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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON
HOMELAND SECURITY AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6250

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August 12, 2024

Ms. Kimberly A. Howell
Chairperson
Integrity Committee
Council of the Inspectors General
on Integrity and Efficiency

Dear Ms. Howell:

We understand that the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency's (CIGIE) Integrity Committee, which you chair, continues to investigate the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Office of Inspector General (OIG). For over two years, throughout the course of the Integrity Committee's ongoing inquiries, whistleblowers have informed Senator Johnson's office that complying with the Integrity Committee's constant examinations is extremely burdensome for DHS OIG. These whistleblowers also claim that the Integrity Committee has been inappropriately targeting the DHS OIG, potentially for political reasons. We write to request information about the Integrity Committee's apparent investigations into the DHS OIG.

In March 2022, Senator Johnson and five other senators sent a letter to Department of Transportation Inspector General Eric Soskin regarding CIGIE's ongoing investigation into the DHS OIG. That letter mentioned CIGIE's apparent requests for an "extremely broad set of communications and documents from the DHS OIG."¹ More than two years later, according to whistleblower disclosures, CIGIE's Integrity Committee continues to subject the DHS OIG to onerous requests.

Whistleblowers also allege that the Integrity Committee's examinations into the DHS OIG may be politically motivated. DHS Inspector General Joseph Cuffari is a Trump appointee who has helmed multiple inspections into vulnerabilities at the southern border. For example, in the last year, the DHS OIG published reports titled, "DHS Does Not Have Assurance That All Migrants Can be Located Once Released into the United States" and "CBP Released a Migrant on a Terrorist Watchlist, and ICE Faced Information Sharing Challenge Planning and Conducting the Arrest."² Additionally, the DHS OIG recently released a report that found problems with "the government's parole processes surrounding the resettling of tens of

¹ Letter from Ron Johnson, Ranking Member, Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations, et al., to Eric Soskin, Inspector General, Dep't of Transportation, Mar. 15, 2022.

² Semiannual Report to Congress: April 1, 2023 – September 30, 2023, Dep't of Homeland Security Office of Inspector General, <https://www.oig.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/assets/SAR/2024/oig-sar-apr23-sept23.pdf> at 17-18.

thousands of Afghan evacuees after the botched withdrawal from Afghanistan.”³ In July, the DHS OIG released its report detailing the U.S. Secret Service’s (USSS) failures around January 6, 2021.⁴ During that review, the DHS OIG faced issues with obtaining and accessing USSS records, including text messages. DHS and its components are obstructing DHS OIG’s independent work. This is unacceptable and the Inspector General community along with Congress must stand with the DHS OIG.

The whistleblowers claim that the DHS OIG’s completed and ongoing investigations could be perceived as a negative reflection of the Biden administration’s policies. Therefore, in an apparent attempt to protect the Biden administration, the whistleblowers allege that the true purpose of the Integrity Committee’s investigations is to hinder, delay, or stop Dr. Cuffari’s efforts to expose the Biden administration’s policy failures, most notably the open border catastrophe.

To be clear, any effort to obstruct, delay, or silence the DHS OIG, particularly for political purposes, is completely unacceptable. Based on the DHS OIG’s public reports issued to date, it is evident that, despite the Integrity Committee’s ongoing inquiries, Dr. Cuffari and his staff are successfully fulfilling their oversight responsibilities. However, given the whistleblowers’ allegations, more information is needed in order to assess whether the Integrity Committee is intentionally attempting to hinder the OIG’s ability to conduct much-needed oversight of DHS. Therefore, we request that you provide the following:

1. A briefing on the status of CIGIE’s examinations of the DHS OIG; and
2. The amount of staff and money CIGIE, including its Integrity Committee, has spent on investigating the DHS OIG.

Please provide this information as soon as possible but no later than August 26, 2024. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Ron Johnson
Ranking Member
Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations



Rick Scott
U.S. Senator

³ Adam Shaw, *Afghan evacuee vetting process ‘fragmented’ with ‘vulnerabilities’, watchdog warns*, Fox News, May 22, 2024, <https://www.foxnews.com/politics/afghan-evacuee-vetting-process-fragmented-vulnerabilities-watchdog-warn>.

⁴ The Secret Service’s Preparation for, and Response to, the Events of January 6, 2021, Dep’t of Homeland Security Office of Inspector General, July 31, 2024, <https://www.oig.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/assets/2024-08/OIG-24-42-Aug24-Redacted.pdf>.

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cc: The Honorable Richard Blumenthal
Chairman
Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations

The Honorable Mark Greenblatt
Chairman
Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency

The Honorable Eric Soskin
Inspector General
Department of Transportation

Integrity Committee Members

The Honorable Joseph Cuffari
Inspector General
Department of Homeland Security