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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6275

KOLAN L. DAVIS, *Chief Counsel and Staff Director*  
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November 25, 2015

**VIA ELECTRONIC TRANSMISSION**

The Honorable Loretta Lynch  
Attorney General  
U.S. Department of Justice  
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20530

Dear Attorney General Lynch:

I write to you today regarding the case of former U.S. Diplomat Linda Howard. In September 2012, the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia found that Linda Howard, together with her husband, Russell Howard, raped and sexually abused their Ethiopian housekeeper, and forced the housekeeper to work 80 hours per week for \$0.88 per hour.<sup>1</sup> Based on this determination, the Howards were found liable for involuntary servitude, forced labor, and trafficking in violation of the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000.<sup>2</sup> According to court records, the abuse occurred in late 2008 and early 2009 while the housekeeper was trapped in the Howards' residence near the U.S. Embassy in Japan, where Linda Howard was stationed.<sup>3</sup>

Reportedly, the State Department's Bureau of Diplomatic Security (DS) interviewed the housekeeper after she fled the Howards' home in 2009.<sup>4</sup> However, according to the State Department, Linda Howard remained employed at the State Department until her retirement in 2012<sup>5</sup>—nearly three years *after* DS reportedly interviewed the victim housekeeper about those offenses. In addition, it is alleged that Linda Howard even received an honor award and a cash bonus, during that intervening period.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Archives, <http://ia700805.us.archive.org/3/items/gov.uscourts.vaed.272788/gov.uscourts.vaed.272788.132.0.pdf>, [hereinafter "2012 U.S. Decision"]; see also Steve Butcher, *Melbourne woman settles claim over slavery, sex abuse claims by former maid at US Embassy in Tokyo*, September 6, 2015, <http://www.theage.com.au/victoria/melbourne-woman-settles-claim-over-slavery-sex-abuse-claims-by-former-maid-at-us-embassy-in-tokyo-20150905-giftsp.html>.

<sup>2</sup> See 2012 U.S. Decision.

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Archives, <http://ia700805.us.archive.org/3/items/gov.uscourts.vaed.272788/gov.uscourts.vaed.272788.1.0.pdf>.

<sup>4</sup> *Id.* at 11-12.

<sup>5</sup> Letter from the Hon. Julia Frifield, Assistant Secretary, U.S. Department of State, to Sen. Charles E. Grassley, Chairman, Sen. Comm. on the Judiciary (November 24, 2015).

<sup>6</sup> Peter Van Buren, "Diplomatic Abuse of Servants: Not Just For Indians," *Shadowproof.com*, Dec. 18, 2013, <https://shadowproof.com/2013/12/18/diplomatic-abuse-of-servants-not-just-for-indians/>.

These circumstances raise a question as to whether an adequate attempt was made to investigate the serious allegations against Linda Howard. So, on September 17, 2015, this Committee asked the State Department about its handling of this case. On November 24, 2015, the State Department explained that DS referred this matter to the Department of Justice. Thus, the Committee requests any information you have on how the Justice Department handled this case.

Accordingly, please provide a response to the following questions by December 11, 2015:

1. On what date did the Justice Department receive a referral of the Linda Howard case from the State Department?
2. Following this referral, how did the Justice Department handle this case? Please provide a detailed explanation, including (a) whether a preliminary inquiry or an investigation was opened; (b) the date on which any such inquiry or investigation was opened; (c) the date on which any such inquiry or investigation was closed; (d) the current status of any such inquiry or investigation; (e) the findings of any such inquiry or investigation; and (f) whether and when any of the above information was provided to the State Department.

Please number your responses according to their corresponding questions. Please contact Jay Lim of my Committee staff at (202) 224-5225 should you have any questions. Thank you for your cooperation in this important matter.

Sincerely,



Charles E. Grassley  
Chairman  
Senate Committee on the Judiciary

cc:

The Honorable Patrick Leahy  
Ranking Member  
Senate Committee on the Judiciary

The Honorable Steve A. Linick  
Inspector General  
U.S. Department of State

The Honorable Michael E. Horowitz  
Inspector General  
U.S. Department of Justice