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## United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON  
HOMELAND SECURITY AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6250

June 3, 2020

Acting Secretary Chad Wolf  
U.S. Department of Homeland Security  
245 Murray Lane, SW  
Washington, DC 20528

Dear Acting Secretary Wolf,

Over the past few days, we have witnessed widespread protests across the country. The vast majority of protestors are exercising their First Amendment rights to protest systemic injustice and demand change. Unfortunately, a small number of violent actors—reportedly anarchists and other violent opportunists—have taken advantage of the moment to commit violence and destroy property.<sup>1</sup> There are also reports of others using social media platforms to incite distrust and violence, including anti-government agitators, white supremacists, and foreign adversaries, primarily Russia and China.<sup>2</sup> The Department also warned that other extremists may seek to exploit these protests for their own violent ends.<sup>3</sup>

Defending the security of the homeland must include protecting the rights of all Americans, including the right to protest peacefully, from enemies both foreign and domestic. That includes being able to separate out those who commit violence and should be prosecuted from those who exercise their rights and should be respected.

So that the Committee may better understand efforts by domestic extremists and foreign adversaries to exploit a legitimate protest movement to sow division and incite violence, please brief the Committee by June 10, 2020. We appreciate your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



Ron Johnson  
Chairman



Gary C. Peters  
Ranking Member

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<sup>1</sup> Ted Hesson, Mark Hosenball, Mica Rosenberg, Brad Heath, "U.S. assessment finds opportunists drive protest violence, not extremists," Reuters, June 3, 2020, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-minneapolis-police-protests-extremist/u-s-assessment-finds-opportunists-drive-protest-violence-not-extremists-idUSKBN23A1KU>.

<sup>2</sup> Aaron Holmes, "An 'ANTIFA' Twitter account that called for looting 'white hoods' was actually run by white nationalist group Identity Evropa," Business Insider, June 2, 2020, <https://www.businessinsider.com/white-nationalist-identity-evropa-twitter-antifa-looting-2020-6>; "Extremists Weigh in on Nationwide Protests," Anti-Defamation League, June 1, 2020, <https://www.adl.org/blog/extremists-weigh-in-on-nationwide-protests>; Mark Scott, "Russia and China target U.S. protests on social media," Politico, June 1, 2020, <https://www.politico.com/news/2020/06/01/russia-and-china-target-us-protests-on-social-media-294315>.

<sup>3</sup> Betsy Woodruff Swan, Natasha Bertrand, "Domestic terrorist actors' could exploit Floyd protests, DHS memo warns," Politico, June 1, 2020, <https://www.politico.com/news/2020/06/01/dhs-domestic-terrorists-protest-294342>