

United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON
HOMELAND SECURITY AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6250

May 14, 2026

The Honorable John Ratcliffe
Director
Central Intelligence Agency
McLean, VA 22101

Dear Director Ratcliffe:

We write to follow up on the hearing held by the U.S. Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs yesterday entitled "Whistleblower Testimony on the COVID Coverup."

The Committee received testimony from James E. Erdman III, a Senior Operations Officer at the Central Intelligence Agency, who appeared pursuant to a subpoena issued by the Committee on May 5, 2026. This letter serves as formal notice that we expect no retaliatory action of any kind to be taken against Mr. Erdman in connection with his appearance before the Committee.

Enclosed is a copy of the written testimony submitted to the Committee by Mr. Erdman. We ask that you personally review it in full, as Mr. Erdman testified under oath to a pattern of deeply troubling conduct occurring within the Central Intelligence Agency.

Please be advised that a copy of this letter is also being transmitted to the Inspector General of the Intelligence Community.

Sincerely,



Rand Paul, M.D.
Chairman
U.S. Senate Committee on Homeland
Security and Governmental Affairs



Ron Johnson
Chairman
Permanent Subcommittee on
Investigations

Enclosure:
Written Testimony of James E. Erdman III

cc: The Honorable Christopher Fox
Inspector General
Intelligence Community

Written Testimony of James E. Erdman III
Before the U.S. Senate Homeland Security & Governmental Affairs
Committee
Full Committee Hearing: Whistleblower Testimony on the COVID Coverup
May 13, 2026

I am providing this statement as a whistleblower and in the interest of supporting this administration's explicit order to discontinue dangerous gain of function research (GoF), end weaponization of the intelligence community, and restore faith in our institutions.

Transparency is the first and most important step to reform. On April 08, 2025, Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard created a task force charged with restoring transparency and accountability to the Intelligence Community. The group was called DIG, or Director's Initiatives Group, and was tasked with implementing President Trump's executive orders and priorities on reform, including declassifying documents related to the JFK, RFK, and MLK assassinations, the origins of COVID-19, Crossfire Hurricane, the Biden Administration's domestic surveillance and censorship, Anomalous Health Incidents (AHI), and Unidentified Aerial Phenomena.

I was asked to join the group as one of its earliest members, given my many years of experience at the CIA and my knowledge on the origins of the COVID-19 pandemic.

I am testifying here today because, in my year with the DIG, the CIA obstructed lawful oversight related to the DIG's work and retaliated against the DIG with what I believe were illegal investigations into DIG members.

This obstruction and retaliation included:

- 1) Withholding documents and information to both the DIG, and ultimately the American public, that had been ordered declassified by statute or executive order;
- 2) Denying the DIG access to necessary information to conduct its inquiries;
- 3) Withholding information from DNI Gabbard;
- 4) And, most alarmingly, opening investigations into, and monitoring the communications and computer activity of, DIG members.

This obstruction and retaliation undermine our democracy and preventing the American people from learning the truth about matters that are in the public interest. For example, despite statutory and executive order requirements, the CIA has refused to make available

all documents related to the assassination of President John F Kennedy. DIG findings on AHIs are being held up in interagency coordination.

My expertise and portfolio with the DIG pertain to the origin of the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as other life science and sensitive matters related to gain-of-function research. I believe the ODNI National Intelligence Council (NIC) and CIA personnel have spent years covering up the truth about the COVID-19 pandemic.

In 2023, both chambers of Congress unanimously passed the COVID Act of 2023, which then-President Biden subsequently signed into law. The law required ODNI to declassify any and all information relating to potential links between the Wuhan Institute of Virology and the origin of COVID-19. In my time at the DIG, my team reviewed internal communications that led me to believe that ODNI NIC, under then DNI Avril Haines, did not conduct a serious review or declassification effort for these documents. I also reviewed thousands of pages of material that I believe were responsive to the law, but that the Intelligence Community ignored.

DNI and CIA's role in the COVID origin cover-up demands accountability but is only a small part of the problem caused by Dr. Anthony Fauci's role in creating a system that incentivized dangerous GoF research in the United States and abroad. The following is some of what the DIG uncovered in its work, that has yet to be shared with the American public.

After 9/11, Intelligence Community (IC) recruited and provided security clearances to scientists as part of an initiative it was forming called the Biological Sciences Experts Group (BSEG). Originally the IC wisely intended to limit the use of these scientists to analysis of complex topics, but their functionality quickly expanded far beyond the intended scope of work. The BSEG scientists assisted in vetting the scientific value of raw intelligence, drafted white papers in support of background analysis and finished intelligence, and conducted lab research on sensitive WMD topics.

Their work in the IC provided justification for continued public health funding for their academic and professional research, and their collaboration with organizations like the National Academy of Sciences (NAS). This is also led to a positive feedback loop that further incentivizing more funding for their work, more IC contracts, and deeper collaboration with government officials responsible for crafting of and oversight over WMD and GoF policy and research. The lines between public health and biodefense have been blurred beyond recognition ever since.

The United States Government (USG) needs scientists who can assist in all those matters, but we must be able to ensure overlapping roles don't lead to conflicts of interest, while

maintaining the ability to assess risk and provide oversight. Strategic oversight of the current system is almost impossible in its current state. Changes in its organizational structure occur regularly while the system continues to employ the same revolving door of public health officials, scientists, and IC personnel. The task of teasing out whether the IC influences public health, or if public health has shifted into biodefense, or if policy is being developed by scientists with financial motives for riskier than needed research is possible at the tactical-agency level, but there has been no effective means of a full review of the system.

Oversight of IC work requires additional layers of scrutiny, and it is even more important if the second order effects may have impact on public health policy. The DNI personnel responsible for handling the BSEG waived the typical counterintelligence requirements needed to properly manage risk, and this added additional complications to a system that was already fertile ground for blowback. The work conducted on behalf of the IC often contributed to open-source research funded through HHS, CDC, NIH, and NIAID. In some cases, it incentivized dangerous research at US labs and abroad, all USG funded.

The government's response to the COVID pandemic and the IC's failure to adequately address the question of COVID's origin, was just a symptom of a much larger national defense shortcoming that has been building for over 20 years. Our support to laboratory work at home and abroad needs to be fully reviewed, classification systems aligned appropriately, and the organizational structures must be simplified and transparent to ensure proper oversight.

Key findings

- Dr. Anthony Fauci influenced the IC's analytic process and COVID origin's findings by leveraging his position to ensure the IC consulted with a conflicted list of curated Subject Matter Experts (SME), public health officials, and scientists. This included the authors of the paper "The Proximal Origin of Sars-COV-2" and other public health experts and scientists who have been in his orbit for 20+ years, many of whom have and did receive funding from NIAID, as well as scientists working under IC contract.
- This contradicts Dr. Fauci's 2024 testimony to Congress, when he answered "not to my knowledge" when asked if he had briefed any intel agency concerning viral research.
- The BSEG scientists influenced national laboratory WMD research, policy decisions, finished analysis, and other intelligence matters, creating misaligned incentives and conflicts of interest, as well as counter-intelligence issues.

- Since 2006, the IC's advisory body consisting of bioscientists consulted part time on biodefense issues for the IC, while conducting government-funded research and holding academia positions, as well as maintaining roles in public health institutions and serving as members in the National Academy of Science (NAS). They received funding from NIAID and other agencies for vaccine research, USAID's PREDICT project, the cooperative threat reduction program, and even worked with Chinese scientists on coronavirus and other pathogen studies pursuing vaccines. There was no oversight monitoring how this web of relationships influenced research, policy, and public health in any wholistic way *for over 20 years*. In fact, several of these same IC scientists helped Dr. Fauci rewrite definitions of GoF in 2015 to lift a funding pause on dangerous research -- still others participated in planning Event 201 in 2019. This was a coronavirus pandemic tabletop exercise curiously similar to the events that played out during the COVID-19 pandemic, and it was attended by Dr. Fauci and individuals with IC ties, like former DNI Avril Haines.
- The CIA did not comply with lawful oversight requests during the DIG's investigation. The behavior significantly impacted Director Gabbard's execution of several EOs issued during this administration and tasked to the DIG. The CIA refused to provide information necessary to understand why analytic standards at the CIA were violated.
- The CIA illegally monitored the computer and phone usage of DIG personnel in DNI spaces, their investigations, and contact with whistleblowers.
- One CIA contractor assisting with the DIG's COVID origins investigation was fired one day after meeting with the DIG.
- The CIA and DNI managers responsible for COVID origin investigation made analytic decisions inconsistent with the conclusions of subject matter experts and analytic tradecraft, consistently favoring the theory of zoonosis – natural origin.
- Following the CIA's COVID relook that culminated in 2023, the CIA retaliated against analysts supporting lab leak hypothesis.
- CIA analysts were not bribed. The CIA analysts that supported the lab leak analysis conducted in 2022-2023, took every administrative measure available to them to address their deep concerns regarding the analytic integrity of their finished intelligence.

- DOE's interagency analytic role – particularly at Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory and Los Alamos National Laboratory was minimized to the detriment of the IC.

Common themes

There were a number of common themes framing the DIG's investigation into the IC's analysis of the origin of COVID-19. There were very similar issues associated with the DIG's investigation into AHIs.

- Analysts hung onto the science questions long after it was time to finally pivot into answering the intelligence questions IC analysts are hired to boldly resolve. Right or wrong, it gave the impression that the analysts did not want to have to draw a conclusion. The DIG's review identified emails stating it explicitly. Searching for a perfect analytic answer is not standard practice.
- The COVID origin analysis was an exercise in anchor bias. Instead of gathering data, drawing conclusions, and writing multiple products based on the data, the analysts worked from a binary choice: lab incident or natural origin. It drew needed analytic and operational discussion away from alternate and valuable topics like the possibility of pan-coronavirus vaccine and therapeutic research.
- The executive branch has been expanding functionality in the administrative state, tweaking organizational models, and adjusting the interplay between public health, biodefense, and the IC to such a degree, that the executive branch cannot provide proper oversight, and it is no longer an entity resembling its original structure. With the exception of scientist-bureaucrats who have been part of the system long after their use-by date expired, I am not sure our biodefense and WMD experts have the institutional memory to move it back to a manageable structure. Not without legislative action.

National security implications

The COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated the Intelligence Community (IC) investigation into the origin of SARS-CoV-2, worldwide public health response, and US biodefense policy has serious short-comings, and it exposed a national security crisis. It doesn't matter if the questions that arose in December 2019 were about human-to-human transmission or why Event 201 mirrored the world's pandemic response in 2020, the fact that the IC, public health, and political leadership got it wrong is *irrefutable*.

Who got it right?

- Scientists without security clearances or access to classified data;
- Doctors caring for patients and curing COVID-19 with cheap well-tested therapeutic alternatives in contrast to the bureaucrat-physicians on the evening news;
- A cohort of multi-disciplinary experts not always considered part of a typical response to emerging health crisis; and
- Amateur internet sleuths doing their own research.

They came to their conclusions quicker and more accurately than the IC and America's publicly funded institutions. That should be an unacceptable outcome.

These and other SMEs, amateurs, multi-disciplinary investigators, and in some cases, provocateurs made bold assertions drawn from limited data riddled with uncertainty and risk. They teased out truth from a sea of misinformation and disinformation. They presented it to the public and *tried* to help governments, international organizations, educational institutions, and other public servants responsible for decision-making - make wise choices.

Ironically, that is the exact job description one would find if you looked up the term intelligence professional.

The IC is at risk of becoming nothing more than a think tank pumping out generic white papers. Finished analysis presented to decision makers is intended to be the penultimate expression of the intelligence cycle. Raw intelligence gets collated into all source products, and any subversion of that cycle has downstream and upstream effects.

If the raw intelligence opportunities and finished intelligence is subverted the IC isn't doing its job. If it is watered down to the point of irrelevance in an attempt to avoid controversial calls, or if every report with geopolitical ramifications undesirable to the sitting administration gets *self-curated and organizationally censored* out of collection and dropped to the cutting room floor, or if we decide to ignore the possibility that intelligence partners are trying to influence our actions, we aren't informing policy makers and we are no longer carrying out our statutorily defined responsibility.

When the actions of a tiny minority of the career bureaucrats and political appointees subvert analytical calls, they demonstrate they have little respect for every intelligence officer who spent months and years developing and handling sources, or hours translating difficult dialects and parsing through slang and other cultural references to provide a thorough translation. IC managers should not be counting the number of analysts on each side of an argument and talking about split decisions – it doesn't matter which topic. That

isn't why they were hired. That is – *however* - what happened during COVID. In the case of the ODNI working in the *inter-agency space*, they appeared to be putting the thumb on the scale in support of zoonosis arguments.

COVID origin chronology

The CIA struggled to produce a consolidated, consensus opinion for over four years. Emails from ODNI personnel continued to demonstrate a bias towards natural origin. In one email a senior NIC officer admitted that it was not standard practice for the NIC to take an independent stance but offered to write a paper supporting natural origin. That stance was based on a vote among the members of that team. There was no other documentation explaining how they justified the conclusion. Regardless of the analytic integrity of the NIC's stance, given the structure of previous inter-agency products, even if the CIA had changed its position to lab leak there is no indication that the NIC would discontinue parsing out agency-specific decisions between DIA, NGA, NSA, DOE, FBI, CIA, and the NIC.

Dr. Fauci injected himself into the process during two key timeframes. First in February 2020 as the pandemic started and in June 2021 as the IC was initiating a 90-day review of all source intelligence. His involvement with the IC in February 2020, when compared to his public facing actions and that which has been revealed to the public from FOIA results, clearly indicates his actions were intentional. It gave the appearance that he was seeking to ensure the IC did not get too far ahead of the narrative he was generating with overseas partners like Jeremy Farrar and Edward Holmes; while making sophomoric attempts to publicly claim he did not have a hand in the findings from Kristian Andersen's paper "The Proximal Origins of SARS-CoV-2". Instead, he pressured the IC to meet with the paper's authors and a curated list of supporters who also happened to receive NIAID funding and in some cases were part of the IC's advisory body of scientists. Included below is an unclassified timeline of events from some of the DIG's findings.

- There is no definitive reporting supporting the supposition that SARS-CoV-2 originated during the 2019 Military World games in Wuhan, China between 18 – 27 October 2019.
- October 2019 tabletop exercises like Event 201 and Clade X in May 2018, as well as similarly scoped white papers published by John Hopkins University created a highly managed roadmap for not just origin's analysis, but pandemic response. It may have limited the scope of mitigation measures, counter measures, health responses and research. The degree of IC involvement in these types of exercises still needs close examination.

- Credible reporting does indicate that the pandemic may have begun in November 2019 in Wuhan, China and was the product of a lab incident.
- Early reports coming from DOD and FBI were heavily scrutinized and one could reasonably generalize the NIC's reaction to these reports as one of dismissal and resistance.
- By late December 2019 and early January 2020, the IC was fully aware there was the potential for a significant pandemic event. There was no indication that they were sitting on intelligence or delaying action.
- On 28 January 2020, Dr. Ralph Baric provided NCBC with a power point presentation on the origin of SARS-CoV-2. Page 22 included discussion of the possibility of a lab leak. Following discussion with National Counterproliferation and Biosecurity Center (NCBC) personnel, he provided a new power point on 30 January 2020 that stripped the discussion on lab leak.
- 1 February 2020, Dr. Fauci led a private teleconference call with Jeremy Farrar, Edward Holmes, Kristian Andersen, Robert Garry, Andrew Rambaut, and Francis Collins.
- 3 February 2020, Dr. Fauci participated in a National Academy of Science (NAS) call with Kristian Andersen, Ralph Baric, FBI, and ODNI. The lab leak theory was generally dismissed, but they did discuss Baric's ties to the Wuhan Institute of virology (WIV), and Baric's sharing of hACE2 mice.
- 26 May 2020, Dr. Greg Cutlip, a DIA National Center for Medical Intelligence (NCMI) research scientist and CDR Jean-Paul Chretien, a US Navy Commander and DIA scientist draft the paper "Critical Analysis of Andersen et al. The Proximal Origin of SARS-CoV-2". It received little attention in the interagency space despite its accurate analysis. Emails from NCBC were dismissive of the paper at the time of publication.
- In May 2020, a DOE national lab produced a report indicating that all of the prerequisite conditions for a lab leak were present at the Wuhan Institute of Virology (WIV). There were other DOE technical papers supporting both lab leak and zoonosis, but this DOE lab and one other lab tended to lean in on the possibility of a lab leak. This report highlighted considerable interagency discussion on the definition of a lab incident: passaging experiments, accidental release of a naturally occurring virus, and genetic engineering. That report was widely distributed during inter-agency coordination but was not included in any of the IC products in 2020. It

was published in February 2021 with only one change and was included in the annex of the classified 2021 90-day study NIC product.

- By February 2021, Some CIA analysts with technical expertise in life sciences were leaning towards supporting a lab leak call. Interagency discussion eventually pushed the analysts at CIA back towards a lack of consensus call, but there was one email originating in the National Intelligence Council (NIC) that stated: if the CIA could make a call, they would likely assess lab leak. Due CIA's refusal to provide documents to the DIG, we were unable to determine why CIA analysts were dissuading from making a lab incident determination.
- March 2021, FBI assessed with moderate confidence that SARS-CoV-2 originated in a lab incident. It was incorporated into the August 2021 publication of the 90-day study.
- May 2021-August 2021, a senior CIA officer serving in a Joint Duty Assignment (JDA) in the NIC-led the 90-day study, which culminated in a briefing for President Biden. The process included participation in interagency structured analytic techniques and regular coordination.
- 4 June 2021, there was an interagency meeting which included Dr. Anthony Fauci. He provided specific guidance regarding the IC's outreach efforts. The NIC officer in charge of the 90-day study proceeded to ensure Dr. Fauci's recommendations were pursued.
 - According to one email exchange, a senior DNI official reached out to the NIC officer leading the 90-day study to ask whether it was appropriate to pursue Dr. Fauci's recommendations and opinion on COVID origins. The NIC officer in charge of the 90-day study stated that Dr. Fauci should be considered a SME rather than a public health official. This appears to be in direct contrast to Dr. Fauci's 3 June 2024 testimony where he commented that he was not "an evolutionary virologist and would not be qualified to do so in any case. I left the issue of origin of the virus to the experts."
 - The IC pursued Dr. Fauci's recommendations.
 - The 90-day study listed off each agency's individual stance on the origin of COVID-10: Lab leak, natural origin, or unable to make a consolidated determination. The NIC is responsible for marshalling the interagency and producing a consolidated response for policy makers. This did not occur.

- There was one email indicating the NIC took a vote to determine where they stood – as a separate agency – on COVID origins. Five of the six individuals serving in the NIC office responsible for COVID origins assessed it to be natural origin. The DIG couldn't find any other documentation supporting how the NIC came to that conclusion other than a vote.
- Sometime between 12 and 17 August 2021, the CIA changed its assessment from lab incident to a non-consensus determination. There is no indication based on the documents in DIG holdings to indicate why the assessment changed.
- Following publication of the NIC product, there was a briefing for POTUS. The NIC project lead was the briefer and an analyst from CIA served as a back bencher. CIA's backbencher was one of the CIA's top scientists. When POTUS asked the CIA analyst for an opinion, the CIA analyst said that the analysis was based on five scientific pillars and all five favored the lab leak theory.
- There was new information that surfaced in 2022. According to WBs, By September 2022 the interagency was working on a COVID relook.
- August 2022, House Oversight Committee Chairman Comer sent a letter to DNI Haines regarding discrepancies between the 90-day study and a DOE Q&A that appeared to contradict the conclusions in the NIC product.
 - The NIC coordinated with DOE HQS to consolidate a response. DOE HQS employees were attempting to bridge the differences in products with the NIC, but when they coordinated with the lab responsible for drafting the Q&A, it further exacerbated the scientific/analytic differences between the two products.
 - The NIC did not include DOE's additional justification in the response to Congress, taking what appeared to be a very narrow view of oversight's request. The NIC response confirmed that the NIC product was accurate and reflective of the interagency body of knowledge, but did not include DOE's additional justification for the DOE stance in the Q&A. The NIC addressed this with a minor change in verbiage to the NIC product.
- In late 2022, a draft CIA assessment was sent to the CIA's Weapons and Counterproliferation Center (WCPMC) front office for review. The NIC was informed that the CIA was intending to make a lab leak call in their upcoming assessment.
 - One day later, a new intelligence report was published that allegedly contradicted the new information. According to multiple SMEs who spoke to

the DIG. It did not contradict the body of evidence that had been collected since the pandemic began in 2020.

- The analysts were told to go back and conduct a reassessment. At the time there were 10 individuals assigned to the COVID relook team.
- According to multiple WBs, prior to being told to conduct a reassessment, eight of the 10 were in support of the lab leak scenario at a low confidence level. One of the analysts supported at a medium confidence. There were seven technical experts on the team, the others were career analysts without life science specialties.
- In January 2023, DOE changed its assessment to lab incident based on the new information that surfaced in 2022.
- By March 2023, a majority of the CIA 10-person team still assessed that it was a lab leak. Six of seven technical experts assessed it was a lab leak. CIA management – none of whom were SMEs - changed the analytic line to “we may never *precisely* know the origin of SARS-CoV-2.”
 - Precisely is not an analytic term typically used and according to WBs that came forward to the DIG, it was wording intended to dissuade the IC from further inquiry.
 - Changes to the draft CIA assessment were made in the middle of the night – 1:53 am - and the track changes on the word document do not reflect who was making the changes to the wording.
 - Two of the analysts made complaints to the ombudsman for analytic integrity.
 - The seniormost analyst/SME wrote an email specifically addressing their disagreement over the changed assessment and asked that it be sent directly to WCPMC FO. Management at WCPMC did send it to the WCPMC FO, but not before adding their commentary to the notification.
 - The author of the email also refused to participate in any further COVID analysis; that individual was worried that policy makers were being misinformed.
 - The CIA retaliated against (these) analysts who assessed lab leak. They no longer serve as analysts in WCPMC, their careers have been impacted, while

those managers have been promoted into very senior positions. One of whom was promoted to senior intelligence service just this last year.

- The analysts were not bribed. The analysts who assessed lab leak were given a \$1500 exceptional performance award. In contrast, at least one non-specialist in favor of zoonosis according to documents held at the DNI, was awarded four times that amount.
- Going forward - It will be very important that any awards for COVID analysis between 2020 and 2024 be scrutinized to see if there was a pattern of rewarding one side of the COVID argument preferentially.
- Although there were a number of concerning behaviors and an obvious bias towards zoonosis between 2020 and 2023, without further documentation from CIA to clarify information gaps - this was the first time there was *clear evidence* of violations of analytic tradecraft.
- August 2023, the Australian leaked an unclassified National Center for medical Intelligence (NCMI) paper from DIA; it was written by CDR Chetrein and Greg Cutlip. It highlighted the key short-comings associated with Kristian Andersen's paper "The Proximal Origin of SARS-CoV-2." Internally, the IC was conducting damage control without addressing the substance of the paper. This was a behavior that was repeated throughout the pandemic. Open-source publications would produce reports, they would be flipped up to the IC, and it appeared that they were consistently looking for holes in the lab leak theory. The same behavior did not occur with articles in support of zoonosis. In contrast, the DIG read an email from one senior member of NCBC that stated, the "we <the IC> have our answer " in reference to the publication of "The Proximal Origin of SARS-CoV-2."
- November 2024, CIA changes analytic stance. According to WBs this was not based on significant new information. It was directed by the CIA and WCPMC senior leadership. They were told they had to make call on zoonosis or lab incident.

DIG investigations were being undermined from within the IC.

As previously mentioned, DIG encountered several concerning obstacles to their efforts to carry out the tasks dictated in several Executive Orders (EO) and tasked by Director Gabbard. In addition to requests for information being ignored and slow rolled by the CIA, and eventually refused, the CIA was investigating DIG members and illegally monitoring their communications.

In late October 2025, investigative journalist Steve Baker contacted ODNI with information allegedly related to the identity of the January 6 pipe bomber. Baker, as has now been made clear in his reporting, had assessed that a current CIA employee, then a Capitol Police officer, had planted the bombs outside the DNC and RNC headquarters on the evening of January 5th. DIG members could not and did not attempt to corroborate Baker's allegations; the group did not have the means or legal authority to do so. But, as part of ODNI, which is a coordinating agency, the DIG consulted with senior ODNI leadership, to include the Office of General Counsel and the Office of the Principal Deputy Director of National Intelligence, on circulating this information with appropriate agencies who could attempt to investigate the matter. To the best of my recollection, I remember several of my colleagues who were involved recalling that the DIG was directed to draft a memo with Baker's information that could be circulated to other agencies. After some internal deliberations, the decision to circulate such a memo was apparently reversed, either by the Office of General Counsel or other senior ODNI leadership. It had apparently been decided that the Principal Deputy Director of National Intelligence Aaron Lukas would call his counterpart at CIA, Deputy Director Michael Ellis, to pass along the information. Before his phone call with Ellis, Lukas requested a hard copy of DIG's draft memo to use as talking points in his phone call. Sometime between that evening and the following morning, Lukas shared a copy of that memo with Ellis. Within a few hours, as has now been reported publicly, that memo circulated to senior Trump administration officials across several agencies.

The memo and the ensuing drama that unfolded as a result helped spark a pause in the DIG's work in December 2025, and its ultimate dissolution in January 2026. The dissolution of the DIG has halted critical transparency work that the American people voted for when reelecting President Donald Trump.

Sometime shortly after, the CIA began monitoring the computer usage of the DIG officers involved in handling Steve Baker's information and pulling their electronic communications. The CIA also opened investigations into these individuals and began contacting them demanding that they report to a separate facility to be interviewed as part of this investigation. That facility is known as a location where polygraph interviews are conducted.

Since DIG members were made aware of these investigations, a complaint was filed with the IC Inspector General. This was not the first time the CIA appears to have been monitoring DIG communications. Individuals involved in our AHI investigation discovered third parties were listening into secure phone calls at Intelligence Community facilities. In one instance, it was during a conversation with a whistleblower. These were also reported

in counterintelligence channels and DNI IT experts confirmed that it required an IT engineering work order to reproduce what occurred on the secure phone calls. Someone had to request a technical change to the infrastructure.

These experiences led DIG individuals to believe that CIA was constantly aware and monitoring DIG activity. In one of the most obvious examples – a contractor reporting to the DIG as a whistleblower was fired one day after reporting to the DIG.

After the DIG shutdown, in addition to transfer of the COVID work over to the NIC, the CIA took back 40 boxes of documents being processed for declassification. They were JFK assassination files, and they have not yet been released. They also took back MKULTRA files the DNI was going to process for possible declassification.

If this is the reaction of a subordinate agency to investigations being tasked by Director Gabbard, the only safe way to address the behavior is publicly. If Director Gabbard were to leave her position, I have no faith that the CIA would continue to refrain from these actions.