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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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July 11, 2017

**VIA ELECTRONIC TRANSMISSION**

The Honorable John Kelly  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Homeland Security  
Washington, D.C. 20528

The Honorable Rex W. Tillerson  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of State  
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Secretary Kelly and Secretary Tillerson:

In March of this year, the Committee began investigating the Justice Department's response to a formal complaint alleging failure to register properly under the Foreign Agents Registration Act ("FARA") and the Lobbying Disclosure Act of 1995. The complaint alleged that a group of unregistered Russian agents worked in the U.S. on behalf of Russian interests to undermine the Magnitsky Act and the Global Magnitsky Act.<sup>1</sup> As you know, the Magnitsky Act was named after Mr. Sergei Magnitsky, a Russian attorney for Hermitage Capital Management. In 2007, Mr. Magnitsky discovered that corrupt Russian government officials and members of organized crime had engaged in corporate identity theft, stealing the corporate identities of three Hermitage companies and using them to fraudulently obtain \$230 million, which was then laundered out of Russia. After reporting the crimes to Russian law enforcement, Mr. Magnitsky was arrested by the same corrupt officials. He died in custody under suspicious circumstances.

Mr. William Browder, the CEO of Hermitage Capital Management, then engaged in a concerted effort to obtain justice for Mr. Magnitsky, and in response to his efforts Congress passed the bipartisan Magnitsky Act, which authorized the President to sanction those involved in Mr. Magnitsky's death as well as other Russian human rights abusers. In 2016, the Global

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<sup>1</sup> Letter from Chairman Grassley, U.S. Senate Committee on the Judiciary, to Acting Deputy Attorney General Boente, U.S. Department of Justice (Mar. 31, 2017), available at [https://www.judiciary.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/2017-03-31%20CEG%20to%20DOJ%20\(Anti-Magnitsky%20FARA%20violations\)%20with%20attachments.pdf](https://www.judiciary.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/2017-03-31%20CEG%20to%20DOJ%20(Anti-Magnitsky%20FARA%20violations)%20with%20attachments.pdf)

Magnitsky Act was also enacted, applying this sanctions framework to human rights abusers worldwide.

It is that same Mr. Browder who in July of 2016 filed the FARA complaint with the Justice Department describing the cohort of Russian agents allegedly involved in the ongoing effort to undermine the Magnitsky Act.<sup>2</sup> Among them were:

- Rinat Akhmetshin, a Russian immigrant to the U.S. who was reportedly a former Russian GRU counterintelligence officer specializing in active measures campaigns;<sup>3</sup>
- Glenn Simpson, the founder of Fusion GPS; and
- Natalia Veselnitskaya, Russian lawyer for Prevezon Holdings, a Russian-owned company the Justice Department alleged received millions laundered from the crime Mr. Magnitsky uncovered.<sup>4</sup>

I previously wrote Secretary Kelly seeking immigration information related to Mr. Akhmetshin for the Committee, which I later received.<sup>5</sup> Today, I write to the two of you seeking information relating to Ms. Veselnitskaya.

In 2013, the Department of Justice initiated a civil asset forfeiture case against Prevezon Holdings, a company owned by Russian Denis Katsyv, the son of a former Russian government minister.<sup>6</sup> The Justice Department argued that his company had received millions of the laundered \$230 million from the conspiracy Mr. Magnitsky discovered. According to her sworn declaration filed in that case, Natalia Veselnitskaya, a former Moscow prosecutor and founder of Kamerton Consulting, was retained by Prevezon to assist in the suit.<sup>7</sup>

Her declaration raises a number of issues of interest to the Committee, which DHS and State should be able to help explain. In the declaration, Veselnitskaya testified that she was

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<sup>2</sup> *Complaint Regarding the Violation of US Lobbying Laws by the Human Rights Accountability Global Initiative Foundation and Others*, Hermitage Capital Management (July 15, 2016) (“Browder Complaint”) (attached).

<sup>3</sup> Isaac Arnsdorf, *FARA Complaint Alleges Pro-Russian Lobbying*, POLITICO (Dec. 8, 2016). (“Akhmetshin used to spy for the Soviets and ‘specializes in active measures campaigns’ ... Akhmetshin acknowledged having been a Soviet counterintelligence officer”); Chuck Ross, *Oppo Researcher Behind Trump Dossier Is Linked to Pro-Kremlin Lobbying Effort*, THE DAILY CALLER (Jan. 13, 2017) (Akhmetshin “was affiliated with GRU, Russia’s main intelligence directorate”); STEVE LEVINE, *THE OIL AND THE GLORY: THE PURSUIT OF EMPIRE AND FORTUNE ON THE CASPIAN SEA 366* (2007) (describing how a former KGB officer turned businessman turned Kazakh politician “hired a lobbyist, an English-speaking former Soviet Army counter-intelligence officer named Rinat Akhmetshin [and] the skilled Akhmetshin burrowed in with Washington reporters, think tank experts, administration bureaucrats, and key political figures”); Plaintiff’s Complaint, *International Mineral Resources B.V. v. Rinat Akhmetshin, et al.*, No. 161682/2015, 2015 WL 7180277 (N.Y. Sup.) (“Akhmetshin is a former Soviet military counterintelligence officer who moved to Washington, D.C. to become a lobbyist.”).

<sup>4</sup> See Second Amended Verified Complaint, *U.S. v. Prevezon Holdings Ltd., et al.*, No. 13-cv-6326, ECF 381 (SDNY) (“Prevezon Complaint”).

<sup>5</sup> Letter from Chairman Grassley, U.S. Senate Committee on the Judiciary, to Secretary Kelly, U.S. Department of Homeland Security (April 4, 2017), available at [https://www.judiciary.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/2017-04-04%20CEG%20to%20DHS%20\(Akhmetshin%20Information\)%20with%20attachment.pdf](https://www.judiciary.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/2017-04-04%20CEG%20to%20DHS%20(Akhmetshin%20Information)%20with%20attachment.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> Prevezon Complaint.

<sup>7</sup> Declaration of Natalia Veselnitskaya *U.S. v. Prevezon Holdings Ltd., et al.*, No. 13-cv-6326. ECF 731 (attached).

denied a U.S. visa when she sought to travel to the United States from Russia to participate in the litigation, but was issued a “parole letter” by the U.S. government that permitted her to enter for that purpose.<sup>8</sup> Although the timeline of events is not perfectly clear, it appears that she was eventually granted this parole in 2015. According to her testimony she was also detained for two hours at London’s Heathrow airport when she was travelling back to the United States from a trip to London in November, 2015.<sup>9</sup>

Notably, Veselnitskaya’s declaration stated that her parole was set to expire on January 7, 2016, and that she had requested an extension but was denied on January 4, 2016.<sup>10</sup> Indeed, she noted: “Prior to [January 7, 2016], I will have to leave the United States.”<sup>11</sup>

However, according to news reports, many months later Ms. Veselnitskaya allegedly met with Donald Trump Jr., Jared Kushner, and Paul Manafort at Trump Tower in New York City on June 9, 2016. It is unclear how she was still in the country for that meeting despite being denied a visa beforehand and her parole purportedly expiring on January 7, 2016. This raises serious questions about whether the Obama administration authorized her to remain in the country, and if so, why?

In order for the Committee to understand the circumstances surrounding Veselnitskaya’s visa denial and subsequent parole, please answer the following questions no later than July 25, 2017.

### U.S. Department of State

1. Please provide all visa records and associated documentation for Natalia Veselnitskaya.

a. In her affidavit, Natalia Veselnitskaya states that she applied for, but was denied a visa to travel to the United States.

i. Did Veselnitskaya apply for a U.S. visa? If the answer is yes, what category of visa was sought? Which embassy or consulate did she submit the application? and on what basis was her visa application denied?

ii. Please provide the visa category and validity period for any and all previous visas issued to Veselnitskaya.

iii. Please provide the dates of application submission and the basis of denial for any past visa applications submitted by Veselnitskaya, along with any associated documentation, case notes, or other related information.

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<sup>8</sup> *Id.* at ¶. 2.

<sup>9</sup> *Id.*

<sup>10</sup> *Id.* ¶ 3.

<sup>11</sup> *Id.*

iv. Has Veselnitskaya ever been in possession of a U.S. visa that was later revoked? If so, please provide any information that supported the decision to revoke her visa.

b. Was Natalia Veselnitskaya subjected to any additional administrative processing associated with any visa application? Please explain and provide all documentation uncovered, or created, as a result of such additional processing.

U.S. Department of Homeland Security

1. Was Natalia Veselnitskaya ever paroled into the United States under INA section 212(d)(5)(A)? If so, on what basis? How many times was parole granted and/or extended? Please provide all information and documentation associated with the request for parole, including any conditions or restrictions imposed in connection with her parole.

a. Which government agencies, if any, requested parole for Natalia Veselnitskaya? Please explain and produce any relevant documentation or notes regarding the decision to grant parole.

i. Please provide any point of contact or a place of residence information that Veselnitskaya provided prior to or after a grant of parole.

b. Other than the requesting agency, which agencies, if any, were aware of, provided input regarding, or were otherwise involved in the decision to grant parole? Please explain.

c. Please produce any records of entry into or exit from any port of entry in the United States for Natalia Veselnitskaya, and a timeline of her known travel into the United States.

d. To your knowledge, is Natalia Veselnitskaya in the United States at this time?

I anticipate that your written reply and any responsive documents will be unclassified. Please send all unclassified material directly to the Committee. In keeping with the requirements of Executive Order 13526, if any of the responsive documents do contain classified information, please segregate all unclassified material within the classified documents, provide all unclassified information directly to the Committee, and provide a classified addendum to the Office of Senate Security. Although the Committee complies with all laws and regulations governing the handling of classified information, it is not bound, absent its prior agreement, by any handling restrictions or instructions on unclassified information unilaterally asserted by the Executive Branch.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter. Should you have any questions, please contact Katherine Nikas or Patrick Davis of my staff at 202-224-5225.

Sincerely,



Charles E. Grassley  
Chairman  
Senate Committee on the Judiciary

cc:

The Honorable Dianne Feinstein  
Ranking Member  
Senate Committee on the Judiciary