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COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6275

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August 5, 2016

VIA ELECTRONIC TRANSMISSION

The Honorable Loretta Lynch
Attorney General
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20530

Dear Attorney General Lynch:

On August 3, 2016, the Wall Street Journal reported that the Obama administration secretly organized an airlift of \$400 million worth of cash to Iran last January that coincided with the release of four Americans detained in Tehran.¹ Later on August 3, the Wall Street Journal also reported that “[s]enior Justice Department officials objected to sending a plane loaded with cash to Tehran at the same time that Iran released four imprisoned Americans, but their objections were overruled by the State Department[.]”² According to that report, Justice Department officials had “concern the Iranians probably did consider it a ransom payment.”³

These reports are particularly troubling in light of the Department’s continuing failure to cooperate with my inquiry into the FBI’s alleged role in facilitating ransom payments to terrorist groups.⁴ Between the current reports of this \$400 million payment to Iran and the previous reports that the FBI helped send substantial ransom payments to al Qaeda,⁵ there are serious questions about this administration’s policies regarding paying ransoms to terrorists and state-sponsors of terrorism. As Chairman of the Judiciary Committee, which has oversight authority over the Justice Department, it is my duty to get the facts.

¹ Jay Solomon and Carol E. Lee, *U.S. Sent Cash to Iran as Americans Were Freed*, THE WALL STREET JOURNAL, Aug. 3, 2016.

² Devlin Barrett, *Justice Department Officials Raised Objections on U.S. Cash Payment to Iran*, THE WALL STREET JOURNAL, Aug. 3, 2016.

³ *Id.*

⁴ <http://www.grassley.senate.gov/news/news-releases/grassley-oversight-needed-fbis-facilitation-ransom-payments>

⁵ Adam Entous and Devlin Barrett, *FBI Helped Facilitate Ransom for U.S. Hostage Killed in Drone Strike*, THE WALL STREET JOURNAL, April 29, 2015.

Accordingly, I am writing to request additional information about the Department of Justice's role in this transfer of cash to Iran. Please respond to the following by August 19, 2016:

1. Please provide all Department of Justice records, including electronic communications involving Department of Justice personnel, relating to the \$400 million payment to Iran.
2. Which Justice Department officials objected to sending the cash payment at the same time the prisoners were released? What were their objections? Please provide all records relating to their objections, including all records of the State Department's disagreement with the objections, and the resolution of the dispute.
3. According to the Wall Street Journal, "[t]he prisoner-swap negotiations were led by the State Department, with help from the Central Intelligence Agency and Federal Bureau of Investigation."⁶ Please provide all records relating to the FBI's involvement in the prisoner-swap negotiations.
4. Did the Office of Legal Counsel or any other component of the Department of Justice analyze the legality of this cash transfer and simultaneous release of U.S. citizens? If so, please provide that analysis. If not, why not?
5. The Wall Street Journal also reported: "The Justice Department raised other objections to the Iran deals. Prosecutors were concerned that the U.S. would release too many Iranian convicts and drop too many pending criminal cases against people suspected of violating sanctions laws."⁷ Please provide all records relating to these other objections Justice Department personnel raised regarding the Iran deals.

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

Sincerely,



Charles E. Grassley
Chairman
Committee on the Judiciary

cc: The Honorable Patrick J. Leahy
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on the Judiciary

⁶ *Supra* n.2.

⁷ *Supra* n.2.