



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

March 11, 2022

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Biden,

In September 2021, it was reported your administration released Alexei Burkov, a high-profile Russian cybercriminal into Russian custody¹. This decision by your Department of Justice (DOJ), in conjunction with Russia's track record of committing cyber-attacks against the United States² and our western allies³, is alarming. Your administration needs to justify this decision to the American people.

News reports indicate this dangerous Russian hacker was released on August 25, 2021. Your DOJ refused to answer any questions on this matter. If you and Attorney General Merrick Garland believe this was a wise decision, why is your DOJ unwilling to answer questions regarding the circumstances behind Burkov's release?

When the Kremlin's spokesman, Dimitry Peskov considers his release a "positive development," that should worry the American people. We believe this decision was another capitulation to Vladimir Putin, rather than your administration showing any actual strength and resolve against an oppressive tyrant.

We believe Putin chose to invade Ukraine because of weakness from your administration. Your administration chose to significantly weaken our domestic energy sector through the banning of domestic production on federal lands, as well as the cancellation the permit for the Keystone XL pipeline. A pipeline that would have produced over 800,000 barrels of crude oil per day. If you had maintained the strong energy sector you inherited, you could have implemented crippling

¹ Volz, Dustin, and Aruna Viswanatha. "U.S. Deports High-Profile Hacker to Russia before End of Prison Sentence." *The Wall Street Journal*, Dow Jones & Company, 29 Sept. 2021, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/u-s-deports-high-profile-hacker-to-russia-before-end-of-prison-sentence-11632871404#:~:text=WASHINGTON%E2%80%94The%20U.S.,Moscow's%20efforts%20to%20retrieve%20him>.

² Lyngaas, Sean. "US Officials Believe Russia Arrested Hacker Responsible for Colonial Pipeline Attack." *CNN*, Cable News Network, 14 Jan. 2022, <https://www.cnn.com/2022/01/14/politics/us-russia-colonial-pipeline-hack-arrest/index.html>.

³ Feiner, Lauren. "Cyberattack Hits Ukrainian Banks and Government Websites." *CNBC*, 23 Feb. 2022, <https://archive.fo/5ARDe>.

sanctions on Russia's energy sector. Instead, your administration was forced to settle on financial sanctions that could take months to have significant effects. While the weakness behind the sanctions is troubling, the bigger issue is you waited until after the killing began in Ukraine before you chose to act with any sense of purpose. Your administration has continuously been a step behind and late to react. You need to be stronger on the world stage.

Vladimir Putin has been committing atrocities across eastern Europe, as well as cyber-attacks around the world. He invaded Georgia in an unprovoked attack in 2008. During the Russ-Georgian conflict, Putin-backed South Ossetia forces were accused of ethnic cleansing of Georgians.⁴ Between these two military conflicts instigated by Russia, Putin has deployed sophisticated cyber-attacks against the United States. From the hack of SolarWinds in 2020⁵, to the hacking of the Colonial Pipeline in 2021⁶, Putin has continually attacked the United States with little deterrence or punitive response. Now it has been reported that Putin has been utilizing thermobaric weapons (vacuum bombs) against the Ukrainian people⁷. The use of these munitions against civilians could be deemed a war crime under the Hague Conventions of 1899 and 1907.⁸

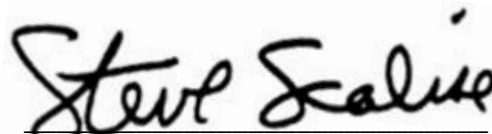
Do you plan on taking aggressive action against these war crimes? If you want to be seen as the leader of the free world, as all post-WWII U.S. Presidents have been perceived, you need to begin taking actual aggressive action against tyrants. Not implementing sanctions that do not actually target the heart of a despot's economy.

We are demanding you or Attorney General Garland brief all members of Congress on your justification for releasing Alexei Burkov back to Vladimir Putin. The American people deserve answers as to why you believe a dangerous hacker should be released.

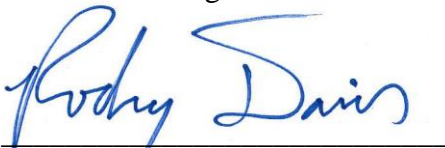
Sincerely,



Lisa McClain
Member of Congress



Steve Scalise
Member of Congress



Rodney Davis
Member of Congress



Tom Rice
Member of Congress

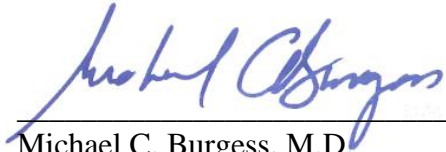
⁴ Harding, Luke. "Russia Committed Human Rights Violation in Georgia War, ECHR Rules." *The Guardian*, Guardian News and Media, 21 Jan. 2021, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jan/21/russia-human-rights-violation-georgia-war-echr-ruling>.

⁵ Morrison, Sara. "How Russian Hackers Infiltrated the Federal Government." *Vox*, Vox, 14 Dec. 2020, <https://www.vox.com/recode/2020/12/14/22174314/government-hack-solarwinds-cozybear-russia>.

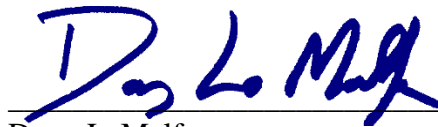
⁶ Kerner, Sean Michael. "Colonial Pipeline Hack Explained: Everything You Need to Know." *WhatIs.com*, TechTarget, 7 July 2021, <https://whatis.techtarget.com/feature/Colonial-Pipeline-hack-explained-Everything-you-need-to-know>.

⁷ Zengerle, Patricia. "Ukraine, Rights Groups Say Russia Used Cluster & Vacuum Bombs." *Reuters*, Thomson Reuters, 1 Mar. 2022, <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/ukraines-ambassador-us-says-russia-used-vacuum-bomb-monday-2022-02-28/>.

⁸ United States, Congress, House., and James Brown Scott. *First and Second International Peace Conferences. Held at The Hague 1899 and 1907*, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1914.



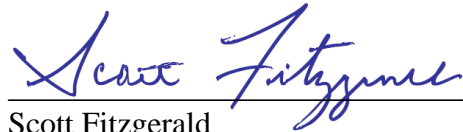
Michael C. Burgess, M.D.
Member of Congress



Doug LaMalfa
Member of Congress



Eric A. "Rick" Crawford
Member of Congress



Scott Fitzgerald
Member of Congress



Diana Harshbarger
Member of Congress



Peter Meijer
Member of Congress



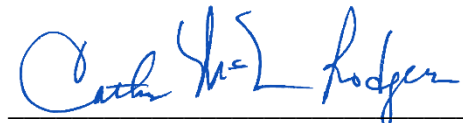
Nicole Malliotakis
Member of Congress



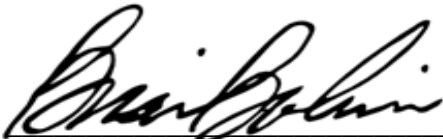
Neal P. Dunn, M.D.
Member of Congress



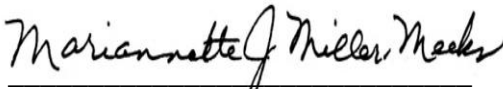
Andy Biggs
Member of Congress



Cathy McMorris Rodgers
Member of Congress



Brian Babin, D.D.S.
Member of Congress



Mariannette Miller-Meeks, M.D.
Member of Congress



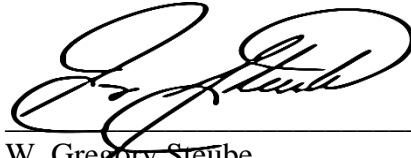
Ralph Norman
Member of Congress



Austin Scott
Member of Congress



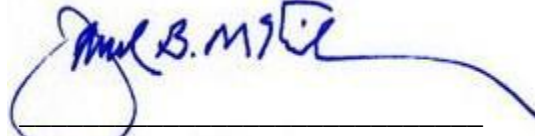
Mo Brooks
Member of Congress



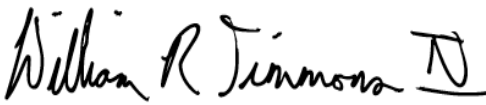
W. Gregory Steube
Member of Congress



Ken Calvert
Member of Congress



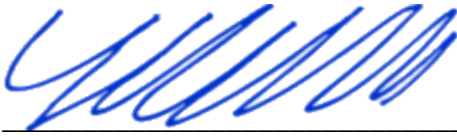
David B. McKinley, P.E.
Member of Congress



William R. Timmons, IV
Member of Congress



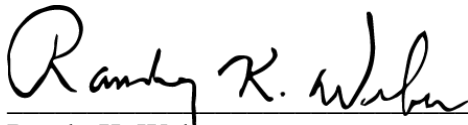
Mark E. Green, M.D.
Member of Congress



Mike Garcia
Member of Congress



Bill Johnson
Member of Congress



Randy K. Weber
Member of Congress