

# Congress of the United States

## House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM

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August 20, 2018

General John F. Kelly  
Chief of Staff  
The White House  
1650 Pennsylvania Avenue N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear General Kelly:

We are writing regarding recent reports that National Security Advisor John Bolton, in his former capacity as a top official with the National Rifle Association (NRA), worked directly with a Russian citizen who has now been charged by federal prosecutors with infiltrating that organization and spying against the United States for years.

Given the alarming and unprecedented nature of these revelations—and the high-level position of trust Mr. Bolton now holds—we request that you produce documents relating to whether Mr. Bolton reported his previous work with this alleged Russian spy on his security clearance forms or other White House vetting materials prior to President Trump appointing him to his current position.

The Committee on Oversight and Government Reform has previously investigated widespread failures by the Trump White House to adequately vet top national security officials for their Russian contacts, including Mr. Bolton's predecessor, former National Security Advisor Michael Flynn.<sup>1</sup>

As you know, President Trump failed to suspend General Flynn's security clearance for several weeks after the Department of Justice informed the White House that General Flynn was under criminal investigation for lying about his secret communications with the Russian Ambassador. General Flynn ultimately pleaded guilty to making false statements to the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) about his secret communications.

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<sup>1</sup> See, e.g., Letter from Chairman Jason Chaffetz and Ranking Member Elijah E. Cummings, House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, to Reince Priebus, White House Chief of Staff (Mar. 22, 2017) (online at [https://democrats-oversight.house.gov/sites/democrats.oversight.house.gov/files/documents/Chaffetz%20Cummings%20to%20Priebus%2003-22-17%20re%20Flynn%20Docs\\_0.pdf](https://democrats-oversight.house.gov/sites/democrats.oversight.house.gov/files/documents/Chaffetz%20Cummings%20to%20Priebus%2003-22-17%20re%20Flynn%20Docs_0.pdf)).

### **Mr. Bolton's Work with Russian Citizen Now Exposed as a Spy**

On July 16, 2018, Maria Butina was arrested for acting as a Russian agent inside the United States. According to the Department of Justice, Ms. Butina worked to “arrange introductions to U.S. persons having influence in American politics, including an organization promoting gun rights, for the purpose of advancing the agenda of the Russian Federation.”<sup>2</sup>

Ms. Butina reportedly acted as an agent of Alexander Torshin, a “lifetime member of the National Rifle Association, a close ally of Russian President Vladimir Putin and the deputy governor of the Bank of Russia.”<sup>3</sup> According to an affidavit by an FBI agent, Ms. Butina and Mr. Torshin “planned to advance Moscow’s long-term strategic objectives in the United States, in part, by establishing relationships with American political organizations, including the GUN RIGHTS ORGANIZATION [the NRA].”<sup>4</sup>

In 2013, Mr. Bolton agreed to participate by video at a roundtable forum on gun rights “organized by Ms. Butina.”<sup>5</sup> This roundtable reportedly was sponsored by a Russian organization known as Right to Bear Arms, and Mr. Bolton reportedly participated at the request of then-NRA President David Keene.<sup>6</sup> Mr. Keene had appointed Mr. Bolton to lead the NRA’s Subcommittee on International Affairs in 2011.<sup>7</sup>

In his video, Mr. Bolton expressed support for amending the Russian constitution to include broader gun rights and offered the Russian people “encouragement as you consider embracing that freedom.” He continued:

Were the Russian government to grant a broader right to bear arms to its people, it would be creating a partnership with its citizens that would better allow for the protection of

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<sup>2</sup> Affidavit in Support of an Application for a Criminal Complaint, *United States v. Butina* (July 14, 2018) (online at [www.justice.gov/opa/press-release/file/1080766/download](http://www.justice.gov/opa/press-release/file/1080766/download)).

<sup>3</sup> *Bolton Aided an FBI-Investigated Moscow Banker and NRA to Plug Russian Gun Rights*, Huffington Post (Mar. 22, 2018) (online at [www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/john-bolton-russian-gun-rights-video\\_us\\_5ab45053e4b054d118e15380](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/john-bolton-russian-gun-rights-video_us_5ab45053e4b054d118e15380)).

<sup>4</sup> Affidavit in Support of an Application for a Criminal Complaint, *United States v. Butina* (July 14, 2018) (online at [www.justice.gov/opa/press-release/file/1080766/download](http://www.justice.gov/opa/press-release/file/1080766/download)).

<sup>5</sup> *Maria Butina Loved Guns, Trump and Russia. It Was a Cover, Prosecutors Say.*, New York Times (July 17, 2018) (online at [www.nytimes.com/2018/07/17/us/maria-butina-russian-agent-charges.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2018/07/17/us/maria-butina-russian-agent-charges.html)). See also Speech by Ambassador John Bolton on the Day of the Celebration of the Day of the Russian Constitution, Right to Bear Arms (Dec. 10, 2013) (online at <https://youtu.be/aPM-FXHj5gA>).

<sup>6</sup> *John Bolton's Curious Appearance in a Russian Gun Rights Video*, NPR (Mar. 22, 2018) (online at [www.npr.org/2018/03/22/595897412/john-boltons-curious-appearance-in-a-russian-gun-rights-video](http://www.npr.org/2018/03/22/595897412/john-boltons-curious-appearance-in-a-russian-gun-rights-video)).

<sup>7</sup> *The World in Its Sights: The NRA's Messianic Quest to Make the Second Amendment Global*, Foreign Policy (July 23, 2012) (online at <https://foreignpolicy.com/2012/07/23/the-world-in-its-sights/>).

mothers, children, and families, without in any way compromising the integrity of the Russian state. That is my wish, and my advice to your great people.<sup>8</sup>

According to an affidavit by an FBI agent, Ms. Butina “took steps to develop relationships with American politicians in order to establish private, or as she called them, ‘back channel’ lines of communication.” According to the affidavit, “These lines could be used by the Russian Federation to penetrate the U.S. decision-making apparatus to advance the agenda of the Russian Federation.”<sup>9</sup>

In her capacity as a covert agent, Ms. Butina is believed to have maintained close ties to Russian intelligence services, including through in-person meetings and electronic communications; maintained close ties to wealthy businessmen in the Russian oligarchy; “cohabited” with Republican operative Paul Erickson to gain access to “an extensive network of U.S. persons in positions to influence political activities in the United States”; and offered “sex in exchange for a position within a special interest organization.”<sup>10</sup>

In addition, Ms. Butina’s romantic partner, Mr. Erickson, reportedly engaged in “lobbying to get K.T. McFarland named as an adviser to Michael Flynn.”<sup>11</sup> Ms. McFarland wrote to the transition team on December 29, 2016, that the sanctions imposed on Russia in response to its interference in the 2016 election made it harder for the incoming Trump Administration to ease tensions with Russia, “which has just thrown the U.S.A. election to him.”<sup>12</sup> In February, Ms. McFarland withdrew as the President’s nominee to become Ambassador to Singapore after claiming falsely to the Senate that she was “not aware of any of the issues or events” relating to General Flynn’s interactions with the Russian Ambassador.<sup>13</sup>

### Request for Information

In order to obtain access to classified information, government employees must submit Standard Form 86 (SF-86), Questionnaire for National Security Positions. The SF-86 explains:

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<sup>8</sup> *Speech by Ambassador John Bolton on the Day of the Celebration of the Day of the Russian Constitution, Right to Bear Arms* (Dec. 10, 2013) (online at <https://youtu.be/aPM-FXHj5gA>).

<sup>9</sup> Affidavit in Support of an Application for a Criminal Complaint, *United States v. Butina* (July 14, 2018) (online at [www.justice.gov/opa/press-release/file/1080766/download](http://www.justice.gov/opa/press-release/file/1080766/download)).

<sup>10</sup> Government’s Memorandum in Support of Pretrial Detention, *United States v. Butina* (D.D.C. July 18, 2018) (online at [www.documentcloud.org/documents/4609972-Government-s-Memorandum-in-Support-of-Pretrial.html](http://www.documentcloud.org/documents/4609972-Government-s-Memorandum-in-Support-of-Pretrial.html)).

<sup>11</sup> ‘She Was Like a Novelty’: How Alleged Russian Agent Maria Butina Gained Access to Elite Conservative Circles, *Washington Post* (July 17, 2018) (online at [www.washingtonpost.com/politics/she-was-like-a-novelty-how-alleged-russian-agent-maria-butina-gained-access-to-elite-conservative-circles/2018/07/17/1bb62bbc-89d2-11e8-a345-a1bf7847b375\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/she-was-like-a-novelty-how-alleged-russian-agent-maria-butina-gained-access-to-elite-conservative-circles/2018/07/17/1bb62bbc-89d2-11e8-a345-a1bf7847b375_story.html)).

<sup>12</sup> *Emails Dispute White House Claims that Flynn Acted Independently on Russia*, *New York Times* (Dec. 2, 2017) (online at [www.nytimes.com/2017/12/02/us/russia-mcfarland-flynn-trump-emails.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2017/12/02/us/russia-mcfarland-flynn-trump-emails.html)).

<sup>13</sup> *K.T. McFarland Withdraws Her Nomination to Be Ambassador to Singapore*, *New York Times* (Feb. 2, 2018) (online at [www.nytimes.com/2018/02/02/us/politics/kt-mcfarland-nomination-ambassador.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2018/02/02/us/politics/kt-mcfarland-nomination-ambassador.html)).



"All questions on this form must be answered completely and truthfully." In addition, it warns applicants that "The U.S. Criminal Code (title 18, section 1001) provides that knowingly falsifying or concealing a material fact is a felony which may result in fines and/or up to five (5) years imprisonment."

Applicants must provide a wide range of information about their contacts with foreign citizens, foreign business and professional activities, foreign government contacts, and any advice they provided or consultancy arrangements they had with foreign entities. Applicants also typically provide additional information directly to the Executive Office of the President as part of their applications for employment at the White House.

For the reasons set forth above, we request that you produce, by September 4, 2018, all documents in the possession, custody, or control of the Executive Office of the President, the National Security Council, and the FBI relating to:

- (1) all documents and information provided by Mr. Bolton in response to questions in Sections 19, 20A, 20B, and 20C of any security clearance applications, renewal applications, or amendments he submitted over the past seven years;
- (2) all documents relating to investigative and adjudicative steps taken relating to Mr. Bolton's security clearance, including but not limited to Guideline B ("Foreign Influence") and Guideline C ("Foreign Preference"); and
- (3) all documents and information provided by Mr. Bolton and his associates to the Executive Office of the President relating to his contacts with foreign nationals over the past seven years.

Thank you for your prompt consideration of this request.

Sincerely,



Elijah E. Cummings  
Ranking Member



Stephen F. Lynch  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on National Security

cc: The Honorable Trey Gowdy, Chairman

The Honorable Ron DeSantis, Chairman  
Subcommittee on National Security