



July 7, 2023

The Honorable Frank Lucas  
Chairman  
Committee on Science, Space and Technology  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Zoe Lofgren  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Science, Space and Technology  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Lucas and Ranking Member Lofgren,

I write in response to the Committee's June 15, 2023, letter, which asks about the steps taken by this office after receiving the Committee's June 6, 2023, request for documents.

On the evening of June 6, 2023, [REDACTED] an employee of the Department of Commerce, Office of Inspector General (OIG) received an email from committee staff attaching the committee's document requests. He forwarded the email and attachment to me and the [REDACTED].

I opened the forwarded email and attachment on June 8, 2023, upon my return from a personal day for a family event. I forwarded the attached document requests to the specific OIG employees from whom responsive documents were requested and to [REDACTED], our [REDACTED] [REDACTED] and asked those employees to begin collecting any responsive documents sought from them.

On the morning of June 9, the following steps were taken:

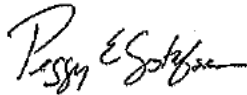
- I recalled the message in Outlook. The recall notice generated by Outlook indicated that the message was successfully recalled and deleted from inboxes and that two recipients, [REDACTED] and [REDACTED], had not opened or read the message.
- I also asked OIG counsel to contact the one individual from the Office of Audit and Evaluation who had opened the message, [REDACTED], to counsel him on the need to keep the information contained in the document requests confidential and to not share the contents of the June 6 document requests with anyone else. In the course of that conversation, counsel learned that [REDACTED] had spoken about the part of the letter that was applicable to him with [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] who serve as [REDACTED] [REDACTED]. Counsel subsequently advised [REDACTED] [REDACTED] to contact the men and provide them the same advice regarding the letter as he had received.

- I also asked OIG counsel to contact [REDACTED] to provide the same advice.

On June 21 [REDACTED] successfully recalled his forwarded message to the [REDACTED], which had not been opened or read. On June 21 and 22, I learned that [REDACTED] had also shown the letter via screen-share over MS Teams to another senior OIG employee, [REDACTED], and a [REDACTED] colleague at the Department of Transportation Office of Inspector General, [REDACTED]. Both of these conversations occurred before I had seen the letter. OIG counsel contacted [REDACTED] and advised him on the appropriate treatment of any information regarding the document request provided to our office. Counsel also contacted counsel at DOT-OIG and suggested [REDACTED] receive the same advice. DOC OIG counsel followed up with DOT OIG and confirmed that [REDACTED] had received said counseling.

I hope this provides the information you seek from your June 15 letter. In the meantime, we are working to respond to your June 6 letter and will continue to provide the documents requested on a rolling basis, as soon as possible.

Sincerely,



Peggy E. Gustafson  
Inspector General

Attachment