

ROBERT MENENDEZ  
NEW JERSEY

COMMITTEES:  
BANKING, HOUSING, AND URBAN  
AFFAIRS

FINANCE

FOREIGN RELATIONS, RANKING MEMBER

## United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-3005

December 12, 2018

528 SENATE HART OFFICE BUILDING  
WASHINGTON, DC 20510  
(202) 224-4744

ONE GATEWAY CENTER  
11TH FLOOR  
NEWARK, NJ 07102  
(973) 645-3030

208 WHITE HORSE PIKE  
SUITE 18-19  
BARRINGTON, NJ 08007  
(856) 757-5353

Christopher Wray  
Director  
Federal Bureau of Investigation  
U.S. Department of Justice  
935 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20535

Caroline C. Hunter  
Federal Election Commission  
1050 First Street, NE  
Washington, DC 20463

Dear Director Wray and Commissioner Hunter:

Amid reports of a pending plea deal and conviction of Maria Butina, a Russian national with strong ties to the National Rifle Association (NRA), it is clear that Russian meddling in U.S. elections continued well past the 2016 presidential race and included the November 2018 midterms. It is critical that the American people fully understand the depth and breadth of the Kremlin's reach within our democratic institutions, including whether the Kremlin funneled money to the NRA during the 2016 or 2018 elections.

Specifically, I am writing to request your assessment on whether Kremlin funds have been directed through the NRA to support U.S. political campaigns during the 2018 election cycle—an action that, if it occurred, would represent a breach of U.S. law and violate the sovereignty of our democratic system and, as such, merits close scrutiny by your respective agencies. Preliminary report findings released earlier this year by the Senate Judiciary Committee suggest that the Kremlin improperly directed financial support to the campaign of 2016 presidential candidate Donald Trump, using the NRA as a channel to do so.<sup>1</sup> I understand the FBI has also been investigating these claims.<sup>2</sup> I also request that your agencies work to determine whether individuals serving as candidates, campaign staff or volunteers in any House or Senate races were aware of, or helped to facilitate, the flow of Russian money to these campaigns.

This past March we learned that Russian politician Alexander Torshin used his ties to the NRA to gain access to those close to the President, including Donald Trump Jr.<sup>3</sup> Even more troubling is the claim that Torshin served as a 2012 U.S. election observer, a role he obtained via his ties to the NRA.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.judiciary.senate.gov/press/releases/materials-from-inquiry-into-circumstances-surrounding-trump-tower-meeting?peek=JnLNybhSog26L1cFm8AR63234MDsncYLzYhn7Ze9%2FdDXzs%2B6>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.cnn.com/2018/01/18/politics/russian-banker-nra-trump/index.html>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.npr.org/2018/03/01/590076949/depth-of-russian-politicians-cultivation-of-nra-ties-revealed>

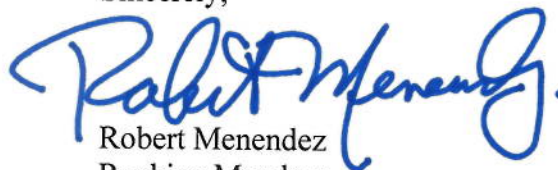
<sup>4</sup> *Id.*

Leaders of U.S. national security agencies expressed concerns in an August 2 White House press conference that the Government of the Russian Federation is continuing to attempt to disrupt democratic institutions and processes in our country, including the November 2018 midterm elections. I share those concerns and agree, Director Wray, with your call for “fierce determination and focus” by relevant U.S. agencies in countering threats emanating from the Kremlin against our electoral processes.<sup>5</sup>

Effectively neutralizing these threats requires that we identify them in real-time, which is why it is important that your agencies direct scrutiny to not just a possible Russia-NRA conduit during the 2016 election, but also whether that conduit is still active today.

Thank you in advance to your prompt attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Robert Menendez  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Foreign Relations  
United States Senate

---

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/08/02/us/politics/russia-election-security-midterm.html>