

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 29, 2020

The Honorable Mike Pompeo
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20520

The Honorable Mark T. Esper
Secretary of Defense
U.S. Department of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 20310

Dear Secretary Pompeo and Secretary Esper

We are writing to express our serious concern about press reports asserting that the Russian military intelligence service Unit 29155 offered and paid bounties for the killing of U.S. and coalition forces in Afghanistan. Yet the president has reportedly taken no steps to confront the Kremlin. In fact, in recent months, he has increased calls for closer ties with Moscow.

The President was reportedly briefed on this information in March. Since then, he has apparently taken no punitive action against Russia. Instead, he has called for Russia to be re-admitted into the G7, saying that Russia should be included in the next meeting of the group in the United States this fall. He also abruptly decided to withdraw a significant number of U.S. forces from Germany without consultation with the United States Congress or our close allies in Berlin. These decisions clearly support the interests of Russian President Vladimir Putin, while putting U.S. servicemembers at unnecessary risk. Instead of using all of the tools at his disposal to fight back against Russian threats against our troops, the President has sought to normalize U.S. relations and reward the Kremlin.

Secretary Pompeo, we request that you respond to the following questions:

1. When did you first learn of concerns about efforts by the Russian military intelligence service Unit 29155 to pay militants in Afghanistan to target U.S. troops? Did you play any role in recommending that the President be briefed or not briefed on this intelligence?
2. What specific efforts did you personally make in your engagements with Russian officials to verify these reports and demand that they stop targeting U.S. forces? You have had several engagements with Russian officials in recent years. You last spoke with Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov on May 6, 2020. Did you raise this issue with him?
3. Special Representative for Afghan Peace Zalmay Khalilzad made several visits to Moscow over the past year. During these visits, did he raise the alleged bounties that the Russian GRU put on U.S. servicemembers?
4. Which officials from the Department of State, Department of Defense, and intelligence community participated in the March 2020 interagency meeting on this

intelligence? What policy recommendations did the group generate to take action against this Russian behavior?

5. Which officials from the Department of State knew about this intelligence? What actions did they recommend the Department or the U.S. take in response?

Secretary Esper, we request that you respond to the following questions:

1. When did you learn of the alleged intelligence?
2. Did any U.S. casualties in Afghanistan occur due to a bounty placed by Russian military intelligence?
3. What additional force protection measures were put in place as a result of this intelligence and when?
4. Given that coalition partners were also reportedly targeted, what conversations did you have with coalition partner military officials regarding this intelligence and when?

U.S. service members raise their right hands to protect and defend the United States. They deserve a Commander in Chief who will respond forcefully if bounties are put on them by enemies of the United States. Given the grave nature of these allegations, we request that you appear before the Senate this week to address these questions.

Sincerely,



Robert Menendez
United States Senator



Jack Reed
United States Senator



Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator