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March 13, 2019

## CONFIDENTIAL

U.S. Senate Committee on Finance  
Attention: DeLisa Ragsdale and Josh Heath  
219 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510-6200

*Re: The February 13, 2019 letter to the Center for the National Interest*

Dear Chairman Grassley and Ranking Member Wyden:

We represent the Center for the National Interest (the "Center"), a non-partisan think tank, in connection with your request for information and documents regarding certain meetings attended by Alexander Torshin and Maria Butina. We thank the Committee for its extension of time to respond to its February 13, 2019 request. As agreed, today the Center is voluntarily producing documents and providing information in response to the Committee's voluntary requests. Included in our production are all communications we located related to three meetings the Center arranged for Mr. Torshin, which we understand Ms. Butina attended as his interpreter. The Center did not arrange any separate meetings for Ms. Butina.

President Nixon founded the Center in 1994 to serve as a voice for strategic realism in U.S. foreign policy. He also defined U.S. relations with Russia and China, among other countries and regions, as topics upon which the Center's work should concentrate. Today, the Center is a non-partisan, non-profit organization with a bi-partisan board of directors. General Charles Boyd, a decorated combat pilot and Vietnam War POW, currently chairs the board. Former Secretary of Defense and CIA Director James Schlesinger was a long-time chairman of the board's executive committee. Senators John McCain and Joseph Lieberman are among the many distinguished individuals to have served on the Center's board of directors over its twenty-five-year existence.

To fulfill its mission, the Center seeks to stimulate debate, promote public understanding of U.S. foreign policy and international affairs, and define principled yet pragmatic policies to advance America's national interest in the complex world of the twenty-first century. Center staff members have provided advice to policy makers in both Democratic and Republican

administrations, have regularly briefed Democratic and Republican administrations on the Center's programmatic activities, and have testified before Congress.

The Center's work spans a broad range of critical relationships and foreign policy challenges including U.S. ties with major powers. The Center examines the U.S. relationship with China, Japan, Russia, and European allies as well as specific issue areas such as regional security in Asia and the Middle East, national security issues including armed conflict, terrorism, and nuclear non-proliferation, and energy and climate change.

The Center formalizes specific endeavors in furtherance of its mission. One such project is the U.S.–Russia Relations Program focused on American policy toward Moscow and on U.S.–Russian dialogue. The goal is to further America's national interests through the promotion of dialogue and a deeper understanding between U.S. and Russia. The director of the U.S.–Russia Relations Program is George Beebe, former Director of Central Intelligence Agency's Russia analysis and Special Advisor to Vice President Cheney for Russia/Eurasia and Intelligence Programs.

To support its mission, like many prominent Washington, D.C. think tanks, the Center invites and hosts visiting foreign officials and/or scholars from time to time to speak at Center events. It is quite common for U.S. government officials to be invited to these Center events. In addition, on occasion for visiting speakers, the Center will attempt to set up meetings with government experts, policy makers, Representatives or Senators to further dialogue and to assist U.S. policy makers' efforts to advance U.S. national interests. This is what happened in 2015 with regard to Mr. Torshin, who was the Deputy Governor of the Central Bank of the Russian Federation at the time.<sup>1</sup> The Center does not regard the efforts it made with regard to Mr. Torshin to be significantly different than those undertaken for other foreign speakers at Center events for whom it attempted to arrange meetings.

After learning in March 2015 that Mr. Torshin would be in the United States traveling in his personal capacity, the Center hosted a luncheon event in which Mr. Torshin was invited to speak to a small group of individuals involved in international affairs and monetary policy. Mr. Torshin spoke at the event, which we believe was attended by one State Department employee invited to the event.<sup>2</sup> Ms. Butina attended the event to assist as an interpreter. It is our understanding that Mr. Torshin generally spoke about his views on the political situation in Moscow, as well as the state of the Russian economy. As has been done for other visiting speakers on occasion and as a courtesy, the Center attempted to arrange meetings with U.S. government personnel and Members of Congress while Mr. Torshin was scheduled to be in Washington, D.C. We understand that the Center contacted government personnel at the Treasury Department, Federal Reserve, and Commerce Department, as well as numerous U.S. Senators and Members of Congress, to determine whether there was an interest in meeting with Mr. Torshin while he was in

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<sup>1</sup> At the time in 2015, the Center understood Maria Butina to be Mr. Torshin's assistant who supported his Washington visit and served as his interpreter while in the United States. The Center did not arrange these meetings for Ms. Butina's benefit nor has the Center subsequently arranged meetings for her benefit.

<sup>2</sup> Kathleen Kavalec, then Director of the Office of Russian Affairs at the State Department.

Washington, D.C.<sup>3</sup> We believe that the Center chose the list of people initially to contact without input from Mr. Torshin or Mr. Butina. Ultimately, we understand that Mr. Torshin met with Nathan Sheets, then Treasury Undersecretary for International Affairs, Stanley Fischer, then Federal Reserve Vice Chairman, and Congressman Randy Weber (R-TX).

It is our understanding that Center personnel did not attend the meeting with Mr. Sheets or Mr. Fischer. As a result, we are not aware of what was discussed. However, the initial outreach to Mr. Sheets and Mr. Fischer by the Center described the topic for the potential meeting to be: "U.S.-Russia relations and international economic issues and...his perspective on Russia's financial situation and its impact on Russian politics." Although we believe one former center employee attended the meeting with Congressman Randy Weber, the former employee does not have a specific recollection of what was discussed and did not take notes.

The Center believes coordinating these meetings advanced its ongoing U.S.-Russia dialogue program as these interactions facilitate dialogue and mutual understanding between U.S. government officials and a Russian counterpart as well as with a Member of Congress interested in a Russian policy. This type of dialogue is crucial to U.S. policy makers' ability to effectively advance U.S. national interests. The Center provided the similar logistical support to participants of other Center programs. For instance, the Center arranged a June 2015 meeting for a joint Japanese and Vietnamese delegation with officials at the Department of Defense, and in March 2012 arranged a series of meetings for a joint Korean and Japanese delegation with seven Members of Congress, a Senator, and relevant Senate Armed Services Committee and Foreign Relations Committee staff.

To the best of its understanding, the Center did not arrange meetings in 2015 or 2016 between Federal Reserve or Treasury Department employees and other Russian officials known by the Center to have associated with Ms. Butina or Mr. Torshin.

Enclosed herein are documents with the Bates Range A00000001-A00000367. By making this production, the Center does not intend to, and does not waive any applicable privilege or protection, including the attorney-client privilege or work product protection. This letter and the documents and records being produced contain highly confidential and proprietary information of the Center, and we ask that the Committee maintain the confidentiality of the letter, documents and records. We further request to be advised beforehand should the Committee be considering disclosing publicly the information contained in this letter or enclosed documents and records so that we may discuss this issue and necessary redactions. We further ask that originals and any copies of the enclosed documents be returned to us at the end of the Committee's inquiry.

Please don't hesitate to contact me at [REDACTED], if you have further questions.

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<sup>3</sup> Document review has confirmed contacts with the Treasury Department, Federal Reserve and Commerce Department to determine if there was an interest in meeting with Mr. Torshin. Although it is possible other personnel at other federal agencies may have been contacted to determine whether there was an interest in setting up a meeting, we are not presently aware of additional contacts.

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Sincerely,

David B. Rivkin, Jr. 

David B. Rivkin, Jr.

Partner

Enclosure: The Center for the National Interest Production