

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 13, 2023

Matthew Taibbi

Dear Mr. Taibbi,

I write regarding your appearance before the House Judiciary Committee Subcommittee on Weaponization on March 9, 2023. It has come to my attention that information foundational to your testimony that day has since been revealed to be false and misleading. I would like to provide you with an opportunity to correct the hearing record to ensure accuracy in a congressional hearing and so that the public and their representatives are not misled.

Specifically, on March 9, immediately before your appearance before the Subcommittee, you released an additional installment of the so-called Twitter Files on your personal Twitter account.¹ As part of that installment, you alleged that the Election Integrity Partnership (EIP) worked with the Cybersecurity & Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA), a component of the Department of Homeland Security, to ask social media companies to remove disinformation on their platforms.² You wrote: “It’s crucial to reiterate: EIP was partnered with state entities like CISA and GEC while seeking elimination of millions of tweets. In the #TwitterFiles, Twitter execs did not distinguish between organizations, using phrases like ‘According to CIS[A], escalated via EIP.’”³



¹ See Matt Taibbi (@mtaibbi), TWITTER (Mar. 9, 2023, 9:00 AM), <https://twitter.com/mtaibbi/status/1633830002742657027>

² Matt Taibbi (@mtaibbi), TWITTER (Mar. 9, 2023) (Deleted).

³ *Id.*

When you appeared before the House Judiciary Committee Subcommittee on Weaponization, you told Congressman Stewart (R-UT):

[W]hat we see in The Twitter Files is that Twitter executives did not distinguish between DHS or CISA and this group EIP. For instance, we would see a communication that said, From CISA escalated by EIP. So they were essentially identical in the eyes of the company... So, yes, we have come to the realization that this bright line that we imagine that exists between, say, the FBI or the DHS or the GEC and these private companies is illusory and that what's more important is this constellation of kind of quasi private organizations that do this work.⁴

The above statements now seem to be contradicted by your own admission. On April 6, 2023, you appeared for an interview on the *Mehdi Hasan Show* on MSNBC. During that interview, Mr. Hasan pointed out that your March 9 tweet added a parenthetical [A] to the acronym CIS, changing the meaning of the term from “Center for Internet Security” —a private organization —to “Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency.”⁵ This mistake is important because, by adding an “A,” you weren’t making a harmless spelling error. Rather, you were alleging that CISA – a government entity—was working with the EIP to have posts removed from social media. When presented with this misinformation, you acknowledged that you had made “an error” by intentionally altering the acronym CIS and you subsequently deleted your erroneous tweet.⁶

In addition to your error regarding CISA, it has become clear that your reporting is rife with numerous other false or misleading claims. For example:

- During the March 9 hearing, you repeatedly referenced the Twitter Files posts you had released earlier that day. Among other claims, your March 9 posts stated: “According to the EIP’s own data, it succeeded in getting nearly 22 million tweets labeled in the runup to the 2020 vote,”⁷ and claimed that the EIP was “among the most voluminous ‘flaggers’” of disinformation.⁸ In fact, the EIP analyzed 21,897,364 tweets discussing false claims in 2020.⁹ From that data set, it identified just 2,890 tweets as being in violation of Twitter’s stated policies¹⁰ because, for example, those tweets led to phishing

⁴ *Hearing on the Weaponization of the Federal Government: Hearing Before the H. Select Subcomm. on the Weaponization of the Fed. Gov’t*, 118th Cong. (Mar. 9, 2023) (Testimony of Matt Taibbi Testimony).

⁵ *The Mehdi Hasan Show*, MSNBC (Apr. 6, 2023).

⁶ *Id.*; Matt Taibbi (@mtaibbi), TWITTER (Apr. 6, 2023, 2:55 PM), <https://twitter.com/mtaibbi/status/1644051295597375488>.

⁷ Matt Taibbi (@mtaibbi), TWITTER (Mar. 9, 2023, 9:00 AM) <https://twitter.com/mtaibbi/status/1633830099152957441>.

⁸ Matt Taibbi (@mtaibbi), TWITTER (Mar. 9, 2023, 9:00 AM) <https://twitter.com/mtaibbi/status/1633830089392791555>.

⁹ Center for an Informed Public, Digital Forensic Research Lab, Graphika, & Stanford Internet Observatory, *The Long Fuse: Misinformation and the 2020 Election*, ELECTION INTEGRITY PARTNERSHIP at 183 (Jun. 15, 2021), <https://purl.stanford.edu/tr171zs0069>.

¹⁰ Stanford Internet Observatory, *Background on the SIO’s Projects on Social Media*, STANFORD UNIV. (Mar. 17, 2023), <https://cyber.fsi.stanford.edu/io/news/background-sios-projects-social-media>.

pages or impersonated election official accounts, “including one fake Kentucky election website that promoted a narrative that votes had been lost by asking voters to share personal information” and a phishing email that directed voters in Arizona to a fake website which sought their “birthdate, address, Social Security number, and driver’s license number.”¹¹ EIP provided this information to platforms but never made any recommendation as to what actions a particular platform should take – information which directly undercuts your allegations that EIP supported censorship.¹² Much of this information is available through a public report produced by EIP in 2021.

- In your March 9 Twitter thread, you alleged that “taxpayer-funded” organizations flagged posts containing disinformation for Twitter during the 2020 election,¹³ you omitted the key context that one of the organizations in question, the EIP, had not even applied for federal grants at the time of the 2020 election.¹⁴ You also posted a partial screenshot of a grant award to Graphika, Inc.¹⁵ The actual website from which this was apparently taken shows that the funding was not distributed until January 1, 2021—two months after the 2020 election.¹⁶ You likewise posted an image of a grant to Newsguard Technologies which you cropped to prevent your readers from viewing the full year that the grant was awarded.¹⁷ In fact, publicly available information shows that Newsguard did not receive that federal grants until September 2021.¹⁸
- On March 17, you incorrectly or misleadingly claimed the EIP was founded in response to the government pausing the operations of the Disinformation Governance Board.¹⁹ In fact, the EIP was established in 2020, two years before the Disinformation Governance Board was created.²⁰ Moreover, the charter for the Disinformation Governance Board makes clear that had the board remained in existence, it would have had *no* operational

¹¹ Center for an Informed Public, Digital Forensic Research Lab, Graphika, & Stanford Internet Observatory, *The Long Fuse: Misinformation and the 2020 Election* at 42, ELECTION INTEGRITY PARTNERSHIP at 183 (Jun. 15. 2021), <https://purl.stanford.edu/tr171zs0069>.

¹² Stanford Internet Observatory, *Background on the SIO’s Projects on Social Media*, STANFORD UNIV. (Mar. 17, 2023), <https://cyber.fsi.stanford.edu/io/news/background-sios-projects-social-media>.

¹³ Matt Taibbi (@mtaibbi), TWITTER (Mar. 9, 2023, 9:00 AM) <https://twitter.com/mtaibbi/status/1633830083835342849>; Matt Taibbi (@mtaibbi), Twitter (Mar. 9, 2023, 9:00 AM) <https://twitter.com/mtaibbi/status/1633830089392791555>.

¹⁴ *The Mehdi Hasan Show*, MSNBC (Apr. 6, 2023).

¹⁵ Matt Taibbi (@mtaibbi), TWITTER (Mar. 9, 2023, 9:00 AM); <https://twitter.com/mtaibbi/status/1633830083835342849>.

¹⁶ Award Profile: Grant Summary, Department of Defense Award to Graphika, Inc., USASPENDING.GOV, https://www.usaspending.gov/award/ASST_NON_N000142112106_1700 (last visited Apr. 11, 2023).

¹⁷ Matt Taibbi (@mtaibbi), TWITTER (Mar. 9, 2023, 9:00 AM); <https://twitter.com/mtaibbi/status/1633830086481965057>.

¹⁸ Award Profile: Contract Summary, Department of Defense Award to Newsguard Technologies, Inc., USASPENDING.GOV, https://www.usaspending.gov/award/CONT_AWD_FA864921P1569_9700_-NONE_-NONE- (last visited Apr. 11, 2023).

¹⁹ Matt Taibbi (@mtaibbi), TWITTER (Apr. 6, 2023, 2:49 PM), <https://twitter.com/mtaibbi/status/1644049681255895040> (noting that you have deleted your earlier Tweet which falsely stated that EIP had been created after the pausing of the Disinformation Governance Board).

²⁰ ELECTION INTEGRITY PARTNERSHIP, <https://www.eipartnership.net/> (last visited Apr. 11, 2023).

authority whatsoever, and would not have been in a position to communicate with social media companies regarding misleading posts.²¹

These instances raise serious questions about other potential inaccuracies in the testimony provided to Congress. In your interview with Mr. Hasan, you acknowledged, “Apparently I’ve gotten one thing wrong or a few things wrong.”²² While these inaccuracies may seem minor to you, they could lead Congress to rely on inaccurate testimony in considering and/or passing new legislation which would impact all Americans. In light of the potential for such serious consequences, I would like to offer you the opportunity to correct your statements before the panel.

In addition, during your testimony before the House Judiciary Committee, I attempted to discuss with you the interactions between Mr. Musk and yourself. Unfortunately, our conversation was curtailed by your false claim that I had asked you to reveal your sources, and we were not able to fully explore your relationship with Mr. Musk. Roughly three hours after the hearing ended, Mr. Musk posted on Twitter: “I’m not his source.”²³ In light of this, you should be able to answer my questions about your interactions with Mr. Musk.

Accordingly, as soon as possible but no later than April 21, 2023, please provide answers to the following questions:

1. Are you aware of any other errors in your factual testimony from March 9, 2023?
2. Have you reviewed your other “Twitter Files” tweets for similar errors?
3. When did Twitter CEO Elon Musk first contact you?
4. Did Mr. Musk place any conditions on your discussions of him and Twitter? What were they?
5. Do those conditions prohibit you from criticizing Mr. Musk?
6. We know that Republicans, including the Trump White House, have made many requests to have information taken down from Twitter. None of these requests have appeared in the Twitter files. Has Mr. Musk prevented you from publishing them?
7. What steps are you taking to ensure that personally identifiable information, or PII, is protected in the files you are reviewing and/or releasing?

Prior to your appearance before the subcommittee on March 9, you signed the Judiciary Committee’s Truth in Testimony form, certifying that you understood that “[k]nowingly providing material false information to this committee/subcommittee, or knowingly concealing

²¹ DHS Disinformation Governance Board Charter, (Feb. 24, 2022), https://www.grassley.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/grassley_hawley_to_deptofhomelandsecuritydisinformationgovernanceboard.pdf

²² *The Mehdi Hasan Show*, MSNBC (Apr. 6, 2023).

²³ Elon Musk (@elonmusk), TWITTER (Mar. 9, 2023, 4:55 PM); <https://twitter.com/elonmusk/status/1633949685600714752>.

material information from this committee/subcommittee, is a crime (18 U.S.C. § 1001).”²⁴ In addition, at the beginning of the March 9 hearing, you swore “under penalty of perjury that the testimony you [were] about to give [was] true and correct to the best of your knowledge, information, and belief.”²⁵ Under the federal perjury statute, 18 U.S.C. § 1621, providing false information is punishable by up to five years imprisonment.

For all of these reasons, I am sure you understand the importance of ensuring that your testimony is true and accurate. I look forward to your prompt response.

Sincerely,



Stacey E. Plaskett
Ranking Member
House Judiciary Select Subcommittee
on the Weaponization
of the Federal Government

cc: The Honorable Jim Jordan, Chairman, House Committee on the Judiciary

²⁴ Taibbi Truth in Testimony Disclosure Form, U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES COMM. REPOSITORY, (Mar. 9, 2023), <https://docs.house.gov/meetings/FD/FD00/20230309/115442/HHRG-118-FD00-Bio-TaibbiM-20230309.pdf>.

²⁵ *Hearing on the Weaponization of the Federal Government: Hearing Before the H. Select Subcomm. on the Weaponization of the Fed. Gov't*, 118th Cong. (Mar. 9, 2023)