter itself says: We do not know

whether these press reports are accurate.

Right?

A Correct.

Q And so, again, you didn't suggest that you had any inside information or nonpublic information.

A That's correct.

Q And you certainly didn't suggest that you had access to any classified information.

A That's correct.

Q And it says actually under your signature line -- it was pointed out that you were the first signatory here. It says former Director of National Intelligence.

A Correct.

Q And former Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence, right?

A Yes.

Q And former Director of the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency and former Director of the Defense Intelligence Agency, correct?

A Correct.

Q So you didn't hold yourself out as having any -- you had obviously qualifications but you didn't have any access to anything that any -- to any material that anybody --

A No, I did not.

Q -- else didn't have. Okay.

A I didn't have a need-to-know, which is why I wouldn't have sought access to classified information. They wouldn't give it to me. The Agency wouldn't.

Q We discussed the timing of the letter earlier, the having it come out before

the first debate, or the second debate, rather. And we just talked through it again.

You were a private citizen when the letter was made public on October 19th, 2020, correct?

A Correct.

Q And Tony Blinken was a private citizen at that time, correct?

A Correct.

Q Mr. Morell was also a private citizen?

A Correct.

Q To your knowledge, was every other signatory of this letter a private citizen?

A Yes, at the time.

Q Okay. Would you agree that as a private citizen, you have the right to engage in the political process?

A I certainly do.

Q And do you agree that the First Amendment protected back then and continues to protect your right to make statements?

A It's supposed to, yes.

Q And it also protects the right of every other signatory to make those statements.

A Exactly.

Q So I think the comment was made earlier that your decision to sign this letter was an act of election interference.

Do you think that was a fair assessment of your actions?

A No.

Q Do you want to say anything further about that?

A I think it's exactly as your question characterized it. It was an exercise of

my First Amendment rights for me as a former, several times in the intelligence community, to wave a red flag here that the dark hand of the Russians could be involved in this.

And I felt that was not only appropriate but it is my duty to do that.

Q And when you say it was your duty, why do you say you feel it was your duty?

A Well, I invested a lot of my life in the intelligence community, you know, defending this country. I served two combat tours in Southeast Asia for the same reason.

And in accordance with that, I guess, almost instinct, I felt the need to join in a warning, particularly based on my experience in the 2016 election, when I was serving as the Director of National Intelligence --

Q Thank you.

A -- and did have access to classified, a lot of classified information about it, which I did not have in this case.

Q Has the aftermath of signing the letter, in particular, the fact you're involved in this investigation, that your name has been in the New York Post, things like that, have that -- has that negatively impacted you in anyway?

A Well, I could -- I could do without it. Put it that way.

Q Do you think the fact that you're a subject of this public investigation could chill your willingness to sign a letter like this in the future?

A Well, possibly, but I think it's more important for future formers. I think it -- this investigation has the potential to chill future formers from expressing concerns about adversaries of the United States.

Mr. Goldman. Could we let the record reflect he put air quotes around

"investigation."

Mr. Clapper. This is an assault on my First Amendment rights. I'll be blunt.

Ms. [REDACTED]. Thank you.

Mr. Goldman. Using the authority of Congress to call you in for questioning about your First Amendment rights as a private citizen to express concerns related to your prior work and an election?

Mr. Clapper. Yeah, exactly. Particularly given my own personal experience. As I said, I saw a lot of bad stuff in 50 years in intelligence. But nothing had bothered me as much as what I understood fully what the Russians did in 2016 in that election.

Mr. Goldman. Are you aware of any efforts by the majority of this committee to call in for questioning Rudy Giuliani, who you said was acting as a Russian agent in an effort to interfere in the 2020 election?

Mr. Clapper. No, I'm not. And nor am I aware of any effort on the part of this committee to call in any of the 215 flag officers who signed the letter in support of President Trump. They don't seem to be investigated.

Mr. Litt. He's front-running you.

Mr. Clapper. I did what?

Ms. [REDACTED]. You referenced the letter from the flag officers. I want to introduce that into the record. That will be exhibit No. 9.

[Clapper Exhibit No. 9

Was marked for identification.]

Mr. Clapper. I say that, respecting their rights to exercise their First Amendment rights.

BY MS. [REDACTED]:

Q So this is an open letter from senior military leaders. It's not dated. I'll

represent to you that Fox -- we have a Fox News article that dates it as being published on September 14th, 2020.

A Uh-huh.

Q You've seen this before?

A I have, and I know many of these officers.

Q And this letter says: The Democrats' opposition to border security, their pledge to return to the disastrous Iran nuclear deal, their antagonism towards the police, and planned cuts to military spending will leave the United States more vulnerable to foreign enemies.

Correct? And this is signed -- I'm sorry. You have to say "yes" for the court reporter. You have to say "yes" for the court reporter.

A Yes.

What was the question? I'm sorry.

[12:12 p.m.]

BY MS. [REDACTED]:

Q The letter says that -- reading directly from the letter -- "The Democrats' opposition to border security, their pledge to return to the disastrous Iran nuclear deal, their antagonism towards the police and planned cuts to military spending will leave the United States more vulnerable to foreign enemies," correct? Did I read that correctly?

A And your question is?

Q Did I read that correctly?

A Yes.

Q That's what it says?

A Yes.

Q That language, from 235 flag officers, that could suggest to the American public that, based on their experience, long experience in the military, that they believe that if President Biden is elected, that could have impacts on our national security, correct?

A Yes.

Q And do flag officers typically hold security clearances?

A Some may.

Q So it's entirely possible that somebody reading this, seeing these individuals who signed it, could think these people have inside information that --

A Yes.

Q -- led them to reach this conclusion?

A They could, yes.

Q And as you said, you believe they had the First Amendment right to make these statements, right?

A Yes. Absolutely.

Q And they had the First Amendment right -- they had the right to participate in the political process?

A Yes.

Q And this committee is not investigating them, is it?

A Not to my knowledge.

Q Okay. In the earlier hour, you --

Mr. Goldman. Are you done with this letter?

Ms. [REDACTED]. Yeah, go ahead.

Mr. Goldman. I just want to ask a question, because this letter from senior military leaders directly attacks Democrats.

Does the letter that you signed attack either Democrats, Republicans, or either candidate for President?

Mr. Clapper. No.

Mr. Goldman. It is focused on, as you say, waving the red flag about Russia's efforts to interfere in our election.

Mr. Clapper. That's correct.

Mr. Goldman. So between the two, in your reading of it, which letter is more overtly political?

Mr. Clapper. Well, I'd have to say the open letter from senior military leaders is probably the more "overtly political" -- I'll put that in air quotes -- than is our letter, the public statement.

Mr. Goldman. And while we're on this topic, are you aware of whether or not Hunter Biden has ever held public office?

Mr. Clapper. I don't believe he has.

Mr. Goldman. And was he running for President in 2020?

Mr. Clapper. No, he was not.

Mr. Goldman. Okay. I yield back.

BY MS. [REDACTED]:

Q There was a discussion earlier suggesting that your letter may have been the reason that the laptop story didn't get traction publicly.

I want to look a little more at the environment or the atmosphere around the New York Post story.

So the New York Post story was published on October 14th, correct?

A I think so.

Q Okay. Are you aware that before the New York Post published the story, Rudy Giuliani actually first approached FOX News and asked them to report on the laptop?

A No, I'm not.

Ms. [REDACTED]. Okay. I want to introduce as exhibit 10 an October 19th, 2020, story. This was published at 11:42 in the morning, so it would have been published before your letter. It's entitled "Exclusive: Fox News passed on Hunter Biden laptop story over credibility concerns."

Mr. Clapper. This is FOX News saying that?

Ms. [REDACTED]. FOX News.

Mr. Clapper. Okay.

Ms. [REDACTED]. I'll withdraw that. We'll do that in the next hour.

How much time do we have? We have -- let's see -- we have about 5 minutes.

Couple quick questions about John Ratcliffe, and then I think we can wrap our hour.

You were asked about the DNI Ratcliffe statements. Do you recall that?

A Uh-huh.

Q And Mr. Ratcliffe said that there was no intelligence to support allegations of Russian involvement, correct?

A Yes.

Q Ratcliffe made those remarks on Monday, October 19th, correct? Does that sound right?

A I don't know the date when. I'll accept that, if that's when it was, but I don't know.

Q We can introduce -- we'll introduce this as exhibit -- this will be exhibit 10.

[Clapper Exhibit No. 10

Was marked for identification.]

BY MS. [REDACTED]:

Q It's an article reporting on Ratcliffe's remarks, and it's dated October 19th, 2020, 1:49 p.m. And we're just introducing it for the fact of the date.

The New York Post story in question was released on October 14th, correct?

A Yes.

Q So that would have been 5 days before Ratcliffe made his remarks?

A Right.

Q And I think you said earlier he couldn't have even begun an investigation in that time period. Is that correct?

A Correct.

Q And can you explain what you mean by that?

A Well, I don't know how -- what his basis for making that statement is when the laptop itself hasn't been investigated.

The DNI, Office of the Director National Intelligence, has no organic forensic

analysis capability at all. So they're dependent on other components of the intelligence community, in this case the FBI, to render such a judgment, which hadn't been rendered. So I don't know how he could make that statement.

Q Okay. And even assuming that Ratcliffe -- sorry. Withdraw that.

And he made these remarks on October 19th, which was the day before the second debate, correct? The second Presidential debate was the 20th.

A Uh-huh.

Q So isn't it possible that Ratcliffe also made his remarks in the hope that they would impact the debate?

A Well, one could conclude that, yes.

Q Okay. And are you aware that on -- the comment was made -- question was -- I don't know if it was a question or a comment made earlier, but would it have been wrong for Ratcliffe to attempt to interfere in the election. Do you recall that coming up?

A Well, yes. Hard to judge, in fairness here, what the motivation was, but certainly from a timing standpoint, it raises the question as to whether this is aiding a political effort.

Q And are you aware that on September 29th, 2020 -- so 2 weeks before the events in question -- Mr. Ratcliffe also released information about Hillary Clinton that had been widely acknowledged to be Russian disinformation? It's acknowledged to be Russian disinformation by both the Special Counsel Mueller and the --

A No, I don't recall that.

Q Okay. I want to introduce as exhibit 11 a New York Times article entitled "Top Intelligence Official Releases Unverified, Previously Rejected Russia Information."

[Clapper Exhibit No. 11

Was marked for identification.]

BY MS. [REDACTED]:

Q Have you seen this article before?

A I don't recall it.

Q Okay. I'm just going to read the first sentence. It says, "President's Trump's top intelligence official on Tuesday released unverified information about the 2016 campaign that appeared to be a bid to help Mr. Trump politically and was said to be disclosed over the objections of career intelligence officials who were concerned that the material could be Russian disinformation."

Did I read that correctly?

A Yes, you did. And I do recall this now, about the "Russian intelligence acquired information that Mrs. Clinton had approved a plan for her 2016 campaign to 'stir up a scandal.'" I remember that now.

Q So Mr. Ratcliffe actually had released damaging information that could help Trump --

A Yes.

Q -- and presumably damage Vice President Biden just 35 days before the November 3rd election, correct?

A Yes.

Q And are you aware that September 29th, which is the day he released the information, was also the day of the first Presidential debate?

A I don't recall the dates of the Presidential debates, no.

Q And I'll represent to you that Mr. Ratcliffe actually released this information just a couple hours before that debate.

To your knowledge, is this committee investigating whether -- Mr. Ratcliffe's

decision to release that information in advance of the debate?

A Not to my knowledge.

Mr. Goldman. If could just ask one question on that?

Is there a difference if a sitting intelligence official is using his position of authority to influence a political election as opposed to former intelligence committee -- intelligence community officials who are exercising their First Amendment rights?

Mr. Clapper. Well, sir, I think there's a big difference. When he's doing that as a sitting active official in performing the duties of that position as the Director of National Intelligence, I mean this has the -- can't prove it, I guess -- but certainly has the earmarks of engaging in the political process, which from my standpoint as the former incumbent is inappropriate.

Ms. [REDACTED]. Thank you.

We're about out of time. So I think we can go off the record. Thank you.

[Recess.]

Mr. [REDACTED]. We'll go back on the record. It's 12:33.

Mrs. Spartz.

Mrs. Spartz. Thank you.

Mr. Clapper, you mentioned earlier that you have a strong mission to fight Russian disinformation and what Russia is doing. And it sounds to me also you have very strong feelings about President Trump, is that correct, based on your statements, which as any American you have a right to do.

Mr. Clapper. Yes.

Mrs. Spartz. So my question is for you, when you signed on to the letter, do you believe you using your former office brought more credibility to this unverified information?

Mr. Clapper. I suppose, yes.

Mrs. Spartz. So why did you do that?

Mr. Clapper. I think that's why all the titles were included.

Mrs. Spartz. There were titles to endorse something --

Mr. Clapper. The title includes the word "former."

Mr. Litt. Let her finish.

Mrs. Spartz. Right. I get it. But there are a lot of officers that did endorsement for President Trump but also for President Biden. But this is a different situation where you actually tried to discredit something and, as you mentioned, on unverified information because you didn't know that. You had no access to intelligence, you have no access to anything to make the statement except your feeling, but want to make sure that there are strong statements. So why did you use your former title, not just as private citizen?

Mr. Clapper. Because I felt, as did all the others who listed their titles as former

this or former that, that that would ascribe some credibility to what we were saying.

Mrs. Spartz. So generally you wanted to bring credibility to this issue without doing due diligence to verify the legitimacy of that.

Mr. Clapper. We were simply expressing our concern about the possibility of Russian involvement. That's all.

Mrs. Spartz. Right. But using the former title with unverified information.

Mr. Clapper. Well, based on our experience with the Russians, as the letter said.

Mrs. Spartz. So based on your experience [inaudible] to anything that was happening there and not understanding, you put credibility of your former titles to bring this unverified information more credibility to use, correct?

Mr. Clapper. Well, yes.

Mrs. Spartz. Why did you do that?

Mr. Clapper. Because I felt that was -- there was an important message here to be conveyed to the American public, warning them of the potential for Russian involvement. And based on -- I didn't think it inappropriate that my association in the intelligence community, I didn't think that was inappropriate.

Mrs. Spartz. Do you think situations like that really could be at issue when we have the involvement of people with prior positions, connections with the media, printing this article could really undermine democratic institutions and our election processes, use of such situations in our country really weakens our democracy?

Mr. Clapper. To the contrary. I think it helps protect the democracy when people like us speak up.

Mrs. Spartz. But when you use the titles of your former positions, not like as an individual, but do you think using the titles, position of something that is not verified, you're just feeling and think what you might be, but putting the title, it actually does

cause this -- you bring credibility and you become intervention in elections in the way how it is can be perceived?

Mr. Clapper. It wasn't intervening in the election. It was sounding a warning about the potential for Russian involvement in our election. That's all it was.

Mrs. Spartz. Without knowing that, correct? You didn't know that, you just had feelings, correct?

Mr. Clapper. No. I had experience with -- hard experience with the Russians over many years.

Mrs. Spartz. Right. But in this specific situation, it was just your feelings and assumptions?

Mr. Clapper. Because of what I observed and what I read in the media. In the absence of any classified information, I felt that a warning was merited.

BY MR. [REDACTED]:

Q The New York Post story was published on October 14th, and subsequently Facebook's founder, Mark Zuckerberg, has acknowledged that they throttled that story, meaning that they took affirmative measures to limit the dissemination of that story. Are you aware of that?

A No, I'm not. I don't do social media, so I'm not -- I don't know that. I don't -- and I don't -- I'm not sure there's a cause-and-effect relationship between the statement and whatever actions that he or other media -- social media companies took.

Q And Twitter banned the story too. If somebody on Twitter tried to forward the story, Twitter took that post down. Are you aware of that?

A No.

Q In fact, some congressional offices posted the text of the New York Post story on their websites, and then Twitter had a -- had tried to take those down too.

Were you aware of that?

A No.

Q And that lasted from October 14th to October 19th. And then the letter from -- that we're talking about here today with the 51 former intel officials -- went October 20th.

Do you think your letter further added so-called credibility that this was a nonstory or a false story, the Biden laptop?

A I'm not sure I understand your question in relation to social media.

Q Well, the New York Post publishes their story detailing what's on the laptop, which arguably, and I think we discussed earlier today, is fair game to discuss in an election, right?

A Sure.

Q Whether the son or daughter of a President is getting paid for doing nothing is certainly something that the electorate ought to have a chance to analyze on their own and make a decision.

A Sure.

Q But that story was shut down by the social media companies, Facebook and Twitter, for a period of time. And then, when it was opened up, the letter from the 51 intel officials rolls out, adding further difficulties to getting that story out. Do you see the problem with that?

Mr. Litt. Do you --

Mr. Clapper. No, I can't -- I think you're relating two events that are not necessarily connected.

Mr. [REDACTED]. So at no point prior to the 2020 election was the story fairly shared and portrayed as true when, in fact, it was true. Doesn't that present a problem?

Mr. Clapper. I don't know.

Mr. Litt. When you say you don't know, do you mean you don't know whether it's a problem or you don't know whether what he said is accurate?

Mr. Clapper. Both.

BY MR. [REDACTED]:

Q We've established --

A I guess you're trying to suggest that the public statement we made somehow suppressed the media coverage? Is that what you're suggesting?

Q Well, it added a coefficient of negative credibility to the story.

A Okay. That's your formulation.

Q What Biden, Vice President Biden, said at the debate is: "Look, there are 50 former national former intelligence folks who said that what this, he's accusing me of, is a Russian plan." Is that accurate or not?

A Not exactly. It's somewhat akin to the Politico headline. If he had said "could have" or "may have," that would comport with what the intent as I felt it was of the public statement, not a definitive statement, this was Russian interference.

Q The Vice President at the time continued -- or candidate Biden: "They have said that this has all the characteristics -- four -- five former heads of the CIA -- both parties -- say what he's saying is a bunch of garbage. Nobody believes it except him and his good friend, Rudy Giuliani."

Now, that's not true, is it?

A I think that's somewhat of an overstatement, yes.

Q In the Politico article, there's a paragraph on -- relating to Director Ratcliffe?

Mr. Litt. Give me a second, and I'll get it for him.

Mr. [REDACTED]. Of course. Of course.

Mr. Clapper. Which paragraph?

Mr. [REDACTED]: It's on the third page, and it's the penultimate paragraph.

"Director of National Intelligence John Ratcliffe said on Monday that the information on Biden's laptop 'is not part of some Russian disinformation campaign.'"

Mr. Litt. Could you read the rest of the sentence?

Mr. [REDACTED]: "Though the FBI is reportedly conducting an ongoing investigation into whether Russia was involved."

BY MR. [REDACTED]:

Q You've cast some doubt today on the DNI's statement that it's not Russian disinformation. Is that true?

A Yes.

Q But we've since learned that, in fact, it wasn't Russian disinformation.

A We didn't know it then. And he makes the statement when an investigation by the FBI is still ongoing.

Q But you know better than any of us, when you're the Director of National Intelligence, you have at your fingertips a lot of resources to make determinations.

A Well, there's a very fine line between the access that the Office of the Director of National Intelligence has to investigatory and prosecutorial matters by the FBI or DOJ. So he, from my own experience, may not have had, probably didn't have direct access to that kind of data.

Q Were you aware that subsequently Attorney General Barr followed up and said he agreed with Director Ratcliffe?

A No, I don't recall that.

Q Okay.

A I'm sure he did, but I don't remember.

Q Okay. Does that change the situation?

A Not really.

Q Why not?

A It just doesn't change it.

Q A minute ago, you said that --

A I'm talking about this statement at the time it was given, and I have serious credibility issues with Ratcliffe as DNI, had all of 5 months experience in intelligence.

Q Okay. But a moment ago you said the reason the Ratcliffe statement was a problem is because the FBI and DOJ hadn't weighed in yet, correct?

A Right.

Q But then the Attorney General did weigh in right in the same timeframe?

A When was that?

Mr. [REDACTED]. Go off the record for a second.

[Discussion off the record.]

BY MR. [REDACTED]:

Q We've had some discussion about Russia's involvement in the 2016 election, and you've stated that it was your belief that they did interfere in the 2016 election. Is that correct?

A Yes.

Q Now, that is different from whether you had evidence that the Trump campaign or some associate of President Trump, then candidate Trump, was working with Russians. Isn't that correct?

A Well, I've testified to that effect, that contemporaneously we didn't see any -- I didn't see any intelligence information about that.

Q That indicated that the campaign was colluding with Russia.

A Well, if you think -- if you don't think Paul Manafort sharing election analysis data is not collusion, okay.

Q But you testified before the House Intelligence Committee --

A Yeah.

Q -- that you didn't have any.

A That's right, we didn't have any intelligence information. This was information that came to light later, in the course of the Mueller investigation, which we

didn't have access to obviously at the time.

Q Okay. So now it's your position that, based on the Paul Manafort information, that the Trump campaign was colluding with --

Mr. Litt. I really think we're not talking about the Hunter Biden laptop here. You don't need to answer the question.

Mr. [REDACTED]. I'm just trying to clarify what he said.

Mr. Litt. You don't need to answer that question.

I should have jumped in on the last question.

Mr. [REDACTED]. Okay.

Mr. Litt. We're not here to talk about the Mueller investigation or the --

Mr. [REDACTED]. I'm just trying to understand, like, what he said.

Mr. Litt. I understand.

Mr. [REDACTED]. So I don't know how you want to move forward with that.

Mr. Litt. We can just go on to the next question.

Mr. [REDACTED]. Okay.

Mrs. Spartz. Can I ask a question?

Mr. [REDACTED]. Of course.

Mrs. Spartz. Do you believe situations like yours and others really significantly undermine the credibility of our intelligence community with the American people?

Mr. Clapper. Do what?

Mrs. Spartz. Do situations like yours and some other situations maybe you cited does not now really significantly undermine the credibility of the intelligence community and FBI with the American people?

Mr. Clapper. No, not necessarily.

Mrs. Spartz. So you believe it's okay to have all of this different mingling of CIA

and FBI and former and this writing letters, do different things, and you don't think the American people would not lose trust from all -- looking at these letters and looking at dossiers that turn out not to be true, do you think it's not undermining it?

Mr. Clapper. No more than the 215 or so flag officers who signed a letter in support of President Trump whom you're not investigating. That doesn't undermine -- I respect their First Amendment rights. I don't think that undermines confidence in the Flag Officer Corps of the Armed Forces of the United States.

Mrs. Spartz. Well, but that's a different --

Mr. Clapper. No, it isn't different.

Mrs. Spartz. We're talking about a situation where you endorse someone and have someone say someone is supporting of that.

Mr. Clapper. I beg to differ.

Mrs. Spartz. Which is different when you try to look into ongoing investigations and try to make opinion to cause doubt and undermine credibility. It's very different involvement of this title of that versus just say, I like someone even if you use some title. Don't you think there is a difference?

Mr. Clapper. No.

Mrs. Spartz. There is no difference?

Mr. Clapper. No. You have your opinion. I have mine.

Mrs. Spartz. I think as an American we see a lot of credibility that is lost in this community when see it on the ground. But that's --

Mr. Clapper. That's your opinion?

Mrs. Spartz. That's my opinion. That's right.

Mr. Clapper. That's right. And you're free to have it in this country.

Mrs. Spartz. Of course. You are too. But I think -- I'm not using my titles too.

There's a difference to use your former titles to put your personal opinions and undermine information versus just express it. I think it's a difference.

Mr. Litt. I don't think there is a question there.

Mrs. Spartz. The gentleman believes there is not. I believe it is.

BY MR. [REDACTED]:

Q You do see a difference between the open letter from the senior military leaders and the letter that you signed, though?

A Yes, I do see a difference.

Q I mean, the difference is that at the time there was a question and controversy whether this laptop story was legitimate and authentic. Your letter basically weighed in and said it was not, when in fact it was.

A That isn't -- we said watch out. It's a warning. The Russians could be involved. Don't read into it something it isn't.

Q But it certainly had a different effect. I mean, the Politico story mischaracterized it.

A That's correct.

Q The Vice President mischaracterized it in the debate.

A That's correct.

Q And we have testimony from Mr. Morell that he knew that would happen. And so in light of that, isn't there -- isn't the distinction pretty stark?

A The distinction with what?

Q Between the two letters. I mean, this was a letter that was used to discredit a story --

A Well --

Mr. Litt. Let him finish.

Mr. [REDACTED]. -- used to discredit a story that, in fact, was true, whereas the open letter from senior military leaders is just a, you know, it's just a -- essentially an endorsement.

Mr. Clapper. It's a political statement. That's right. That's right. And it cast doubt on the Democrats.

Mr. Litt. Just to be clear, when you say it's a political statement, you're talking about the military leader statement?

Mr. Clapper. Yes. Exactly.

BY MR. [REDACTED]:

Q As we sit here today, does it give you any concern that there was a subset of the signers of the letter that were surely pursuing a political operation by using this letter?

A Well, I don't know, and nor did I seek to understand what the motivations were of the various other signatories, of whom I was not aware anyway who the other signatories were.

Q So before you agreed to sign on, you didn't -- or before the letter was published, you didn't get a list of the folks that were joining the letter?

A No, I don't think I did. I think it was afterwards.

Q Do you believe Mr. Morell was trying to help the campaign here so he could become the Director of the CIA?

A I don't know that.

Q At the time, did you have discussions with Mr. Morell about whether he was interested in being the CIA Director?

A No.

Q Do you believe the Biden campaign and Mr. Morell were trying to capitalize

on your credentials -- you know, you're the first person listed on the letter -- to quash this negative reporting?

A Well, I don't think -- I wouldn't agree with the characterization that the intent was to quash negative reporting. I think the intent on my part, at least, I can't speak for the other 50, my part was simply to sign to signal a warning of the potential Russian involvement.

Q But you can acknowledge the Biden campaign was eager to have you sign on because of the credentials that you bring to the letter?

A I suppose, yeah.

Q And so in hindsight, does it give you pause that the Biden campaign may have been using you and using your credentials to quash this negative story?

A Well, I did not know contemporaneously of the campaign connection with Michael Morell. I did not know that. So I don't know whether that would have affected the decision to sign it or not.

Q I mean, one of the classic earmarks of former intel officials, I think, in many respects, and you can disagree with this or agree with it, is that for the most part you are viewed as a nonpartisan career official.

A During my time of service, yes.

Q And so when you're a former official, your name and the other former heads of the CIA bring to bear the fact that they're not a partisan political operative. Don't you think that was valuable for the Biden campaign?

A I suppose.

Q And --

A I don't know.

Q And if you had to do it again, would you opt out of the letter, or would you

agree to participate in it, if you knew it was a political campaign?

A Well, given the fact I'm being investigated for signing it, I'd probably think twice, yeah, in the exercise of my First Amendment rights.

Q In fact, we have some emails -- and I wanted to ask whether you are aware that following the debate there were some email exchanges between some of the people that signed the letter saying such things as, "TP worked well at the debate. Great idea guys." Were you aware of that?

A No.

Q And that was from Gregory Tarbell. Do you know who that is?

A No.

Q To Kristin Wood. Do you know who Kristin Wood is?

A I know of her. I don't know her.

Q And Ms. Wood responded to Mr. Tarbell, "That was really cool."

Does it give you any concern that some of the signatories of the letter were celebrating sort of the political aspects of it?

A No.

Mr. [REDACTED]: What number are we up to?

Mr. [REDACTED]: 12.

Mr. [REDACTED]: 12?

[Clapper Exhibit No. 12

Was marked for identification.]

Mr. [REDACTED]: Just introducing the exhibit that I referenced between Ms. Wood and Mr. Tarbell.

BY MR. [REDACTED]:

Q Earlier today we had a little bit of a discussion about the Steele Dossier.

When did you first learn of the Steele Dossier?

A I think it was in mid-December -- around December 15th of 2016.

Q And do you remember how you learned about it?

A I had a call from John Brennan to inform me -- asking me was I aware of it, and I was not.

Q And at that point, did you -- were you able to make an assessment of whether the Steele Dossier was authentic information -- contained authentic information?

A Not at that very instant, no.

Q At any point in time, did you come to make an assessment of the content of the Steele Dossier?

A Well, the community assessment was -- the team that put together the intelligence community assessment was not to draw on it as a source for the intelligence community assessment. So you won't find a footnote using the dossier as a source.

Q What do you recall of that communication you had with Director Brennan at the time?

A He just called me up and said, "Are you aware of this dossier that has some damning information about candidate Trump?" and I said no.

Q Did he send it to you?

A No. I got it from the FBI.

Q Do you remember who at the FBI sent it to you?

Mr. Litt. Are we going to tie this back to the Hunter Biden laptop in some respect? I really don't think this is the forum to be litigating the Steele Dossier.

Mr. [REDACTED]. Just asking some questions. You're here voluntarily. If he doesn't want to answer them --

Mr. Litt. I understand you're asking questions. If you have a question about the Biden laptop statement, we can deal with that.

But I don't think you should be answering these questions about --

Mr. [REDACTED]. Well, part of the problem with the Steele Dossier is that it was classic disinformation, where the Hunter Biden laptop was not.

Mr. Clapper. Well --

Mr. Litt. That's not a question to you.

Mr. [REDACTED]. Don't you agree?

Mr. [REDACTED]. Don't I agree with what?

Mr. [REDACTED]. That on one hand, the Hunter Biden laptop information was not disinformation, but the Steele Dossier was. It was false --

Mr. Clapper. Not in its entirety. Some of what was in the 35 separate memos that compose the Steele Dossier was corroborated from separate sources. Much of it was not.

Mr. [REDACTED]. Okay.

Mr. Gaetz. But didn't the Steele Dossier have all the features of a Russian disinformation operation? Didn't you testify to that earlier?

Mr. Clapper. Well, it had some, I suppose, but bear in mind that at least the FBI considered that the initial sourcing, which was Robert Steele, was credible. He'd been a credible -- what they regard as a credible source for about 3 years. The issue was with the second and third order assets which Steele drew on which we could not corroborate.

Mr. Gaetz. And by Robert Steele, do you mean Christopher Steele?

Mr. Clapper. So I don't see a direct parallel.

Mr. Gaetz. We went through this earlier. For the record, I'm going to assert that the basis for these questions about the Steele Dossier emerged from Director

Clapper claiming that his extensive experience analyzing Russia informed on his basis to sign the Hunter Biden letter.

So one cannot simultaneously say my basis is all this experience I have analyzing that which is or isn't a Russian information operation, and then say you're not going to talk about that analysis through the lens of the Hunter Biden letter.

So I understand you take exception to that. We have done this with a number of witnesses. But if we proceed with a contempt proceeding, I at least wanted the basis to be reflected.

Mr. Litt. Just to be clear, I have not interposed any objections to questions such as you were just talking about, comparing the Steele Dossier to the Biden laptop.

What I did start to object to was discussions about how he learned about the dossier, what his communications with John Brennan were, who he obtained the dossier from, which I don't think is within the scope.

I have no problem with your asking the kinds of questions you were talking about, sir.

Mr. Gaetz. Yeah. And as to Mr. Castor's question, the committee's position, I believe, will be that when Director Clapper references the full suite of his experience, then the full suite of his Russia experience becomes probative to this inquiry.

But as Mr. [REDACTED] has said, you could choose to answer or not answer any questions you want because you're here voluntarily.

Mrs. Spartz. But which earmarks? You said that this Biden laptop had all earmarks of Russian disinformation, but the Steele Dossier didn't have all. Which one it didn't have from your perspective?

Mr. Clapper. Well, the difference was the primary source of the Steele document was Robert Steele, who --

Mr. Litt. Christopher.

Mr. Clapper. I'm sorry?

Mr. Litt. Christopher Steele.

Mr. Clapper. Oh, Christopher Steele, excuse me, was a career-long professional British intelligence officer who was an expert on Russia. So he was considered credible.

The issue was the second and third order assets that he drew on to compile the Steele -- this dossier, which most of which we could not corroborate.

Mrs. Spartz. So what do you believe --

Mr. Clapper. And of course, difference, the big difference here is I was in a position to have access to classified information to make inquiries about it, which I was not in the case of the laptop.

Mrs. Spartz. So do you believe you were used by the Biden campaign for their political reasons?

Mr. Clapper. No, I don't feel used.

Mrs. Spartz. So how would you -- since you didn't know, but they used your credential to use in the elections and write this letter, how would you --

Mr. Clapper. Well, I can't --

Mrs. Spartz. -- classify that?

Mr. Clapper. I can't comment on that. My purpose was simply to sound a warning, as I've said many times before this morning, that there is the potential for Russian involvement. That's all.

Mrs. Spartz. Did you cite it in any other situation before?

Mr. Clapper. What?

Mrs. Spartz. In any other situation, do you have circumstances where you cited the warning in any other -- during your career after that it could be potentially Russian

involvement? Have you had any other situation when you made the same warning, or this is the only time that you made that statement?

Mr. Clapper. I mean, since the I left the government?

Mrs. Spartz. Since you left or during that, have you made statements, have you issued that warning ever before, or this is the first time?

Mr. Litt. I'm sorry. Are you asking about while he was in the government or just after?

Mrs. Spartz. While or after. Did you ever --

Mr. Clapper. I sounded a warning immediately -- in fact, that's why I wanted to go public, to express my concern about the Russians after the 2016 election.

Mrs. Spartz. But a specific case, that was the first time you publicly issued the warning?

Mr. Clapper. No, it was not. I issued it on "Meet the Press" in 2017.

Mrs. Spartz. And what was that warning?

Mr. Clapper. About the Russian involvement. I talked about the Russian interference in our election in 2016. And I'm sure there are other appearances I made on CNN where I spoke to it.

Mrs. Spartz. But why would you think that anything like that, why would the Russian involvement and that would be discredited, why would you think Russians wouldn't want to have Hunter and Mr. Biden? Why do you think they would not actually try to do something on purpose to have Biden? Why do you think they would not want to support him?

Mr. Clapper. I don't understand the question.

Mrs. Spartz. Why would you think that when you look at this disinformation and why do you think that potentially maybe the Russians had a different idea when they

interfere and maybe they had no problems with President Biden?

Mr. Clapper. Well, that didn't occur to me. I just again thought that the public should know of the potential for Russian involvement.

Mrs. Spartz. So in your mind, you always had this in your mind, Trump and Russian connection, even though a lot of things never were proved to be true, that there was no specific connection, but you still made these assessments --

Mr. Clapper. Well, I don't know that yet for sure. I think at the time that the potential for Russian involvement was real and that I thought it was appropriate that the American public be warned of it. That was the whole purpose.

Mrs. Spartz. So you thought there could be connection between Trump campaign and Russian Government?

Mr. Clapper. What?

Mrs. Spartz. You thought in your mind there could be connection between Trump campaign and Russian Government?

Mr. Clapper. What's the question?

Mr. Litt. She's asking whether what you're saying is you thought there could be a connection between the Trump campaign and the Russian Government.

Mr. Clapper. Yes, I did. When President Trump publicly solicited Russian assistance in finding the Russian emails, or the missing Hillary Clinton emails, 5 hours later the Russian Intelligence Service, specifically the GRU, went to work to just -- to do just that.

Mrs. Spartz. How did he solicit when you say that?

Mr. Clapper. How did I what?

Mrs. Spartz. How did he solicit that?

Mr. Clapper. Solicit?

Mr. Litt. How did he solicit the Russian assistance?

Mrs. Spartz. Yeah, how did he do that?

Mr. Clapper. He made it in a rally speech.

Mrs. Spartz. You can do rally speeches. We do a lot of different things. He didn't spend any --

Mr. Clapper. Well, the point is, the intelligence showed that the Russians reacted.

Mrs. Spartz. What about what intelligence did on the information that Clinton campaign and Jake Sullivan, current National Security Advisor, gave to intelligence services, you think that's a problem, how it was more credible when Clinton campaign give information?

Mr. Clapper. What are we talking about here?

Mr. Litt. I'm not sure what she -- she's talking about something about Jake Sullivan.

Mrs. Spartz. And Hillary Clinton campaign giving information to intelligence services, which became more credible.

Mr. Clapper. I don't know what you're talking about with Jake Sullivan.

Mrs. Spartz. As part of Clinton -- when Clinton campaign provided information also to intelligence services, is that credibility, was that a question?

Mr. Clapper. Well, there's some doubt about that.

Mr. [REDACTED]: I'm going to return to the information I was talking about, Attorney General Barr. We have an exhibit that will be No. 13.

[Clapper Exhibit No. 13

Was marked for identification.]

Mr. [REDACTED]: Look over that.

First of all, the title of this story from Blaze Media is, "Bill Barr says suppressing Hunter Biden laptop story 'definitely made an impact on the election.'"

"Barr recalled when a letter signed by more than 50 former senior U.S. intelligence officials -- including former DNI James Clapper -- claimed the allegations regarding a laptop purportedly owned by President Joe Biden's son 'had all the classic earmarks of a Russian information operation' was released in October 2020."

And then here's a quote: "As soon as this letter came out from the so-called intelligence specialists, the DNI, John Ratcliffe at the time, and the FBI -- which worked for me -- both came out and said this was not the result of Russian disinformation,' Barr said during a Thursday appearance on 'Jesse Watters Primetime.' 'The media ignored that completely and just kept going on with the disinformation lie.'"

So my question is, did you not know that Barr had come out and ratified what Director Ratcliffe had said?

Mr. Litt. What's the date of this article?

Mr. [REDACTED]: March 18th, 2022.

Mr. Litt. Okay.

Mr. Clapper. Well, this is a little bit after the letter, the public statement.

Mr. [REDACTED]: No, but the Attorney General's talking about what he did at the time.

Mr. Litt. I'm sorry. Where does he say anything about what he did at the time?

Mr. [REDACTED]: He said the FBI, which works for me.

Mr. Forrest. Do you have the FBI statement?

Mr. [REDACTED]: We do. We have that ready for you.

Mr. Litt. Okay. Why don't we deal with that then.

Mr. Clapper. This is in 2022.

Mr. Litt. Yeah.

[Clapper Exhibit No. 14

Was marked for identification.]

BY MR. [REDACTED]:

Q The concluding sentence, the penultimate paragraph, "Therefore, the FBI cannot provide any additional information in response to the enumerated questions to your letter. We have nothing to add at this time to the October 19th public statement by the Director of National Intelligence about the available actionable intelligence on Hunter Biden's laptops and emails."

And I'm just wondering whether you were aware of that?

A This?

Q Yes.

A No, I've never seen this letter before.

Q Okay. And the date on this is October 20th, 2020.

A How would I have seen this letter?

Q I don't know how you would or how you wouldn't. I'm sure it was published in the news, discussed in the news.

A Oh, was it? Okay.

Q Okay. You mentioned the Steele Dossier had 35 chapters or 35 components?

A 35, as I recall, or so documents, separate documents that comprised what was called the dossier.

Q And did you ever have access to all 35?

A Yes.

Q And did you ever disseminate them?

Mr. Litt. What do you mean by disseminate?

Mr. [REDACTED]: Give to anybody.

Mr. Litt. He gave it to me.

Mr. Clapper. I gave him a copy and gave my deputy a copy.

BY MR. [REDACTED]:

Q And did you give it to any news organizations?

A No.

Q At any point did you use the Steele Dossier to -- did you talk about the Steele Dossier in a positive way on any of your television appearances?

A No, other than -- well --

Q Giving it credibility?

A No. I always made the point that we didn't use it for the intelligence community assessment, we didn't draw on it.

Mr. [REDACTED]: We have about 20 minutes left in our hour.

Mr. Litt. Don't feel compelled to use it.

Mr. [REDACTED]: I'm not. I'm seeing if anybody has -- Mrs. Spartz or Mr. Gaetz?

Mr. Gaetz. Director, were you aware of any of the contents on the Hunter Biden laptop when you signed this letter?

Mr. Clapper. No. No, I was not.

Mr. Gaetz. And have you subsequently become aware of any of the contents of the laptop?

Mr. Clapper. Well, I've read media reports, yes.

Mr. Gaetz. Do any of the contents of the laptop concern you as you sit here today?

Mr. Clapper. Well, sure. I mean, yes, it would be of concern.

Mr. [REDACTED]. Can we go off the record for a second?

[Discussion off the record.]

Mr. [REDACTED]. Back on the record.

Mr. Gaetz. You indicated that the contents of the laptop, as you now understand them, concern you, and I'd like to know why.

Mr. Clapper. Well, again, I'm going based on only what I've read in the media, but there certainly is the potential for compromise, I suppose. But, again, I'm not authoritative on the actual content, how much of it -- do we know was any of that inserted by somebody else? I don't know.

Mr. Gaetz. You don't have any basis to believe any information is inauthentic today, do you?

Mr. Clapper. Well, I don't have any basis for saying it's authentic or unauthentic, other than what I read in the media.

Mr. Gaetz. Yeah. Well, Mr. Clapper, one basis for presuming it might be authentic is that Hunter Biden's authenticated it, right?

Mr. Clapper. He's apparently said it is his laptop and that at least some of what's on it is his --

Mr. Gaetz. Has he said any of it is not --

Mr. Clapper. -- as I understand what's been in the media.

Mr. Gaetz. These are really predicate questions. I don't mean to go back and belabor them. But you've testified earlier to us that you're unaware of any effort by Hunter Biden to say that this isn't authentic, that you suppose --

Mr. Clapper. That's why I was saying I don't have a basis for saying --

Mr. Gaetz. Mr. Director, you've got to let me finish the question.

Mr. Clapper. Yeah. I apologize. Sorry.

Mr. Gaetz. You've testified earlier today that you have no basis to believe it's not authentic, that you're aware that Hunter Biden has authenticated some of it, and that you suppose -- your words -- that if there was anything inauthentic, that someone from Hunter Biden's team would say so.

Have I misunderstood any part of what we've discussed?

Mr. Clapper. Well, I think that's right.

Mr. Gaetz. Okay. Back to the predication. And now we're talking about the contents of the laptop. I'm trying to understand from you why the contents don't concern you more.

Mr. Litt. More than what?

Mr. Clapper. Well, I don't know what the contents actually are.

Mr. Gaetz. Okay. Are you aware of --

Mr. Clapper. I didn't know that much about it certainly in October 2020.

Mr. Gaetz. Moments ago -- and that's actually what I'm trying to probe here, is how your understanding of the context have changed from when you signed the letter to now, because that might inform on the committee's legislative work --

Mr. Clapper. Well, again, all I know --

Mr. Litt. Let him finish.

Mr. Gaetz. That may inform on the committee's legislative work regarding how to constrain some security clearances for former folks. So that is our basis for asking the question.

So in 2020, when you signed the letter, you were unaware of any contents, correct?

Mr. Clapper. Other than what the New York Post reported.

Mr. Gaetz. And today you're aware of more contents of the laptop?

Mr. Clapper. Well, there's been more publicity about it, yeah.

Mr. Gaetz. Sure. And that understanding has now developed within you a concern over potential compromise. Isn't that right?

Mr. Clapper. Well, I suppose, yeah. You can -- I guess you could spin a web to say that there's potential for compromise, yeah.

Mr. Gaetz. These aren't trick questions. I'm citing your testimony back to you. And had you known when you signed the letter what you know now, would you similarly have been concerned about compromise of the First Family.

Mr. Clapper. Well, probably. But my greater concern, my overriding concern was the potential for Russian involvement. That's why I signed the letter, the release.

Mr. Gaetz. Why were you more concerned about Russian involvement than compromise of the First Family?

Mr. Litt. You mean why would he have been more concerned if he had known at the time?

Mr. Gaetz. Well, that's not my question.

As you sit here today, why are you more concerned about the Russian interference features of this operation and not as much the compromise?

Mr. Clapper. I can't quantify how much I'm concerned about compromise of the First Family versus -- I can't quantify that to say one is more or less. I'm concerned -- the issue for me was what did I think in 2020, October 2020, two and a half years ago.

Mr. Gaetz. And if you would have known in 2020 what you know now about the potential for compromise, would that have stopped you from signing the letter?

Mr. Clapper. I don't know. I will say, I'll repeat what I said earlier, the letter would have been better had we added a sentence something to the effect that we will abide by the results of a competent, legitimate forensic analysis of the laptop and its

content. I think that would have strengthened the statement when we made it in October of 2020.

Mr. Gaetz. And there are other ways to authentic contents other than a forensic analysis, right?

Mr. Clapper. Well, I suppose. But that's what I would ascribe the most credibility to.

Mr. Gaetz. If Hunter Biden stood up and said, "That is my laptop and those contents are authentic," would that have been sufficient for you?

Mr. Clapper. I don't know.

Mr. Gaetz. How could that have been insufficient?

Mr. Clapper. If the content of the laptop had been manipulated in such a way that he wasn't aware of it, you have to -- there's that possibility. The Russians are pretty skillful at this stuff.

Mr. Gaetz. And as we sit here today, you have no basis to believe that that alteration has, in fact, occurred, right?

Mr. Clapper. I don't know that, no.

Mr. Gaetz. If you were aware of contents of the laptop wherein Hunter Biden was engaged in business deals in Russia, would that have factored into your decision to sign or not sign the letter?

Mr. Clapper. Well, it's not illegal for people to have -- at least it wasn't then -- business deals in Russia or China.

[1:22 p.m.]

Mr. Gaetz. I'm not suggesting it's illegal. I'm trying to --

Mr. Clapper. Well, there's the potential for a national security implication there, yes. But I don't know enough about that to say definitively one way or the other whether there was.

Mr. Gaetz. And I'm not trying to assert that you have a definitive understanding of everything on the laptop.

What I'm trying to understand, had you had more visibility into the contents, which of these various things from the laptop may have caused you pause, or may have been forthright in the consideration of your decision to sign or not sign?

Mr. Clapper. Had someone said in a position of authority, not just the Biden family, or Hunter Biden himself, but if a competent investigatory body had done a forensic analysis, could definitively say there's no evidence of Russian interference here, clearly that would have affected my decision whether or not to sign the letter or not, had I known that contemporaneously. I didn't know that.

Mr. Gaetz. Yeah, you've been very clear about that.

But a separate and distinct question from whether or not an independent analysis would have authenticated the laptop is whether or not the contents themselves would have motivated you in any particular way. So let me ask you another -- about another vertical there. Are -- as you sit here today, are you aware of SinoHawk as business entity?

Mr. Clapper. As what?

Mr. Gaetz. SinoHawk.

Mr. Clapper. I don't know what you're referring to.

Mr. Gaetz. Okay. Have you ever heard of Tony Bobulinski?

Mr. Clapper. I've heard the name. I don't know -- can't -- I can't go much beyond that.

Mr. Gaetz. And as you sit here today, are you aware of contents the laptop had evidence a number of connections with the Chinese and Hunter Biden?

Mr. Clapper. I'll accept that. I don't -- I don't -- I didn't know that for sure.

Mr. Gaetz. Yeah, I'm not asking you to accept my premise. I'm asking -- I'm trying to probe your awareness of these things.

Mr. Clapper. I was not aware of any Chinese connection in October of 2020 on the laptop, no.

Mr. Gaetz. And are you aware of such a connection today?

Mr. Clapper. That's what I've read.

Mr. Gaetz. And do you believe what you've read on that?

Mr. Clapper. Well, I -- I -- I don't know.

Mr. Gaetz. Mr. Director, the reason I'm asking this, some things that John Ratcliffe writes -- John Ratcliffe writes, you don't believe. Some things that others write, you do believe. So I'm trying to understand what goes into your decision calculus here.

So the things you read today about Chinese connections between the Biden family that have emerged off of this laptop, do you have -- do you have any basis with your wealth of specific to assess the veracity of those claims?

Mr. Clapper. Well, I accept the claims. I -- but I don't know what the specifics of the claims are.

Mr. Gaetz. Um --

Mr. Clapper. So, yes, you're always concerned if there are interactions with entities in an adversary's nation-state like China or Russia.

Mr. Gaetz. China does --

Mr. Clapper. That's always a concern, but it may not be anything nefarious or certainly illegal.

Mr. Gaetz. Yeah, and I --

Mr. Clapper. I mean, all kinds of people have business dealings with China.

Mr. Gaetz. Sure. And I'm not suggesting every one of them is illegal. I'm wondering to what extent knowledge of those interactions would inform on signing a letter such as the subject of our discussion today in the course of a Presidential campaign. So --

Mr. Clapper. Well, these are all --

Mr. Gaetz. -- as it relates to China -- excuse me, Director.

As it relates to China, China does try to compromise powerful Americans, don't they?

Mr. Clapper. China what?

Mr. Gaetz. Does try to compromise powerful Americans, don't they?

Mr. Clapper. Well, they have, yes.

Mr. Gaetz. And they try to compromise American politicians, right?

Mr. Clapper. They have attempted, yes.

Mr. Gaetz. They've succeeded in some cases.

Mr. Clapper. Well, I can't speak to that. Well, I was privy to certain investigations when I was DNI, but I don't think I should speak to --

Mr. Gaetz. Okay. That's an important -- so I'm to understand your objection to the question to be that it calls upon to you discuss classified information, not that you're just unwilling to speak about it generally.

Mr. Clapper. Yeah, okay.

Mr. Gaetz. The -- are you aware of content on Hunter Biden's laptop wherein

Hunter Biden organizes the annual meeting of his investment fund at the Chinese Embassy?

Mr. Clapper. No.

Mr. Gaetz. Had you been aware of that, would that have concerned you?

Mr. Clapper. Perhaps. There could be -- there could be security implication or not. I don't know enough about it.

Mr. Gaetz. And if that meeting of Hunter Biden investment fund, if the opportunity to have that at the Chinese Embassy was predicated on Hunter Biden's willingness to have a one-on-one meeting with the Chinese Ambassador, while his father was Vice President, would that increase or decrease your concern about such an interaction?

Mr. Clapper. It would depend on the nature of the conversation.

Mr. Gaetz. Do you think it's proper for the son of a sitting Vice President to be holding investment meetings at the Chinese Embassy and having one-on-one meetings with the ambassador?

Mr. Clapper. I can't say.

Mr. Gaetz. Does anything about that concern you?

Mr. Clapper. Were there national security implications there? I don't know.

Mr. Gaetz. Had you known that there were arrangements to have such a meeting for Hunter Biden at the Chinese Embassy predicated on Hunter Biden before that meeting, having a one-on-one discussion with the ambassador, would that have impacted your decision to sign the letter?

Mr. Clapper. I don't know. I mean, you're -- this is hypothetical questions you're asking. But 2-1/2 years ago and whether that would have impacted the decision I might have made to sign one or not, I don't know.

Mr. Gaetz. Well, shouldn't it have?

Mr. Clapper. Possibly, had I -- if I knew more detail about the nature of the conversations. Was there a national security implication here, or was this just a business dealing?

Mr. Gaetz. Prior to signing the letter, can you list for me the steps you took to understand the contents of the laptop?

Mr. Clapper. I'm sorry?

Mr. Gaetz. Prior to signing the letter, can you list for me the steps you took to understand what the contents the laptop were?

Mr. Clapper. I wasn't in a position to garner information or insight about the contents of the laptop. All I had to go on was what was in the media at the time.

Mr. Gaetz. Why did you assess that the contents of the laptop weren't relevant to assessing these indicia of Russian disinformation?

Mr. Clapper. Because I was concerned about potential Russian involvement in inserting content.

Mr. Gaetz. Wouldn't your concern about any potential inserted content necessitate some investigation or discovery or inquiry on your part as to those contents?

Mr. Clapper. No --

Mr. Gaetz. Why not?

Mr. Clapper. -- Congressman. I simply was concerned about potential Russian involvement. I don't know how many times I have to say that.

Mr. Gaetz. We hear you loud and clear that that was a concern. But we have to decide how to legislate around the fact that 51 former intelligence officials went and said something that the media portrayed as a falsity, and then it was used in a Presidential debate and it harms the credibility of our intelligence entity.

So that legislative endeavor necessitates understanding when a person in your position with your active security clearance puts their name on such a letter: What things do you investigate? What things do you review? What things do you research? What experiences do you draw on?

And so you can -- you can come and say in each one, in response to all of our questions, that you just thought the public ought to be warned. But that's not fulsome when we're trying to ascertain the process you went through.

And so -- so I'll go into some more granular detail.

Did you speak to anybody currently in the government before you signed the Hunter Biden letter?

Mr. Clapper. No.

Mr. Gaetz. Did you speak to anyone other than the signatories to the letter who had left government but had previously held positions in the government before signing the letter?

Mr. Clapper. Other than the ones that were in the email exchange.

Mr. Gaetz. Yeah, I -- I understand those -- for a moment, I'm going to carve out signatories to the letter. But is there any human being who is not a signatory to the letter that you discussed the letter with prior to signing?

Mr. Clapper. No.

Mr. Gaetz. Okay. Which of the signatories to the letter did you have a discussion with about the letter?

Mr. Clapper. Other than my email exchanges with Michael Morell, none.

Mr. Gaetz. So you didn't speak to Mr. Morell on the phone?

Mr. Clapper. No.

Mr. Gaetz. Mr. Polymeropoulos?

Mr. Clapper. No.

Mr. Gaetz. Mr. Brennan?

Mr. Clapper. No.

Mr. Gaetz. Did you review any files or materials in your possession, custody, or control, prior to signing the letter?

Mr. Clapper. No, other than the media reporting which is publicly available.

Mr. Gaetz. But no other notes you've taken, briefs you've written?

Mr. Clapper. No.

Mr. Gaetz. And the public, do you recall --

Mr. Clapper. On the specific subject of the laptop?

Mr. Gaetz. Yes, sir.

Mr. Clapper. No.

Mr. Gaetz. And when you say that you reviewed media reports, can you list for me which reports those were?

Mr. Clapper. Well, The New York Post.

Mr. Gaetz. Okay. Any others?

Mr. Clapper. Not that I remember contemporaneously, no. I don't remember any others.

Mr. Gaetz. So upon reading one media report, you agreed to sign this letter.

Mr. Clapper. Well, I suppose there was other -- other media outlets that spoke about the reporting originally generated by The New York Post. I can't tell you, recite for that for you who that was in October of 2020.

Mr. Gaetz. And did you review The New York Post story on a digital device?

Mr. Clapper. On what?

Mr. Gaetz. On a digital device?

Mr. Clapper. I don't remember where I -- I suppose on -- I would have read it on my computer, yeah.

Mr. Gaetz. And --

Mr. Clapper. It wasn't the original article. It was others, you know, reporting on The New York Post article.

Mr. Gaetz. And who's your internet service provider?

Mr. Litt. Really?

Go ahead. You can answer the question.

Mr. Clapper. What?

Mr. Gaetz. Who's your internet service provider?

Mr. Clapper. Verizon.

What's that for?

Mr. Litt. He doesn't have to tell you that. He can ask any question he wants.

Mr. Gaetz. That's correct. I believe I've asked them.

Mrs. Spartz. I have a quick question for you.

Just, you know, you mentioned about the potential compromise of the First Family and concern.

Do you believe -- you know, from your professional opinion which, you know, you've been in this for a long time, you know, seeing what's happened with Hunter Biden and the corruption prosecutor, with Burisma, with information that right now current Amos Hochstein, who's actually current advisor, energy advisor to President Biden and there is, you know, ex-CEO of Naftogaz oil gas under investigation with the corruption prosecutor, is this something, this issue could be potentially, you know, a problem because he had his family and his current employee involved in some anticorruption investigation in Ukraine?

And I think this is really -- I think that we should be looking very carefully because that potential could compromise our First Family.

So ex-CEO of Naftogaz right now, anticorruption prosecutor of Ukraine opened a case for him and the current advisor to President, Amos Hochstein, who is the one who advised the ones that now is under investigation, you know, by this anticorruption prosecutor. So we have the same situation where his family, his employees involved in some advisory dealings with money in Ukraine, which is pretty corrupt country, as you know, and there is a lot of work to do there.

Do you think this is pause -- causes you pause, you know, to start thinking about what is really happening in, you know, in our intelligence community? Are we doing our job?

Mr. Clapper. I'm not sure I understand what you're getting at here.

Mrs. Spartz. You know, do you believe all of the situation involvements of President Biden's son, President Biden's current employees when a lot of oil business in Ukraine --

Mr. Clapper. Uh-huh.

Mrs. Spartz. -- could potentially compromise the First Family?

Mr. Clapper. In the absence of information, more information than is available to me, I don't know. I suppose it could be but I -- I don't know enough to answer that.

Mrs. Spartz. So if you -- but if you would see similar concern, you'd be willing to make the same strong statements that you just made about some concerns that you had in the letter that you sent related to the laptop situation. Would you -- you still would be --

Mr. Clapper. I'm not --

Mrs. Spartz. -- impartial --

Mr. Clapper. I'm --

Mrs. Spartz. -- to do that.

Mr. Clapper. I'm afraid I'm not following you here.

Mrs. Spartz. But you would be impartial to do, this your statements, you know, if you in that -- in the similar situation with -- that you just did about Hunter Biden laptop. Would you -- using your professional knowledge or you only feel like you need to do it only if it's related to anti-Trump?

Mr. Clapper. I'm sorry. I'm missing the point here.

Can you help me, Bob?

Mr. Litt. No.

Mrs. Spartz. But you believe the potential, from what you know, that First Family could be compromised. Is that correct?

Mr. Clapper. Well, I suppose that's possible. But I don't know that. I don't know enough facts to make a judgement.

Mrs. Spartz. But it's concerning, what you've seen in your professional opinion, what you've heard and seen about laptop and other things. Is it concerning?

Mr. Clapper. Well, I don't know enough about it to say whether -- it could be, you know. Anything's possible, but I don't know enough to answer that question.

Mrs. Spartz. But you did know enough or you just made an assumption last time when you did put your signature on that letter. What did you know?

Mr. Clapper. What I know -- what I knew of is about 30-plus years of experience with the Russians and the experience I had in the election of 2016. That yes, I was very concerned about that.

Mrs. Spartz. But you're not concerned about what's happening now?

Mr. Clapper. Well, I'd have to know more facts.

Mrs. Spartz. Okay.

Mr. [REDACTED]: Thank you.

Mr. Clapper. This is history I haven't lived. I lived a lot of history with the Russians.

Mr. [REDACTED]: Thank you.

Ms. [REDACTED]: We can go off the record.

[Discussion off the record.]

Ms. [REDACTED]: We can go back on the record. It is 1:45 in the afternoon.

EXAMINATION

BY MS. [REDACTED]:

Q General Clapper, I want to turn back to I think it's exhibit 14, but I'm not sure if I marked it down right. It's the letter from the FBI that's dated October 20th, 2020.

Is that exhibit 14? Is that what you have it as?

Mr. [REDACTED]: Yes.

Ms. [REDACTED]: Okay.

BY MS. [REDACTED]:

Q The FBI cannot provide any additional information in response to the enumerated questions in your letter. I want to just state for the record what that full paragraph reads. The full paragraph reads that:

Finally, as the FBI advised the committee in its letter dated October 5th, 2020, consistent with longstanding Department of Justice department policy and practice, the FBI can neither confirm nor deny the existence of any ongoing investigation or persons or entities under investigation, including to Members of Congress.

It explains that the IG has laid out the rationale for that decision. And then it says:

Therefore, the FBI cannot provide any additional information in response to the enumerated questions in your letter?

So, and I know you said you've never seen this letter before, right?

A Right.

Q But it's pretty clear there that to the extent the FBI cannot provide any further information, it's because they cannot provide information about potential or ongoing investigations, correct?

A Right, that's typical.

Q Okay. And that's standard.

A That's what?

Q Thank you. I want -- that's standard. That's standard.

A Yes.

Q The FBI can't provide --

A Yes.

Q -- that type of information.

A Yes.

Q Okay. Thank you. I just wanted to clarify the record on that, and we can move on from that exhibit.

There's also been a fair amount of discussion about the -- whether the laptop has been authenticated or not. And I think you said that you don't know, right, that there's no official statement to that effect?

A Yeah, I don't know.

Q Are you familiar with the type of investigation that the government would do to authenticate something like that?

A Well, generally. I would say the government would be, at least for me, the

FBI would do that sort of thing.

Q Okay. And they would -- it would take them some time to do that, correct?

A Yeah, it would depend on the complexity of the --

Q Okay.

A -- what they're looking at.

Q And, to date, the FBI has not released any official analysis?

A Not to my knowledge.

Q Okay. And sometimes, the FBI might have done something, but for various reasons it might not release it, perhaps because there's indictments under seal or for any variety of reasons.

A Right.

Q Right? Okay.

Ms. [REDACTED]: I do want to introduce into the record as -- I have no idea what exhibit number we're on --

Mr. Litt. 15.

Ms. [REDACTED]: -- as exhibit 15, a Washington Post article. It's entitled, "Here's how The Post analyzed Hunter Biden's laptop," and I'm just going to read briefly from it?

[Clapper Exhibit No. 15

Was marked for identification.]

BY MS. [REDACTED]:

Q And I'll give you a minute to review it. We're not going to go through the whole thing. We're actually just going to look at the first page of it.

A Yeah, I recall.

Q Okay.

A I recall --

Q Okay.

A I recall this article.

Q Okay. So according to this article, it states that, while some of the emails from the laptop, quote -- and this is in the Washington Post analysis, I should say. This is not a government analysis. But according to The Washington Post analysis: While some the emails from the laptop, quote, "are authentic communications that can be verified through cryptographic signatures," end quote, those emails, quote, "are a small fraction of 217 gigabytes of data provided to The Post on a portable hard drive by Republican activist Jack Maxey," end quote.

Then it goes on, and it says: And, in fact, quote, the vast majority of the data and most of the nearly 129,000 emails it contained could not be verified by either of the two security experts who reviewed the data for The Post, end quote.

And then it says: quote, "The security experts who examined the data for The Post struggled to reach definitive conclusions about the laptop as a whole, including whether all of it originated from a single computer or could have been assembled from files from multiple computers and put on a portable drive," end quote.

So this article at least suggests that based on The Washington Post analysis, there are legitimate questions about the authenticity the laptop, correct?

A Yes, there are.

Q Okay. So to the extent that it was stated earlier that the emails are authentic or the laptop is authentic, that's actually not been proven, correct?

A Right.

Q Okay.

A Which is why I couldn't say one way or the other about the con -- anything about the content.

Q Thank you. And just one final line, final set of questions here.

You were asked earlier about the social media companies' activities with respect to the laptop. Do you remember that? Or --

A Yes.

Q -- with respect to The New York Post story, I should say.

Are you aware of the date that the social media companies took action?

A No.

Q Okay. I'll represent to you that The New York Times article was -- I'm sorry -- the New York Post article was published on the 14th.

[Clapper Exhibit No. 16

Was marked for identification.]

BY MS. [REDACTED]:

Q And I want to introduce as exhibit 16, a New York Times story published on October 16th that says, "In Reversal Twitter Noise Longer Blocking the New York Post Article."

A And that was on what date?

Q October 16th.

A Oh, okay.

Q And I'll give you a minute to review the article.

But the point is that if the emails were -- if the story was being freely shared by October 16th, your letter on the 19th couldn't have had an impact on it, right?

A Correct.

Q So do you agree that this article says that by October 16th, Twitter was permitting the articles to be freely shared?

A Yes.

Q So your email or your letter couldn't have had an impact on it.

[Clapper Exhibit No. 17

Was marked for identification.]

Ms. [REDACTED]: And now I also want to introduce as exhibit 17th -- 17, an October 15th, 2020, article from Business Insider. It's entitled, "The New York Post's dubious Hunter Biden article was shared 300,000 times on Facebook, even after the company said it limited its reach."

This is exhibit No. 17, and the date of this article is October 15th, 2020.

Mr. Clapper. Before the statement, yes.

BY MS. [REDACTED]:

Q So according to this article, Facebook first began to limit the -- attempted to limit the distribution of the article on Wednesday, October 14th.

Your letter was dated October 19th, correct?

A Correct.

Q So your letter could not have impacted the Facebook decision --

A Correct.

Q -- correct? And actually, the letter says that Facebook attempted to limit the distribution but it was not -- whatever attempt it made was not successful, for the record.

Mr. Litt. You mean the article.

Ms. [REDACTED]: The article, sorry.

And it still was shared many hundreds of thousands of times, for the record.

BY MS. [REDACTED]:

Q Okay. Now with respect to media coverage more broadly, as we said in the earlier hour, Rudy Giuliani actually first approached Fox News, and asked them to report

on the Hunter Biden laptop. And you said you weren't aware of that.

Do you recall that?

A Correct.

Ms. [REDACTED]: So I want to introduce as exhibit 18 the article reporting on the New York -- the Fox News decision.

[Clapper Exhibit No. 18

Was marked for identification.]

BY MS. [REDACTED]:

Q So according to this article, Rudy Giuliani approached Fox News with the story even before he approached Fox News, but Fox News's -- news division of Fox News declined to run the story, correct?

A Correct.

Q And it said it's because they couldn't properly -- they refused to run the story unless or until the sourcing and veracity of the emails could be properly vetted --

A Correct.

Q -- correct?

A Yes.

Q So, again, this article was published the 19th. But if The New York Post article was published on the 14th of October, Rudy Giuliani would have had to approach Fox News before the 14th of October, right?

A Right.

Q So once again, the public letter you signed could not have impacted the Fox News decision.

A Correct.

Ms. [REDACTED]: All right. And one more article and then I think we're done.

I want to introduce as exhibit 19 an October 15th, 2020, article entitled, "Bret Baier Calls Out Dubious Sourcing of Alleged Hunter Biden Emails: Let's Not Sugarcoat It, This Whole Thing is Sketchy."

[Clapper Exhibit No. 19

Was marked for identification.]

BY MS. [REDACTED]:

Q Are you familiar with Mr. Baier's comments?

A No.

Q Are you familiar with who Mr. Baier is?

A Yes.

Q Who is he?

A He's an anchor, commentator on Fox News.

Q Okay. And according to the article, this is what Bret Baier said about the laptop story on October 15th, 2020. He said: Let's say, just not sugarcoat it. This whole thing is sketchy. You couldn't write this script in 19 days from an election.

I believe that's on the second page. Do you see where it says that?

A I'm sorry?

Q Do you see where it says that on the second page?

A Yes, I -- yes.

Q So a Fox News anchor described -- a Fox News anchor described this story as sketchy on October 15th, which was 4 days before your letter was published --

A Right.

Q -- correct? And to your knowledge, are your committees -- are these committees investigating Bret Baier's reasons for making the statement that the laptop story was sketchy?

A Not to my knowledge.

Ms. [REDACTED]: Okay. Thank you. We can go off the record.

[Whereupon, at 1:59 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

Clapper Errata

p. 8, next to last paragraph, the reference to Chairman Jordan's statement should be in quotation marks, i.e. As Chairman Jordan said, "the most . . . doing so."

p. 25, fifth line from bottom, should be "80,000 votes" not "80 votes." I don't know whether Clapper misspoke or it was mistranscribed but the context is clear.

p. 52, 4th answer, should be "destruction" not "instruction."

p. 64, first full question, should be "extension" not "extent."