

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND REFORM

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<https://oversight.house.gov>

September 7, 2022

Mr. Joseph Cuffari
Inspector General
Office of Inspector General/MAIL STOP 0305
United States Department of Homeland Security
245 Murray Lane SW
Washington, DC 20528-0305

Dear Inspector General Cuffari,

As members of the House Committee on Oversight and Reform, we are writing today to express serious concern about the possibility of Department of Homeland Security (DHS) funds being used to enrich China, an adversary with a record of human rights abuses and slave labor. Specifically, we are concerned with federal taxpayer dollars Congress has allocated to FEMA for supplemental disaster relief since 2017 and how they may be used.¹

According to the U.S. Department of State, genocide and slave labor in the Xinjiang region of China are being actively perpetrated against the Uyghur minority.² As you know, the Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act (UFLPA) was signed into law in December 2021 to prevent the U.S. purchase or importation of goods made with forced labor in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region of China. Unfortunately, almost 40 percent of the global production of polysilicon, a key component in solar panels, comes from the Xinjiang region, and nearly 85 percent of the world's solar components are produced in China.³

We strongly support the UFLPA but remain troubled the United States may still possibly be using taxpayer dollars to purchase products manufactured using slave labor in direct violation of the UFLPA, and nowhere has this possibility become more real and concerning than in the U.S. Virgin Islands (USVI). Following Hurricanes Irma and Maria in 2017, the federal government committed nearly \$8 billion to assist with disaster relief in the USVI, with almost \$5 billion of those dollars coming from FEMA.⁴

¹ "Spending Explorer." <https://recovery.fema.gov/spending-explorer>

² "Xinjiang Supply Chain Business Advisory" <https://www.state.gov/xinjiang-supply-chain-business-advisory/>

³ Holleyman, Robert. "America Can't Allow China to Keep Crushing Our Solar Energy Industry." *The New York Times*, 9 July 2022, www.nytimes.com/2022/07/09/opinion/environment/china-solar-panels-renewable-energy.html?_sm_byp=iVVVNVF6R04rN5DQ.

⁴ "2017 Hurricanes." <https://www.usviodr.com/irmaandmariafunding/>

A large sum of the disaster relief funds was allocated to bolster and rebuild the USVI's energy grid, making it more reliable and resistant to future storms. Additionally, the USVI announced in 2021 that a new 28-megawatt solar micro-grid project on St. Croix was awarded \$4.4 million from FEMA for the initial phase of construction while USVI officials expect FEMA to fund the bulk of the remaining \$129 million project cost.⁵ This territory-wide transition to solar power will potentially serve to massively enrich China.

If we are not vigilant in our efforts to ensure that no solar panels or components made with slave labor are being purchased with federal dollars from FEMA or other U.S. agencies and used on similar solar projects, it is possible the United States could be directly funding the genocide and abuse occurring in China's Xinjiang region.

Today, we are requesting that you, in your role as Inspector General, conduct an immediate investigation to determine the following:

1. Have there been or are there plans to use FEMA funds to purchase solar panels or components that have been manufactured by Chinese companies in violation of the UFLPA?
2. Have there been or are there plans to use FEMA funds to purchase solar panels or components, specifically for the USVI solar buildout, which have been manufactured by Chinese companies in violation of the UFLPA?
3. What percent of imported solar panels or components have been flagged as potentially having ties to the Chinese Communist Party? Has the U.S government identified any imported solar panels that violate the now-actionable UFLPA?

Thank you for your consideration of this important issue. To make arrangements to deliver documents or ask any related follow-up questions, please contact Committee on Oversight and Reform Republican Staff at (202) 225-5074. The Committee on Oversight and Reform is the principal oversight committee of the U.S. House of Representatives and has broad authority to investigate "any matter" at "any time" under House Rule X. Thank you in advance for your cooperation with this inquiry.

Sincerely,



Bob Gibbs
Member of Congress



James Comer
Ranking Member
Committee on Oversight and Reform

⁵ Howland, Ethan. "A 28-MW Virgin Islands Microgrid Receives FEMA Funding" Microgrid Knowledge, 13 April 2021. <https://microgridknowledge.com/fema-virgin-islands-microgrid/>



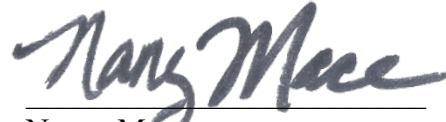
Jody Hice
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Government Operations



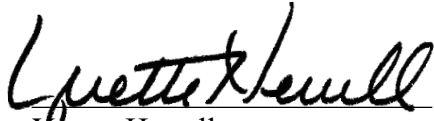
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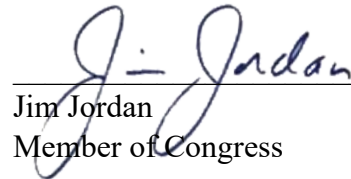
Michael Cloud
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Economic and
Consumer Policy



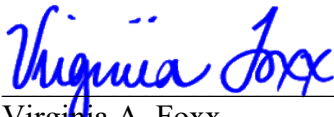
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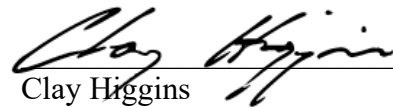
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Member of Congress



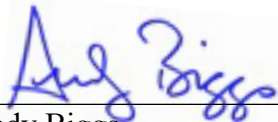
Clay Higgins
Member of Congress



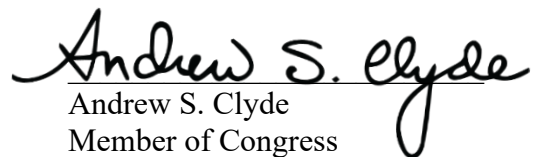
Pete Sessions
Member of Congress



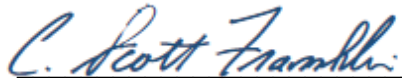
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Member of Congress



Andy Biggs
Member of Congress




Andrew S. Clyde
Member of Congress



C. Scott Franklin
Member of Congress



Jake LaTurner
Member of Congress



Byron Donalds
Member of Congress



Mike Flood
Member of Congress

cc: The Honorable Carolyn Maloney, Chairwoman
Committee on Oversight and Reform

The Honorable Gerald E. Connolly, Chairman
Subcommittee on Government Operations

The Honorable Stephen F. Lynch, Chairman
Subcommittee on National Security

The Honorable Raja Krishnamoorthi, Chairman
Subcommittee on Economic and Consumer Policy

The Honorable Ro Khanna, Chairman
Subcommittee on Environment

The Honorable Jamie Raskin, Chairman
Subcommittee on Civil Rights and Civil Liberties