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U.S. House of Representatives

Washington, DC 20515-6035

ONE HUNDRED FIFTEENTH CONGRESS

March 9, 2018

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JENNIFER M. STEWART, STAFF DIRECTOR

President Donald J. Trump
1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Trump:

We write today regarding the Department of State's Global Engagement Center (GEC). In particular, we write to urge you to enable and fully resource the GEC to effectively execute its roles and responsibilities in leading the United States efforts to counter the exploitation of the information environment by state and non-state actors aimed at undermining U.S. national security interests.

As you are aware, the 2018 National Security Strategy (NSS) acknowledges the risk weaponization of information poses to U.S. national security. Examples include the Islamic State's successful use of propaganda for recruiting and inspiring violence and the Russian Federation's continuous employment of global information operations aimed at undermining democratic institutions, values, and principles.

The 2018 NSS concludes that "U.S. efforts to counter the exploitation of information by rivals have been tepid and fragmented." Although we agree with this statement, we note that Congress, and this committee in particular, has legislated in a manner that provides for the synchronized, coordinated, whole-of-government approach required to effectively counter state and non-state actor's activities in the information environment that threaten U.S. national security.

Specifically, section 1287 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2017 (Public Law 114-328) statutorily established the GEC within the Department of State. Section 1287 authorizes the GEC, in coordination with the Secretary of Defense and heads of other relevant federal agencies and departments, to lead, synchronize, and coordinate the efforts of the Federal Government to recognize, understand, expose, and counter foreign state and non-state propaganda and disinformation efforts aimed at undermining U.S. national security interests. This authorization not only expanded the original scope and mission of the GEC to also

counter state-sponsored propaganda, but it provided additional authority for DOD to transfer up to \$60 million to support the GEC's efforts.

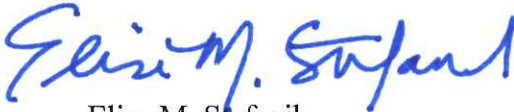
The 2018 NSS identifies priority actions, such as innovation and driving effective communications that the GEC is well-poised to lead as a result of this law. We are therefore disappointed that to date your Administration has not provided adequate resources, including funding and personnel, to the GEC to carry out its mission and, furthermore, that you have not yet appointed a director to lead the agency in this endeavor.

Our nation must bolster efforts to counter exploitation of the information environment. We can no longer afford to assume the risk exploitation incurs to our citizens and our democratic institutions and values. We urge you to provide adequate authorities and resources to the GEC so that it, in conjunction with relevant agencies and departments, may begin work on a comprehensive strategy and conduct associated activities to carry out its roles and responsibilities to counter weaponization of information. Finally, we implore you to immediately appoint a director of the GEC to lead our nation's effort against this threat.

Thank you for your attention to this matter and we look forward to your response.



William M. "Mac" Thornberry
Chairman
House Armed Services Committee



Elise M. Stefanik
Subcommittee Chairwoman
Emerging Threats & Capabilities
House Armed Services Committee

Sincerely,



Adam Smith
Ranking Member
House Armed Services Committee



James Langevin
Subcommittee Ranking Member
Emerging Threats & Capabilities
House Armed Services Committee

WMT//AS:pv
EMS//JL:lk

cc:
The Honorable Rex Tillerson, Secretary of State
The Honorable James Mattis, Secretary of Defense