

ELIZABETH WARREN
MASSACHUSETTS

COMMITTEES:
BANKING, HOUSING, AND URBAN AFFAIRS
ARMED SERVICES
FINANCE
SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON AGING

United States Senate

UNITED STATES SENATE
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-2105
P: 202-224-4543

2400 JFK FEDERAL BUILDING
15 NEW SUDBURY STREET
BOSTON, MA 02203
P: 617-565-3170

1550 MAIN STREET
SUITE 406
SPRINGFIELD, MA 01103
P: 413-788-2690

www.warren.senate.gov

June 10, 2022

The Honorable Antony Blinken
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C St. NW
Washington DC 20520

The Honorable Lloyd J. Austin III
Secretary of Defense
Department of Defense
The Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301

Dear Secretary Blinken and Secretary Austin:

I write regarding a disturbing report from earlier this week indicating that former Marine Corps General John R. Allen, who led U.S. and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) forces in Afghanistan, is presently under investigation by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) as a result of “ma[king] false statements and withh[olding] ‘incriminating’ documents about his role in an illegal foreign lobbying campaign on behalf of the wealthy Persian Gulf nation of Qatar.”¹

The new report indicates that Allen - at the same time as he was “pursuing multi-million dollar business deals with the government of Qatar,” led a “behind-the scenes efforts to help Qatar influence U.S. policy in 2017 when a diplomatic crisis erupted between the gas-rich Persian Gulf monarchy and its neighbors,” and that he “played an important role in shifting the U.S.’s response.”² Specifically, authorities say Allen “lobbied then-National Security Advisor H.R. McMaster to have the Trump administration adopt more Qatar-friendly tone.”³ In one instance then-Secretary of State Rex Tillerson issued a statement calling for restraint the same day Allen made that request on behalf of Qatar to McMaster.⁴

¹ Associated Press, “FBI seizes retired general’s data related to Qatar lobbying,” Alan Suderman and Jim Mustian, June 8, 2022, <https://apnews.com/article/politics-us-news-think-tanks-nato-ap-top-5c30827587d2295012549d5d65fc806e>.

² *Id.*

³ *Id.*

⁴ Application for a Warrant, Case No. 2:22-MJ-1530, p. 24, <https://int.nyt.com/data/documenttools/dc-lobby-court-documents/df4dbfe3fd26ed7a/full.pdf>.

General Allen is not the only high-level official to be ensnared in “a broad investigation by the Justice Department and F.B.I. into the influence that wealthy Arab nations like Qatar, the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia wield in Washington.”⁵ The documents containing the allegations about General Allen also reportedly indicate that he “joined in the secret lobbying plan along with Richard G. Olson, a former United States ambassador to the United Arab Emirates and Pakistan,” who “has agreed to plead guilty for participating in the Qatari lobbying effort in violation of a prohibition on such activity during the first year after leaving diplomatic service.”⁶

These are highly disturbing reports. Americans must be able to trust that the officials that are chosen to represent them as diplomats, and to command the nation’s military forces, are acting solely in the best interests of the United States, and are not compromised by conflicts of interest. And after they leave government service, these high-ranking officials should not be trading on the trust that they have been granted by the United States to instead represent the interests of foreign governments.

Both Mr. Olson, who pled guilty to violating revolving door laws in place at the Department of State, and Mr. Allen may have violated the *Foreign Agent Registration Act* (FARA), which requires disclosures by individuals that are working on behalf of foreign interests.⁷ Their actions reveal the need for strong enforcement of lobbying and revolving-door laws by the Department of Justice, and additional efforts by the Department of Defense (DoD) and the State Department to ensure that officials follow the law. They also indicate the need for more stringent rules, including my *Anti-Corruption and Public Integrity Act*,⁸ which would ban any foreign lobbying by Americans, and my *DoD Ethics and Anti-Corruption Act*,⁹ which would require explicit approval of the Secretary of State for all former senior officials of the White House and Departments of State, Defense, and Treasury who seek paid work for a foreign government or non-governmental foreign entity, and bans former senior Pentagon officials from lobbying and behind-the-scenes lobbying DoD for four years.

Given the questions raised by these new reports, I am writing to seek information on the extent to which former DoD or State officials may be working for foreign governments, and the efforts by DoD and the State Department to prevent these officials from violating the law or

⁵ New York Times, “Retired General Investigated Over Undisclosed Lobbying for Qatar,” Mark Mazzetti and David D. Kirkpatrick, June 7, 2022, <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/06/07/us/politics/general-john-allen-lobbying-qatar.html>.

⁶ *Id.*

⁷ U.S. Department of Justice, “FOREIGN AGENTS REGISTRATION ACT,” <https://www.justice.gov/nsd-fara>.


⁸ Office of U.S. Senator Elizabeth Warren, “ANTI-CORRUPTION AND PUBLIC INTEGRITY ACT – SENATOR ELIZABETH WARREN,” <https://www.warren.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/Master%20Summary%20of%20Anti%20Corruption%20Act%20-%20FINAL.pdf>.

⁹ Office of U.S. Senator Elizabeth Warren, “Department of Defense Ethics and Anti-Corruption Act of 2019,” <https://www.warren.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/DoD%20Ethics%20and%20Anti-Corruption%20Act%20One-Pager%20FINAL.pdf>.

inappropriately or unethically aiding foreign governments. I therefore ask that you provide me with answers to the following questions by no later than June 24, 2022:

1. What specific laws and rules apply to former high-ranking DoD and State Department officials' employment or work for foreign governments once they have left federal service?
2. Did General Allen seek permission from DoD or the State Department to work on behalf of Qatar or any other foreign government?
3. What tools do DoD and the State Department employ to ensure compliance with these rules?
4. The new report indicates that General Allen lobbied then-National Security Adviser H.R. McMaster on behalf of Qatar in 2017. Did Mr. McMaster report these contacts to any DoD, State, or other federal official?
5. Did General Allen disclose to Mr. McMaster or any DoD or State officials that he was contacting them on behalf of the Qatari government?
6. To the extent that DoD officials are lobbied or otherwise contacted by former colleagues that are now representing the interests of foreign governments, are these DoD officials required to report these contacts to ethics officials or other DoD or federal officials?
7. To the extent that State Department officials are lobbied or otherwise contacted by former colleagues that are now representing the interests of foreign governments, are these State Department officials required to report these contacts to ethics officials or other State Department or federal officials?
8. Does DoD track the number of former high-ranking officials who are working for or on behalf of foreign governments, and the work they are doing on their behalf? If so, please provide a full list of these officials and their roles.
9. Does the Department of State track the number of former high-ranking officials who are working for or on behalf of foreign governments, and the work they are doing on their behalf? If so, please provide a full list of these officials and their roles.
10. Is DoD or State considering any administrative or disciplinary action in response to these allegations, including suspension or debarment?

Sincerely,



Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator