

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

February 2, 2017

The Honorable Donald J. Trump
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

On Saturday, January 28th, 2017 you issued a Presidential Memorandum on the Organization of the National Security Council and the Homeland Security Council. While we recognize it is the prerogative of presidents to appoint their own executive staff, we are deeply concerned that the new directive removes the Director of National Intelligence and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff from the required regular attendees of the NSC Principals Committee meeting.

The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff has been included as a principal in every version of the National Security Council since its formal establishment in 1947, and the Director of National Intelligence has been a principal ever since the creation of the office after 9/11. This is a reflection of the deeply valued contribution that our intelligence and military communities have to offer in every national security decision – not simply in those topics that explicitly relate to their offices. It is an insult to both offices to limit their participation to meetings “where issues pertaining to their responsibilities and expertise are to be discussed,” as your Memorandum states.

We are also concerned with both the substance and appearance of your decision to add the Assistant to the President and Chief of Staff and the Assistant to the President and Chief Strategist as members of the Principals Committee.

Mr. President, successive Administrations have expressed concern over the politicization of the National Security Council. Even the slightest appearance of politicizing decisions of national security harms American interests. Josh Bolten, a former Chief of Staff to George W. Bush stated about President Bush, “the President also knew that the signal he wanted to send to the rest of his Administration, the signal he wanted to send to the public, and the signal he especially wanted to send to the military is that the decisions I’m making that involve life and death for the people in uniform will not be tainted by any political decisions.”

Because Mr. Bannon has no formal experience in national security or foreign policy, your apparent reason for his inclusion on this high-level security decision-making body appears to be based purely on the political advice that he gives to you. As Chairman of Breitbart News, Mr. Bannon advised Breitbart News Network to publish inflammatory and baseless stories like “Were Obama and Hillary Founders of ISIS? You Bet,” “Islamic State General Flees to Europe with 400 Soldiers Disguised as Refugees,” and “Bill Kristol: Republican Spoiler, Renegade Jew” to name just a few.

And the deeply troubling allegations that Mr. Bannon supports or is tolerant of anti-Semitic and anti-Muslim views take on added significance if he is to serve as a Member of the NSC Principals Committee. At a time when the United States is leading the fight against ISIS, we

should not be giving our partners in the Arab world, who are fighting alongside U.S. troops, any reason to doubt U.S. commitment to our alliances with these predominantly Muslim countries.

Taken together, the decisions to elevate Chief Strategist Steve Bannon while degrading the role of our nation's intelligence and military leaders are deeply concerning.

As Members of Congress, preserving the safety and security of all Americans is our highest priority. National security should never fall victim to partisan politics. We strongly encourage you to restore the Director of National Intelligence and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff to their rightful status as regular members of the Principals Committee. In addition, we request that your Administration provide to Congress a written explanation for your decision to inject politics into the Principals Committee by elevating political members of your staff to formal members of NSC's Principals Committee.

Sincerely,



Theodore E. Deutch
MEMBER OF CONGRESS



Jerrold Nadler
MEMBER OF CONGRESS



Bobby Scott
MEMBER OF CONGRESS



Nita M. Lowey
MEMBER OF CONGRESS



Louise M. Slaughter
MEMBER OF CONGRESS



Joseph Crowley
MEMBER OF CONGRESS




Danny K. Davis
MEMBER OF CONGRESS



Alcee L. Hastings
MEMBER OF CONGRESS



Luis V. Gutiérrez
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James P. McGovern
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Steve Cohen
MEMBER OF CONGRESS



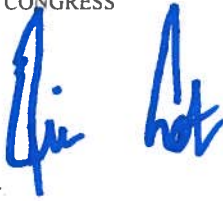
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MEMBER OF CONGRESS



Andre Carson
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William R. Keating
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Jim Costa
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Michelle Lujan Grisham
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