

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND REFORM

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WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6143

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<https://oversight.house.gov>

September 17, 2021

The Honorable Lloyd J. Austin III
Secretary of Defense
U.S. Department of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 20301

Dear Secretary Austin:

The Committee on Oversight and Reform Republicans write to request the transcript(s) and related materials of calls reportedly conducted by General Mark A. Milley in October 2020 and January 2021 with Chinese military officials. According to media reports, on a forthcoming book by Bob Woodward and Robert Costa, these calls raise serious national security concerns implicating the ability of the U.S. to effectively counter threats posed by China. They also call into question Gen. Milley's conduct with respect to the military chain of command and his respect for and compliance with the paramount principle of civilian control over the military.

Just yesterday—on September 14—public reporting emerged that Gen. Milley may have engaged in conduct intended to obstruct the President's ability to fully utilize his military authority as Commander-in-Chief. Specifically, the *Washington Post* reported that Gen. Milley utilized secret back channels to alert his Chinese counterpart, Gen. Li Zuocheng of the People's Liberation Army, about the Trump Administration's military strategy towards China.¹

Furthermore, according to reports, Gen. Milley told Gen. Li on October 30, 2020: "[w]e are not going to attack or conduct any kinetic operations against you."² He further stated that "[i]f we're going to attack, I'm going to call you ahead of time. It's not going to be a surprise."³ Gen. Milley called Gen. Li a second time on January 8, reportedly to "address Chinese fears about the events of Jan. 6," promising Li that "[w]e are 100 percent steady. Everything's fine." Members of the Oversight Committee have a responsibility to gather all the facts and, when

¹ Isaac Stanley-Becker, *Top General was so Fearful Trump might spark war that he made secret calls to his Chinese counterpart, new book says*, WASH. POST, Sept. 14, 2021, available at <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2021/09/14/peril-woodward-costa-trump-milley-china/>.

² *Id.*

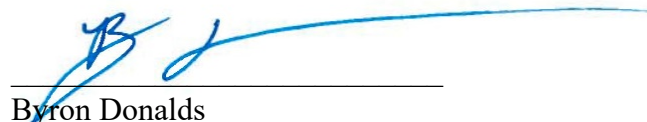
³ *Id.*

necessary, hold government officials at the highest levels accountable for their actions. If a transcript of these calls exists, the Committee has an obligation to review these transcripts to validate or invalidate the allegations reportedly included in a new book entitled, *Peril*, by Bob Woodward and Robert Costa. Just days after the events of January 6, 2021, Gen. Milley also reportedly held covert Pentagon staff meetings “to review the process for military action, including launching nuclear weapons.” If the allegations are true, Gen. Milley’s actions were at best insubordinate, and at worst treasonous.

To assist the Republicans on the Oversight Committee in assessing the validity of these reports and Gen. Milley’s actions, please provide a list of all participants in the telephone calls, any notes taken in preparation or contemporaneous, and transcript(s) of both phone calls no later than October 1, 2021.

Thank you for your consideration of this important issue. To make arrangements to deliver documents or ask any related follow-up questions, please contact Committee on Oversight and Reform Republican Staff at (202) 225-5074. The Committee on Oversight and Reform is the principal oversight Committee of the U.S. House of Representatives and has broad authority to investigate “any matter” at “any time” under House Rule X. Thank you for your cooperation with this inquiry.

Sincerely,



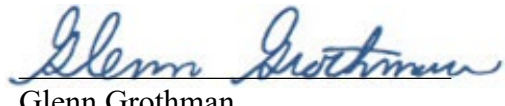
Byron Donalds
Member of Congress



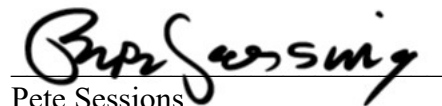
James Comer
Ranking Member
Committee on Oversight and Reform



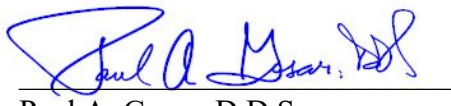
Jody Hice
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Government Operations



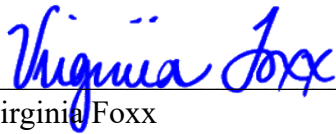
Glenn Grothman
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on National Security



Pete Sessions
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Civil Rights and Civil Liberties



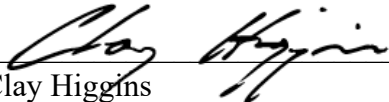
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Member of Congress



Virginia Foxx
Member of Congress



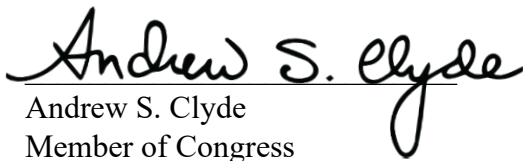
Bob Gibbs
Member of Congress



Clay Higgins
Member of Congress



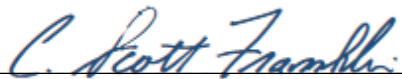
Fred Keller
Member of Congress



Andrew S. Clyde
Member of Congress



Nancy Mace
Member of Congress



Scott Franklin
Member of Congress



Jake LaTurner
Member of Congress



Yvette Herrell
Member of Congress

cc: The Honorable Carolyn Maloney, Chairwoman
Committee on Oversight and Reform

The Honorable Gerald E. Connolly, Chairman
Subcommittee on Government Operations

The Honorable Stephen F. Lynch, Chairman
Subcommittee on National Security

The Honorable Jamie Raskin, Chairman
Subcommittee on Civil Rights and Civil Liberties