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Chairman Trey Gowdy
Committee on Oversight and Government Reform
2157 Rayburn House Office Building
U.S. House of Representatives

Dear Chairman Gowdy,

A recent article by Josh Meyer of *Politico* exposed the undue influence that the Obama Administration exacted on an investigation into Hezbollah by the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA). In 2008, the DEA launched "Project Cassandra" following mounting evidence that Hezbollah, in addition to being Iran's terror proxy, had become an international criminal organization, garnering approximately \$1 billion annually from arms trafficking, drug trafficking, money laundering, and other criminal activities.

Reportedly, "Project Cassandra" was successful in mapping Hezbollah's criminal operations, including into Latin America, West Africa, Europe, the Middle East, and the United States.

However, as the operation reached into the higher levels of Hezbollah, the revelations threatened to undermine the Obama Administration's nuclear talks with Iran. DEA officials on "Project Cassandra" purportedly faced increased obstacles from political appointees within the Obama Administration. This allegedly included the Department of Justice blocking criminal charges against key Hezbollah figures closely tied to Iran's regime.

The Department of State also reportedly denied requests to lure investigation targets to countries where they could be arrested. Additionally, it appears the Obama Administration declined to seek extradition of key Hezbollah figures in custody in friendly nations. As reported, arrests of Hezbollah officials were not made, Treasury designations of Hezbollah officials were not issued, which would have prevented these targets from accessing U.S. financial markets. Effectively, officials within the Obama Administration appear to have shielded a known terrorist organization from sanction and justice.

In testimony to the House Committee on Foreign Affairs in February 2016, Treasury official Katherine Bauer said that "under the Obama administration ... these [Hezbollah-related] investigations were tamped down for fear of rocking the boat with Iran and jeopardizing the nuclear deal."

According to officials, as the Iranian nuclear negotiations progressed, the Obama Administration increasingly obstructed legitimate law enforcement activities against Hezbollah for fear of upsetting its patron, Iran. This is outrageous and counter to America's national security interests.

As Vice Chairman of the Terrorism and Illicit Finance Subcommittee and the Chairman of the Congressional Taskforce on Terrorism and Unconventional Warfare, I have held two Parliamentary Intelligence-Security Forums in Buenos Aires, Argentina involving over 220 Members of Parliament from 15 South American countries. One of the major focuses of these forums has been the damage that Hezbollah has inflicted on our Latin America allies through its drug trafficking operations throughout the region, particularly the “Tri-Border” Area. Having political officials undermining law enforcement efforts to combat terror financing is a clear and present danger to American interests.

Since the previous administration made enacting any type of meaningful national security strategy difficult, it is even more outrageous that the Obama Administration undermined our efforts against terrorism for the sake of a bad nuclear deal with the world’s largest state sponsor of terrorism, Iran.

Of note, the Obama Administration sent \$1.7 billion in cash to Iran. The previous administration was complicit in allowing the Hezbollah’s money laundering operation to continue and allowing it to fund terrorist activities and harm American interests and our allies. This undermines both the rule of law and law enforcement’s efforts to bring terrorists and criminals to justice.

Therefore, I respectfully request that the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform:

- Investigate this matter with haste;
- Hold hearings on this matter open to the public;
- Make public any documents that are not classified for national security reasons;

Due to the severity of this matter and my engagement on these issues with our Latin American partners, I am happy to testify in front of your subcommittee to offer any expertise. Thank you again for your consideration.

Regards,



Robert Pittenger
Member of Congress