

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 31, 2025

The Honorable Pamela Bondi
Attorney General of the United States
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20530

Dear Attorney General Bondi:

On March 24, *The Atlantic's* editor in chief reported that President Trump's National Security Advisor Michael Waltz had included him in a group message chain with several high-ranking national security officials where highly sensitive, classified, or controlled information was shared and discussed over Signal—an unsecure commercial messaging app.¹ In addition to the reckless inclusion of a journalist in the chat, we are deeply concerned about this serious breach in the proper handling of such information and deliberations. Given the extraordinary circumstances of this shocking incident and the significant public interests at stake, it is imperative that you immediately appoint a Special Counsel to thoroughly and impartially investigate whether any of the government officials involved violated federal criminal law.

Appointment of a Special Counsel is appropriate where the Department may have a conflict of interest or extraordinary circumstances are present, a criminal investigation is warranted, and it is in the public interest to appoint an outside Special Counsel to investigate the matter.² Such circumstances are clearly present here.

The Signal chat group started by Mr. Waltz included Vice President JD Vance, Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth, Secretary of State Marco Rubio, Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard, and Central Intelligence Agency Director John Ratcliffe, among at least 18 other high-ranking government officials.³ In addition to discussing the sensitive foreign policy implications of military strikes against Houthi targets in Yemen, these officials proceeded to discuss key operational information regarding the precise timing of the planned attacks, the types of military aircraft and munitions to be used, and the targets and results of the strikes as they occurred.⁴ An unprecedented security breach of this magnitude involving top senior government officials⁵

¹ Jeffrey Goldberg, *The Trump Administration Accidentally Texted Me Its War Plans*, *The Atlantic*, (March 24, 2025), <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2025/03/trump-administration-accidentally-texted-me-its-war-plans/682151/>.

² 28 C.F.R. § 600.1.

³ Talya Minsberg, *Who Was in the Signal Group Chat?*, *New York Times*, (March 25, 2025), <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/03/25/us/signal-group-chat-key-figures.html>.

⁴ Jeffrey Goldberg and Shane Harris, *Here Are the Attack Plans That Trump's Advisers Shared on Signal*, *The Atlantic*, (March 26, 2025), <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2025/03/signal-group-chat-attack-plans-hegseth-goldberg/682176/>.

presents the kind of extraordinary circumstances clearly contemplated by the Special Counsel regulations.

These officials conducted a highly sensitive discussion, including of clearly classified or controlled information, over the commercial messaging app Signal, including in some instances on personal devices and while traveling in foreign countries,⁶ rather than using the secure U.S. government channels and facilities that are designed and required for the sharing of such information. Despite subsequent claims to the contrary by you,⁷ President Trump,⁸ and several of the officials involved, including in testimony before Congress,⁹ some of the information they shared and discussed over Signal would almost certainly be considered classified or, at a minimum, controlled, prior to and in the immediate aftermath of an impending strike.¹⁰

These shockingly reckless breaches of security protocols for safeguarding sensitive and classified information clearly warrant an investigation into whether any of the government officials involved violated federal laws pertaining to the proper safeguarding and preservation of such information. For example, gross negligence in handling national defense information may violate the Espionage Act.¹¹ Importantly, other laws, including the Federal Records Act, require the preservation of certain government records.¹² Signal allows users to schedule messages for deletion after certain time periods and Mr. Waltz appears to have set the chat messages to delete initially after one week and then later in the chat changed the setting to delete messages after four weeks.¹³ Destruction of government records or property may constitute a violation of various criminal statutes.¹⁴ Subsequent statements to Congress and testimony before the House¹⁵

⁵ John Ismay and Charlie Savage, *The Signal Leak Has Little Precedent*, New York Times, (March 27, 2025), <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/03/27/us/politics/signal-leak-precedent-military.html>.

⁶ Status, Steve Witkoff (@SteveWitkoff), X.com, (March 26, 2025), <https://x.com/SteveWitkoff/status/1904886084879720683>.

⁷ Devin Barrett, *Bondi Suggests Signal Chat Episode Is Unlikely to Be Criminally Investigated*, New York Times, (March 27, 2025), <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/03/27/us/politics/signal-leak-prosecution-bondi.html>.

⁸ Video, *Trump: 'No classified' information was shared on Signal chat*, Washington Post, (March 25, 2025), https://www.washingtonpost.com/video/politics/trump-no-classified-information-was-shared-on-signal-chat/2025/03/25/5f847f2b-9172-4516-b6ef-81d60b88ff79_video.html.

⁹ Daniel Arkin, Dan De Luce and Katherine Doyle, *Trump's top intelligence officials claim no classified information was shared in group chat that included a journalist*, NBC News, (March 25, 2025), <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/national-security/trumps-top-intelligence-officials-claim-no-classified-information-was-rcna197954.Tr>.

¹⁰ See e.g. Anne Flaherty and Lucien Bruggeman, *Former intel official not buying White House dismissals of Signal chat risks*, ABC News, (March 26, 2025), <https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/former-intel-officials-buying-white-house-dismissals-signal/story?id=120198058>; Natasha Bertrand, Zachary Cohen, et al., *Sources say the details shared by Hegseth in Signal chat were classified as Atlantic publishes additional messages*, CNN, (March 26, 2025), <https://www.cnn.com/2025/03/26/politics/the-atlantic-publishes-signal-messages-yemen-strike/index.html>; Dan De Luce and Gordon Lubold, *Former national security officials say air strike plans shared with journalist should have been classified*, NBC News, (March 27, 2025), <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/national-security/former-national-security-officials-say-air-strike-plans-shared-journal-rcna198253>.

¹¹ 18 U.S.C. § 793(f).

¹² 44 U.S.C. §§ 3101 et seq.

¹³ See Goldberg, *supra* note 1.

and Senate Intelligence Committees¹⁶ by several of the officials involved raise additional concerns about potential violations of federal criminal laws that prohibit making false statements to Congress,¹⁷ committing perjury in testimony to Congress,¹⁸ inducing another person to commit perjury,¹⁹ or conspiring to commit any of the foregoing actions.²⁰

Even prior to his first Administration, President Trump campaigned for the need to prosecute and “lock up” individuals who allegedly “bypass government security” or “sent and received classified information on an insecure server.”²¹ Further, as an avowedly loyal and zealous advocate for the President, you echoed these same sentiments prior to your confirmation.²² Given the extraordinary nature of this security breach by senior Trump Administration officials, the likelihood that these actions needlessly endangered American lives and our nation’s security, the importance of putting our nation’s security before partisan political interests, and the range of federal criminal laws that may have been violated, it is imperative that the Department of Justice conduct a thorough investigation to assess the extent of the damage and determine whether any criminal charges are warranted against any of the government officials involved.

During your confirmation hearing before the Senate Judiciary Committee, you assured the American people that everyone will be held to “an equal, fair system of justice” if you were confirmed as Attorney General, and that “no one is above the law.”²³ As the individuals most seriously implicated in this incident include senior officials at the highest levels, including several of your fellow cabinet members, appointment of a Special Counsel is necessary to ensure that the investigation and any ensuing prosecutions are fair, impartial, and independent and that no official, regardless of seniority or political affiliation, is above the law.

¹⁴ See, e.g., 18 U.S.C. § 2071 (destruction of government property); 18 U.S.C. § 641 (disposing of public property or records); and 18 U.S.C. § 1361 (depredation against government property).

¹⁵ *Annual Worldwide Threats Assessment Hearing (Open): Hearing Before the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence*, 119th Cong., (March 26, 2025), <https://intelligence.house.gov/calendar/eventsingle.aspx?EventID=1512>.

¹⁶ *Worldwide Threats: Hearing Before the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence*, 119th Cong., (March 25, 2025), <https://www.intelligence.senate.gov/hearings/open-hearing-worldwide-threats-5>.

¹⁷ 18 U.S.C. § 1001.

¹⁸ 18 U.S.C. § 1621(1).

¹⁹ 18 U.S.C. § 1622.

²⁰ 18 U.S.C. § 371.

²¹ Will Weisert, *Comparing Trump Officials’ Comments on Leaked Signal Chat vs. Hillary Clinton’s Emails*, Time, (March 26, 2025), <https://time.com/7271654/trump-reactions-groupchat-leak-waltz-hegseth-hillary-clinton-emails-server/>; David Jackson, *Trump: Clinton should be in jail, the election is rigged*, The USA Today, (Oct. 15, 2016), <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/elections/2016/2016/10/15/donald-trump-maine-new-hampshire/92143964/>.

²² Steve Bousquet, *Pam Bondi’s ‘lock her up’ speech gives critics new ammunition*, The Tampa Bay Times, (July 20, 2016), <https://www.tampabay.com/pam-bondis-rule-of-law-speech-fired-up-her-critics---again/2286203/>.

²³ *The Nomination of the Honorable Pamela Jo Bondi to be Attorney General of the United States: Hearing Before the Senate Committee on the Judiciary*, 119th Cong. (Jan. 15, 2025) (Testimony of Pamela J. Bondi), <https://www.judiciary.senate.gov/committee-activity/hearings/the-nomination-of-the-honorable-pamela-jo-bondi-to-be-attorney-general-of-the-united-states>.

The people of this country deserve the assurance that this matter will be taken seriously and addressed swiftly. To do so, we urge you to appoint a Special Counsel immediately.

Sincerely,



Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator



Charles E. Schumer
United States Senator



Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator



Jacky Rosen
United States Senator



Cory A. Booker
United States Senator



Adam B. Schiff
United States Senator



Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator



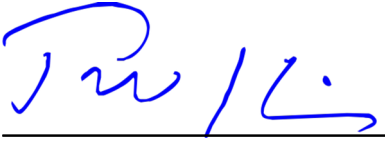
Sheldon Whitehouse
United States Senator



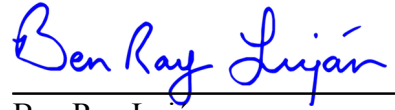
Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator



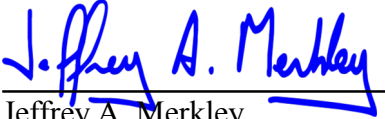
Tammy Duckworth
United States Senator



Tim Kaine
United States Senator



Ben Ray Lujan
United States Senator



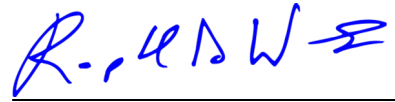
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Chris Van Hollen
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Christopher A. Coons
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United States Senator



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Tina Smith
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Lisa Blunt Rochester
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John Fetterman
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Elissa Slotkin
United States Senator

Edward J. Markey
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Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator

Ruben Gallego
United States Senator

Gary C. Peters
United States Senator