

United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6200

January 19, 2021

The Honorable Michael R. Pompeo
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Pompeo:

On January 11, 2021, the Department of State announced that the United States was imposing sanctions against Andriy Telizhenko for his role in a larger conspiracy to influence the 2020 presidential election.¹ As explained by the Department of the Treasury, since at least 2019, Russian Agent Andrii Derkach, who was sanctioned September 10, 2020, and his associates, including Telizhenko, “have leveraged U.S. media, U.S.-based social media platforms, and influential U.S. persons to spread misleading and unsubstantiated allegations that current and former U.S. officials engaged in corruption, money laundering, and unlawful political influence in Ukraine.”² The Department of the State’s January 11, 2021 press release notes that Mr. Telizhenko’s “efforts and narratives [were] consistent with or in support of Derkach’s objectives [(as a Russian agent)] to influence the 2020 U.S. presidential election.”³

The imposition of sanctions on Mr. Telizhenko was long overdue. However, I am deeply concerned that he was not sanctioned sooner, particularly given that Telizhenko was apparently known to be a key figure in Derkach’s conspiracy at the time Derkach was sanctioned.⁴ In fact, the State Department expeditiously cooperated with a Senate Republican investigation predicated

¹ *Sanctioning Russia-linked Disinformation Network for its Involvement in Attempts to Influence U.S. Election*, January 11, 2021, <https://www.state.gov/sanctioning-russia-linked-disinformation-network-for-its-involvement-in-attempts-to-influence-u-s-election/>.

² *United States Sanctions Russian Actors and Proxies for Efforts To Interfere in Elections*, September 10, 2020, <https://www.state.gov/united-states-sanctions-russian-actors-and-proxies-for-efforts-to-interfere-in-elections/>; *Treasury Takes Further Action Against Russian-linked Actors*, January 11, 2021, <https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/sm1232>.

³ *Id.*; *Treasury Takes Further Action Against Russian-linked Actors*, January 11, 2021 (Mr. Telizhenko’s “efforts [were] consistent with and in support of [Mr.] Derkach’s efforts, acting as an agent of the Russian intelligence services, to influence the 2020 U.S. Presidential election.”), <https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/sm1232>.

⁴ *United States Sanctions Russian Actors and Proxies for Efforts To Interfere in Elections*, September 10, 2020, <https://www.state.gov/united-states-sanctions-russian-actors-and-proxies-for-efforts-to-interfere-in-elections/>; *Sanctioning Russia-linked Disinformation Network for its Involvement in Attempts to Influence U.S. Election*, January 11, 2021, <https://www.state.gov/sanctioning-russia-linked-disinformation-network-for-its-involvement-in-attempts-to-influence-u-s-election/>.

on Mr. Telizhenko's misleading and unsubstantiated allegations, providing voluminous records in response to requests for information.

Beginning in late 2019, the Republican Chairman of the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, Ron Johnson, and the Republican Chairman of the Committee on Finance, Chuck Grassley, conducted an unprecedented election-year investigation of President-elect Biden and his family. This investigation attempted to give credibility to disinformation by Mr. Telizhenko and Mr. Derkach for the sole purpose of boosting Donald Trump's re-election campaign. Chairman Johnson and Chairman Grassley received documents from Mr. Telizhenko and referenced his allegations at least 42 times in letters related to the investigation, and Chairman Johnson and his staff met with Mr. Telizhenko for hours to discuss his disinformation.⁵

The Department provided over 16,000 pages of documents to the Republicans, and did so at a time when the Department knew or should have known of Telizhenko's ties to Russian intelligence figures. The Department of State not only provided this information to Senate Republicans, it did so while ignoring my own repeated requests for additional information about Telizhenko in letters sent on February 11, 2020, May 6, 2020, and July 7, 2020.⁶

Given Mr. Telizhenko's centrality to the Chairmen's investigation, I am disappointed and concerned that the Administration did not act to curb this malign influence on our election by sanctioning Mr. Telizhenko, an associate of Mr. Derkach pushing the same disinformation as him, at the same time that it announced that Mr. Derkach was sanctioned.⁷ Furthermore, it is

⁵ Letter from Chairmen Johnson and Grassley to Attorney General Barr (Sept. 27, 2019) (3 mentions), [<https://www.grassley.senate.gov/sites/default/files/2019-09-27%20CEG%20RHJ%20to%20DOJ%20%28Ukraine%20DNC%29.pdf>]; Letter from Chairmen Johnson and Grassley to the National Archives and Records Administration (Nov. 21, 2019) (5 mentions), [<https://www.grassley.senate.gov/sites/default/files/documents/2019-11-21%20RHJ%20CEG%20to%20NARA%20-%20White%20House%20Meeting%20Records.pdf>]; Letter from Chairman Johnson to Ranking Member Peters (Feb. 24, 2020) (17 mentions), [<https://www.hsgac.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/2020-0224%20RHJ%20to%20GCP%20re%20Andrii%20Telizhenko%20subpoena.pdf>]; Letter from Chairman Johnson to HSGAC Committee Members (Mar. 1, 2020) (12 mentions), [<https://www.hsgac.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/2020-03-01%20RHJ%20Letter%20to%20HSGAC%20members.pdf>]; Letter from Chairmen Johnson and Grassley to Ranking Members Peters and Wyden (July 28, 2020) (5 mentions), [<https://www.grassley.senate.gov/sites/default/files/2020-07-28%20RHJ-CEG%20Letter%20to%20Peters-Wyden%20%28Defensive%20Briefing%29.pdf>]; *Sen. Johnson, ally of Trump and Ukraine, surfaces in crucial episodes in the saga*, WASHINGTON POST, Oct. 28, 2019, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/sen-johnson-ally-of-trump-and-ukraine-surfaces-in-crucial-episodes-in-the-saga/2019/10/28/40b9e44c-f684-11e9-8cf0-4cc99f74d127_story.html].

⁶ *Wyden Requests State Department Documents on Trump-Era Ukraine Activities*, February 11, 2020, [<https://www.finance.senate.gov/ranking-members-news/wyden-requests-state-department-documents-on-trump-era-ukraine-activities>]; *Wyden Again Requests State Department Documents on Trump-Era Ukraine Activities*, May 6, 2020, [<https://www.finance.senate.gov/ranking-members-news/wyden-again-requests-state-department-documents-on-trump-era-ukraine-activities>]; *Wyden Again Requests State Department Documents on Trump-Era Ukraine Activities, Rudy Giuliani Efforts to Manufacture Dirt on Vice President Biden*, July 7, 2020, [<https://www.finance.senate.gov/ranking-members-news/wyden-again-requests-state-department-documents-on-trump-era-ukraine-activities-rudy-giuliani-efforts-to-manufacture-dirt-on-vice-president-biden>].

⁷ *United States Sanctions Russian Actors and Proxies for Efforts To Interfere in Elections*, September 10, 2020, [<https://www.state.gov/united-states-sanctions-russian-actors-and-proxies-for-efforts-to-interfere-in-elections/>].

alarming that the Department of State provided documents in furtherance of the Chairmen's efforts despite the fact the Department knew or should have known the Chairmen were likely being used by Russian intelligence-linked actors for the "coordinated dissemination and promotion of fraudulent or unsubstantiated allegations [. . .] advancing malicious narratives that U.S. Government officials have engaged in corrupt dealings in Ukraine."⁸

Before leaving office on January 20, 2021, please clarify why Mr. Telizhenko was not sanctioned four months ago at the same time as Mr. Derkach, and instead was sanctioned only *after* the 2020 presidential election. Furthermore, please preserve the following documents:

1. All documents related to the production of information by the Department of the State to the Senate Finance Committee and the Senate Homeland Security and Government Affairs Committee from January 21, 2017 to present.
2. All documents related to the eleven individuals and four entities identified as part of a Russia-linked foreign influence network, including but not limited to Andrii Derkach and Andriy Telizhenko, as announced in Department of State press releases on September 10, 2020 and January 11, 2021.

I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Ron Wyden
Ranking Member

⁸ *Sanctioning Russia-linked Disinformation Network for its Involvement in Attempts to Influence U.S. Election*, January 11, 2021, <https://www.state.gov/sanctioning-russia-linked-disinformation-network-for-its-involvement-in-attempts-to-influence-u-s-election/>.