

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 13, 2025

Mr. Steven Stebbins
Acting Inspector General
Department of Defense
Alexandria, VA 22350

Dear Mr. Stebbins,

We write to request that you conduct an inquiry into the Department of Defense's (DOD) role in facilitating and serving as a pass-through for President Trump to receive a luxury plane worth an estimated \$400 million from Qatar.

Following initial public reports, President Trump confirmed on May 12, 2025, that he intends to accept this unprecedented gift from the Qatari royal family, which would constitute one of the largest foreign gifts ever accepted by a President or the U.S. government.¹ According to public reporting, the Qatari government initially considered donating the plane directly to President Trump through his presidential library, but the Administration sought legal advice to restructure the transfer to circumvent constitutional and statutory prohibitions, including federal bribery and ethics laws.²

Public reports raise the troubling prospect that the Administration involved DOD to (1) launder this impermissible gift, so that the Department could provide cover to give the transfer of the plane the appearance of an official gift; (2) place the onus on DOD to retrofit the plane at considerable cost to U.S. taxpayers; and (3) ultimately transfer it to President Trump's library prior to the end of his term for his continued use in a personal capacity.³

DOD risks becoming embroiled in a brazen attempt to evade constitutional limitations on the acceptance of personal gifts from foreign governments without congressional approval. The Constitution provides that "no Person holding any Office of Profit or Trust under them, shall, without the Consent of the Congress, accept of any present, Emolument, Office, or Title, of any kind whatever, from any King, Prince, or foreign State."⁴ Congress has granted consent in only a narrow set of circumstances under the Foreign Gifts and Decorations Act, and none of these circumstances are applicable here.⁵

¹ Maggie Haberman, Eric Schmitt, and Glenn Thrush, *Trump Is Posed to Accept a Luxury 747 From Qatar for Use as Air Force One*, The New York Times (May 11, 2025), <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/05/11/us/politics/trump-qatar-jet-gift-air-force-one.html>.

² *Id.*

³ See, e.g., Rachel Treisman, *Ethics experts worry about the implications of Trump accepting Qatar's luxury plane*, NPR (May 12, 2025), <https://www.npr.org/2025/05/12/nx-s1-5395696/qatar-trump-plane-gift-ethics>; see also Annie Linskey et al., *Trump Sends Message to World: He's Open for Business*, Wall Street Journal (May 12, 2025), <https://www.wsj.com/politics/policy/trump-defends-gift-of-plane-from-qatar-6ab522f8>.

⁴ U.S. Constitution, Art. 1, Section 9, Clause 8.

⁵ See, e.g., 5 U.S.C. § 7342(c).

In addition to these serious constitutional and legal concerns, this foreign emolument – and DOD’s possible involvement in facilitating it – could present severe foreign influence and counterintelligence risks. It could entangle DOD in President Trump’s personal financial interests and conflicts of interest, warp DOD’s military recommendations and advice moving forward, and undermine public confidence in the Department.

Securing the plane against counterintelligence and surveillance risks, moreover, would be costly.⁶ Initial reporting suggests that the plane would need to be substantially retrofitted by a military contractor to ensure it meets necessary security and counterintelligence standards, which could take years to complete.⁷ DOD, and by extension U.S. taxpayers, would thereby bear the ultimate cost, which could be significant. This timeline, moreover, reinforces that such a gift is not, in fact, intended for official use. By the time the plane would be ready for President Trump’s use as part of the Air Force One fleet, we would likely be approaching the final stretch of President Trump’s final term in office, at which point the Department would likely be directed to transfer it to President Trump’s presidential library for his ultimate personal use.

Accordingly, we request that you initiate an inquiry into the facts and circumstances surrounding DOD’s involvement to date in seeking to facilitate this foreign gift transfer and pursue a comprehensive audit and investigation to assess fraud, waste, and abuse if and when such a transfer occurs.

In doing so, we ask that you consider and provide an assessment of the following, including in classified form if needed:

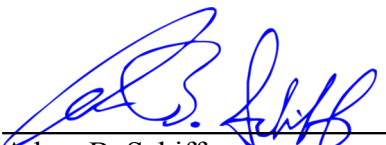
- the cost estimate and assessed timeline for retrofitting such an aircraft and installing communications and other equipment necessary to meet security and counterintelligence requirements for the Air Force One fleet;
- the timeline, if any, that the White House has directed for this aircraft to be ready for the President’s use, whether necessary modifications can be made within such a timeframe to meet Air Force One standards, and what risks such a timeline could entail;
- whether the existing contract for other Air Force One aircraft will continue or be terminated, including the cost of termination; and
- the counterintelligence and security risks of incorporating this aircraft, provided by a foreign government, into the Air Force One fleet.

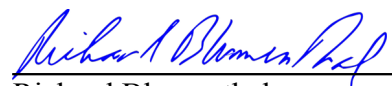
Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter and to this request.

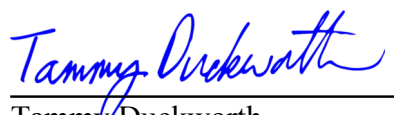
⁶ Joe Gould and Connor O’Brien, *Trump’s free plane is not so free*, Politico (May 12, 2025), <https://www.politico.com/news/2025/05/12/trump-qatar-air-force-one-taxpayer-costs-00342299>.

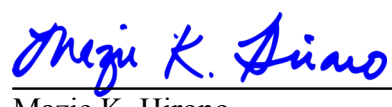
⁷ Maggie Haberman, Eric Schmitt, and Glenn Thrush, *Trump Is Posed to Accept a Luxury 747 From Qatar for Use as Air Force One*, The New York Times (May 11, 2025), <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/05/11/us/politics/trump-qatar-jet-gift-air-force-one.html>.

Sincerely,


Adam B. Schiff
United States Senator

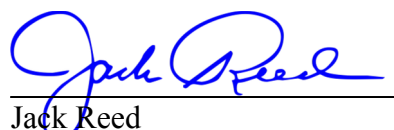

Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator

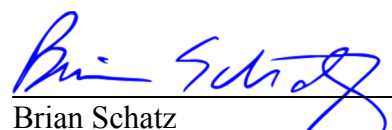

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