



DEPARTMENT OF THE TREASURY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20220

March 5, 2019

The Honorable Ron Wyden
Ranking Member
Committee on Finance
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Wyden:

I write in response to your letter dated February 13, 2019, requesting information on communications or meetings among Treasury Department officials, Maria Butina and Alexander Torshin, during the Obama administration.

As far as we are able to determine, Treasury officials met with Butina and Torshin on one occasion. That meeting occurred on April 7, 2015, in the office of Nathan Sheets, who served as Under Secretary for International Affairs from September 2014 until the end of the Obama administration. Mr. Sheets's office was located in room 3432 of the main Treasury building, which is not a Secret Compartmentalized Information Facility ("SCIF"). Treasury is not aware of the discussion of any classified information at the meeting. A copy of a calendar entry reflecting this meeting is enclosed. In addition to Mr. Sheets, we believe two other Treasury officials participated—Ramin Toloui, Assistant Secretary for International Finance, and Stephan Vitvitsky, International Economist. At this time, we believe John Gay from the Center for the National Interest accompanied Torshin and Butina to the Treasury Department that day but did not participate in the meeting. We do not have any record of Stanley Fischer, then-Vice Chairman of the Federal Reserve, participating in this meeting.

Our understanding is that the April 7, 2015 meeting was typical of meetings Mr. Sheets would hold with foreign officials of similar position and rank. In April 2015, Torshin had been recently appointed Deputy Governor of the Russian Central Bank, and Treasury officials understood that Butina was serving as his interpreter. It is common for a Treasury Under Secretary for International Affairs to meet with comparably ranked officials of other countries to discuss macroeconomic issues, promote U.S. interests on international economic matters, and discuss other policy matters. The meeting request, which was sent to Mr. Sheets, was attached to the enclosed calendar entry and appears consistent with this understanding. A copy of this document is included with the calendar entry. A briefing memorandum prepared for Mr. Sheets suggests that Treasury staff expected the discussion on April 7, 2015, to include these types of issues. A copy of that memorandum also is enclosed. Although some material in this memorandum might be considered deliberative, we have determined that the public interest in its release outweighs any such concerns.

We are unaware of any written policies dictating protocols and procedures for scheduling meetings involving Department leadership or staff and foreign officials or representatives of foreign governments. Treasury's usual practice for meetings between senior Department officials and foreign officials or representatives of foreign governments is the same as for meetings with other non-U.S. government individuals: The relevant senior Treasury official's team refers a meeting request to pertinent functional or regional offices within Treasury, as well as stakeholders at other agencies when appropriate, who provide recommendations. The senior Treasury official then decides whether to participate in the meeting. It appears that Treasury followed these practices in this instance.

Given the sensitive nature of the enclosed materials, please treat them as confidential under Senate Rule 29.5. Treasury is committed to providing you with any additional information responsive to your request that may become available.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Frederick W. Vaughan". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial 'F'.

Frederick W. Vaughan
Deputy Assistant Secretary
Office of Legislative Affairs

Enclosure

Identical letter sent to:

The Honorable Charles E. Grassley, Chairman