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United States Senate
COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6275

June 5, 2018

VIA ELECTRONIC TRANSMISSION

The Honorable Eric M. Thorson
Inspector General
U.S. Department of the Treasury
Washington, DC 20220

Dear Inspector General Thorson:

The Senate Judiciary Committee has been conducting an investigation into issues relating to Russian interference in the 2016 presidential election, as well as the Department of Justice's enforcement of the Foreign Agents Registration Act. In furtherance of those investigative efforts, on September 29, 2017, I wrote to FinCEN Acting Director El-Hindi requesting copies of any and all documents relating to Suspicious Activity Reports (SARs) relating to 37 individuals and entities. I also provided Ranking Member Feinstein a courtesy copy of that letter. I am writing to request that your office investigate whether any Treasury employee leaked the letter to the media.

My normal practice as Chairman is to publicly release Committee letters in the interest of transparency, except when there is an investigative justification not to do so. I did not publicly release my September 29, 2017 letter because there was such an investigative interest. The Committee had not indicated publicly it was investigating several of the individuals and entities listed in the letter, and in particular did not wish to alert them to the fact the Committee was seeking to review their SARs, to the extent they may have had any.

Regardless, on October 24, 2017, my Committee staff received a press inquiry about the letter and asking for comment. The Majority staff provided no response. That story was published two days later. In the story, it was clear that several of the subjects of the letter were contacted about it by the press, which revealed the Committee's nonpublic inquiries to the subjects. Moreover, the story noted that the Committee requested all SARs since January of 2015 for the listed individuals. However, that timeframe was not in the letter itself, and was only relayed in a phone call between Committee staff and Treasury Department officials.

My investigative staff verified that no one from the Majority Committee staff had disclosed the letter and the Minority Committee staff similarly denied they had, pointing the finger at FinCEN. On October 26, 2017, my Committee investigators called their contacts at the Treasury Department to voice their complaint about the apparent leak. In response, an attorney

with the Treasury Department stated that if the disclosure of the letter had come from their Department, it was unauthorized.

Please investigate these circumstances. If an official at the Treasury Department leaked the letter in an attempt to obstruct a Congressional investigation, that would be a serious matter. There is some indication this may be a recurring problem. While I do not know if there is any connection, I note that there have been other stories relying on Treasury officials who were unauthorized to speak to the media and detailing another Committee's requests for SARs relating to its Russia investigation. I also understand that your office has opened an investigation into the apparent leak of SARs related to Michael Cohen to Michael Avenatti.¹

Thank you for your attention to this important matter. If you have any questions about this request, please feel free to contact Patrick Davis of my Committee staff at (202) 224-5225.

Sincerely,



Charles E. Grassley
Chairman
Senate Committee on the Judiciary

¹ Beth Reinhard and Emma Brown, *Treasury Inspector General Launches Probe into Possible Leak of Michael Cohen's Banking Records*, THE WASHINGTON POST (May 9, 2018).