

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM

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April 29, 2025

Mr. Steven Stebbins
Acting Inspector General
Department of Defense
4800 Mark Center Drive
Alexandria, VA 22350

Ms. Tamara A. Johnson
Principal Deputy Inspector General
Office of the Inspector General of the Intelligence Community
Office of the Director of National Intelligence
Washington, DC 20511

Dear Mr. Stebbins and Ms. Johnson:

I write to request that you immediately investigate the Pentagon's pattern of unauthorized disclosures of classified information. According to reports on March 24, 2025; March 26, 2025; and April 20, 2025, Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth appears to have engaged in a pattern of recklessly using insecure communication platforms to share sensitive attack plans and disclosing highly sensitive national security information to persons unauthorized to receive such information.¹

On March 27, 2025, following reporting in *The Atlantic* that Secretary Hegseth disclosed highly sensitive, potentially classified plans for military operations on the free and open-source Signal messaging application, I wrote to inspectors general across the federal government requesting an immediate investigation regarding the method and likely unlawful way in which these discussions occurred.² According to reports, on March 13, 2025, National Security

¹ *The Trump Administration Accidentally Texted Me Its War Plans*, Atlantic (Mar. 24, 2025) (online at www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2025/03/trump-administration-accidentally-texted-me-its-war-plans/682151/); *Here Are the Attack Plans That Trump's Advisers Shared on Signal*, Atlantic (Mar. 26, 2025) (online at www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2025/03/signal-group-chat-attack-plans-hegseth-goldberg/682176/); *Hegseth Said to Have Shared Attack Details in Second Signal Chat*, New York Times (Apr. 20, 2025) (online at www.nytimes.com/2025/04/20/us/politics/hegseth-yemen-attack-second-signal-chat.html).

² Letter from Ranking Member Gerald E. Connolly, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, to Acting Inspectors General and Deputy Inspectors General, et al. (Mar. 27, 2025) (online at <https://oversightdemocrats.house.gov/sites/evo-subsites/democrats-oversight.house.gov/files/evo-media-document/2025-03-27-gec-to-igs-and-whc-re-security-assessment-signal-chat.pdf>).

Advisor Michael Waltz created a group chat on Signal to discuss plans for a military strike on Houthi targets in Yemen and added multiple senior members of the President’s Cabinet and national security team—such as Secretary Hegseth and Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard—and inadvertently added the editor-in-chief of *The Atlantic*, Jeffrey Goldberg.³ The identities of key government personnel were also disclosed on this chat, including by Secretary Hegseth, who named Dan Caldwell, senior advisor to the Secretary of Defense, as the Defense Department’s staff point of contact for the strikes as they were prepared.⁴ The Trump Administration’s national security leadership used this group chat to deliberate the merits of a strike on the Houthi rebel group in Yemen, including mulling over concerns about U.S. national interests and impacts on American allies.⁵ Secretary Hegseth outlined operational information about the current position and posture of actively deployed U.S. military forces that, had it been “read by an adversary of the United States, could conceivably have been used to harm American military and intelligence personnel.”⁶

While the aforementioned incident raises grave questions about the protection of sensitive information and the integrity of our national security, it is seemingly not an isolated incident. On April 20, 2025, *The New York Times* reported that Secretary Hegseth also shared sensitive attack plans in a separate Signal group titled “Defense | Team Huddle” which included his wife, brother, personal lawyer, and “about a dozen other people from his personal and professional inner circle.”⁷ Secretary Hegseth’s wife, a former Fox News producer, is not a Defense Department employee, and while Secretary Hegseth’s brother and personal attorney each hold jobs at the Pentagon, “it is not clear why either would need to know about upcoming military strikes[.]”⁸ Moreover, Secretary Hegseth is alarmingly reported to have used his private, personal mobile device to create and participate in the Signal chat.⁹ The conduct of the

³ *The Trump Administration Accidentally Texted Me Its War Plans*, *The Atlantic* (Mar. 24, 2025) (online at www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2025/03/trump-administration-accidentally-texted-me-its-war-plans/682151/).

⁴ *Id.*; *Exclusive: Top Hegseth Adviser Dan Caldwell Put on Leave in Pentagon Leak Probe*, *Reuters* (Apr. 15, 2025) (online at www.reuters.com/world/us/top-hegseth-advisor-dan-caldwell-put-leave-pentagon-leak-probe-2025-04-15/).

⁵ *The Trump Administration Accidentally Texted Me Its War Plans*, *The Atlantic* (Mar. 24, 2025) (online at www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2025/03/trump-administration-accidentally-texted-me-its-war-plans/682151/); *Here Are the Attack Plans That Trump’s Advisers Shared on Signal*, *Atlantic* (Mar. 26, 2025) (online at www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2025/03/signal-group-chat-attack-plans-hegseth-goldberg/682176/).

⁶ *The Trump Administration Accidentally Texted Me Its War Plans*, *The Atlantic* (Mar. 24, 2025) (online at www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2025/03/trump-administration-accidentally-texted-me-its-war-plans/682151/).

⁷ *Hegseth Said to Have Shared Attack Details in Second Signal Chat*, *New York Times* (Apr. 20, 2025) (online at www.nytimes.com/2025/04/20/us/politics/hegseth-yemen-attack-second-signal-chat.html).

⁸ *Id.* Even if these individuals possessed the requisite security clearance to access the potentially classified strike plans that Secretary Hegseth communicated on an unauthorized channel, they did not possess the required “need-to-know” basis to receive such information. See 32 C.F.R. Part 117; Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence & Security, Department of Defense, *National Industrial Security Program Operating Manual* (accessed Apr. 21, 2025) (online at www.federalregister.gov/documents/2020/12/21/2020-27698/national-industrial-security-program-operating-manual-nispom).

⁹ *Hegseth Said to Have Shared Attack Details in Second Signal Chat*, *New York Times* (Apr. 20, 2025) (online at www.nytimes.com/2025/04/20/us/politics/hegseth-yemen-attack-second-signal-chat.html).

Trump Administration, especially that of Secretary Hegseth, clearly indicates a pattern of misusing insecure communication platforms and devices for sensitive discussions.¹⁰ In this latest reporting, it appears that Secretary Hegseth recklessly shared classified, highly sensitive attack plans with individuals unauthorized to possess such information.¹¹

This pattern of conduct raises grave concerns about the possibility that American military and intelligence professionals may have been compromised by the reckless dissemination of such highly sensitive national security information. It also raises significant questions as to whether relevant Intelligence Community agencies complied with the requisite laws and regulations regarding assessments following unauthorized disclosure of sensitive information. For example, federal law requires the director of national intelligence to “notify the congressional intelligence committees” and “initiate a damage assessment consistent with the procedures set forth in Intelligence Community Directive 732” within seven days of a potential compromise of national intelligence.¹²

It is critical that your offices investigate these matters and any other incidents in which Secretary Hegseth and other senior national security leaders in the Trump Administration have, either through incompetence or neglect, compromised highly sensitive or classified national security information. Moreover, given Director Gabbard’s inclusion in at least one Signal group where sensitive information was disclosed, these incidents demand an immediate, independent investigation by your offices to determine if the requisite actions and damage assessments were undertaken in accordance with federal law.¹³

In furtherance of the Committee’s investigation into this matter, I request that your investigation include information regarding the following requests:

1. Please identify when Signal was downloaded onto the devices that participated in the Signal chats titled “Houthi PC small group,” “Defense | Team Huddle,” and any similar Signal chats where sensitive and/or classified information was shared. Please identify the issuers of these devices, including whether the devices were issued by the United States Government, the dates that these devices were issued, and whether personal devices were utilized to participate in the chats;
2. Please provide a detailed explanation of whether the relevant Intelligence Community agencies confiscated the devices on which the Signal chats titled “Houthi PC small group,” “Defense | Team Huddle,” and any similar Signal chats

¹⁰ See *Waltz’s Team Set Up At Least 20 Signal Group Chats for Crises Across the World*, Politico (Apr. 2, 2025) (online at www.politico.com/news/2025/04/02/waltzs-team-set-up-at-least-20-signal-group-chats-for-crises-across-the-world-00266845).

¹¹ *Hegseth Said to Have Shared Attack Details in Second Signal Chat*, New York Times (Apr. 20, 2025) (online at www.nytimes.com/2025/04/20/us/politics/hegseth-yemen-attack-second-signal-chat.html).

¹² 50 U.S.C. § 3235a; see also Office of the Director of National Intelligence, *Intelligence Community Directive 732: Damage Assessments* (June 27, 2014) (online at www.dni.gov/files/documents/ICD/ICD-732.pdf).

¹³ *The Trump Administration Accidentally Texted Me Its War Plans*, Atlantic (Mar. 24, 2025) (online at www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2025/03/trump-administration-accidentally-texted-me-its-war-plans/682151/).

where sensitive and/or classified information was shared were carried out. Please provide a detailed assessment of whether such devices met pertinent security protocol and whether a forensic search was conducted to identify whether classified records were stored improperly and, if so, a detailed account of how these records were being preserved and stored;

3. Please provide an assessment of whether any of the devices used in the Signal chats titled “Houthi PC small group,” “Defense | Team Huddle,” and any similar Signal chats where sensitive and/or classified information was shared were compromised by foreign, malign, or unintended actors;
4. Please provide an accounting of all instances in which Secretary Pete Hegseth, Dan Caldwell, Darin Selnick, and Colin Carroll employed Signal or similarly unauthorized messaging technology and platforms to discuss classified or sensitive information;
5. Please identify to what extent individuals without requisite security clearances, such as the spouse of Secretary Pete Hegseth, have been included, deliberately or inadvertently, in such conversations on Signal or other unclassified messaging systems to discuss classified or sensitive information;
6. Please provide an assessment of whether existing protocols, guidance, and safeguards to prevent the disclosure of classified or sensitive information through Signal or similar messaging technology and platforms are sufficient to prevent unauthorized disclosure, and whether such protocols, guidance, and safeguards were adhered to by the members of the Signal chats titled “Houthi PC small group” and “Defense | Team Huddle;”
7. Please provide an assessment of whether federal statutes, regulations, and directives governing notice and damage assessments with respect to the potential disclosure or compromise of national intelligence were violated by the relevant agencies, including the Office of the Director of National Intelligence, following reports detailing the exchange of classified or sensitive information on the Signal chats titled “Houthi PC small group” and “Defense | Team Huddle;”
8. Please provide an assessment of whether the implementation and use of the Signal messaging application at agencies under your purview were conducted in compliance with the Federal Information Security Modernization Act (FISMA), including applicable agency-specific information security policies and procedures. As part of this assessment, please evaluate documentation of any risk assessments, authorizations to operate (ATO), and continuous monitoring activities related to this application; and
9. Please provide an assessment of whether any federal statutes or regulations governing the retention of government records or the handling of highly sensitive or classified national security information were violated in connection with the

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Signal chats titled “Houthi PC small group,” “Defense | Team Huddle,” or any similar communications by senior national security officials in the Trump Administration. Specifically, please assess whether such communications were properly preserved in accordance with the Federal Records Act and applicable statutes, executive orders, and directives pertaining to the handling of highly sensitive or classified national security information.

The Committee on Oversight and Government Reform is the principal oversight committee of the House of Representatives and has broad authority to investigate “any matter” at “any time” under House Rule X. If you have any questions regarding this request, please contact Committee Democratic staff at (202) 225-5051. Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Gerald E. Connolly
Ranking Member

cc: The Honorable James Comer, Chairman