John R. Bolton  
National Security Advisor  
National Security Council  
Eisenhower Executive Office Building  
1650 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20504

Dear Mr. Bolton,

During a recent Senate Select Committee on Intelligence hearing held to review the Obama and Trump administrations’ policy response to Russian election interference, Michael Daniel, the cybersecurity czar for former President Obama, confirmed to Sen. Jim Risch (R-ID) that former national security advisor Susan Rice issued a “stand down” order in August 2016 in response to Russian cyber-attacks during the 2016 presidential campaign. In nearly simultaneous fashion, the Obama Administration launched an aggressive investigation into possible collusion between the Trump campaign and Russia.

In that same hearing, former Obama State Department spokeswoman Victoria Nuland said that Russian President Vladimir Putin expected deterrent measures when Russia interfered in the 2016 U.S. election, but did not see any response, so he felt he could “keep pushing.”

As Chairman of the House Homeland Security Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Protection Subcommittee, these cyber-threats and the failure of the Obama Administration to take action are particularly alarming. In addition, given ongoing developments shedding light on improper adherence to standard practice and the presence of pervasive bias at the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Department of Justice during the Obama Administration, the “stand down” order raises further troubling questions about whether Obama Administration officials appropriately carried out their duties to protect the national security of the United States, or rather used their authority to carry out politically-motivated objectives.

In order to further assess whether appropriate steps were taken to protect the United States from cyber-attacks, please examine and respond to the following, either in writing or a classified briefing if deemed appropriate:

1. Did Susan Rice issue the stand-down order on her own volition, or at the behest of other Obama Administration officials?

2. What justification, if any, did Susan Rice use to support issuance of the stand-down order?
3. Did Susan Rice depart from traditional practice and procedure of the National Security Council in issuing the stand-down order?

We owe it to the American people to ensure that the federal government follows its own rules, without regard to partisan bias and motivations. I appreciate your consideration of these important questions.

Sincerely,

John Ratcliffe
Member of Congress

cc: The Honorable Mike Pompeo  
Secretary of State  
United States Department of State

The Honorable Kirstjen Nielsen  
Secretary of Homeland Security  
United States Department of Homeland Security