



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

September 24, 2024

The Honorable Antony Blinken
Secretary of State
Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Secretary Blinken:

As a senior Member of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, I am writing with new and significant concerns that go straight to the declining credibility of American diplomacy during the Biden-Harris Administration and the outright censorship of Americans by the State Department under your tenure.

Specifically, you should know that this Congress is now aware that the Global Engagement Center (GEC) not only participated in domestic censorship activities, but also repeatedly undertook to smear opinion writers, journalists and Members of Congress.

Against this backdrop is the State Department's repeated assertions that the GEC does not engage in domestic activity. But this is not true.

As you know, Congress has wisely barred the State Department from conducting information operations inside the United States, a prohibition that merely implements the protections of the First Amendment. But it is now increasingly clear that the GEC repeatedly funded, supported operations, and bolstered the credibility of organizations that explicitly aimed to censor conservative speech inside the United States.

Most disturbing are revelations from the House Small Business Committee that uncovered a subgrant to the Poynter Institute for Media Studies' International Fact-Checking Network that acted as gatekeeper, judge, and jury for domestic media outlets.¹ Beyond a set of troubling grants, the fundamental problem is that the GEC sees itself not as a vanguard setting the record straight about the best of America to an international audience, but as part of a transatlantic network fighting "misinformation" and "disinformation" not only abroad, but in this country.

¹ "Small Business: Instruments and Casualties of the Censorship Industrial Complex," House Committee on Small Business Interim Staff Report 2024, September 10, 2024, pages 13-14, https://smallbusiness.house.gov/uploadedfiles/house_committee_on_small_business_-_cic_report_september_2024.pdf

This venture is also clearly composed of leftist activists and organizations, which explains why these two technical terms have basically come to mean any speech with which leftists disagree and want to see driven from the public square. This network does not aim merely to counter Russian influence operations, it aims to censor speech that challenges liberal dogma.

By smearing anyone who disagrees with it as a Russian stooge, this network conflates U.S. citizens with a U.S. adversary, as State Department talking points did to my colleague Representative Jim Banks and the award-winning journalists Gabe Kaminsky and Matt Taibbi in a scheming sleight of hand that ruled out of bounds political opinions and fact-based reporting it opposed but cannot refute.²

The GEC is too intertwined with this ecosystem to be reformed, particularly as a matter of grants, outlook, and staffing. The United States critically needs a peacetime information function that counters with the truth the increasingly sophisticated adversaries opposed to America's national interest. A functional State department would begin the overdue task of working in good faith with Congress to craft an enduring, credible solution.

Mr. Secretary: It is time for this failed entity to be held accountable. It is time to bring an end to the Global Engagement Center.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Darrell Issa', written in a cursive style.

Darrell Issa
Member of Congress

² Josh Christenson, “State Department tried to discredit reporters, Republican pol over conservative ‘blacklist’,” *New York Post*, September 13, 2024, <https://nypost.com/2024/09/13/us-news/state-department-tried-to-discredit-reporters-republican-pol-over-conservative-blacklist/>