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August 11, 2020

The Honorable James Risch
Chairman
Committee on Foreign Relations
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Robert Menendez
Ranking Member
Committee on Foreign Relations
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Risch and Ranking Member Menendez:

On behalf of the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), we write to express grave concerns regarding the nomination of Colonel Douglas Macgregor, United States Army (Retired), to be our nation's next Ambassador to the Federal Republic of Germany.

We were deeply disturbed by his reported statement that trivializes the Holocaust, describing the crucial contemporary German principle of "coping with the past" as "sort of a sick mentality that says that generations after generations must atone sins of what happened in 13 years of German history and ignore the other 1,500 years of Germany."¹

That statement mirrors those of the most extreme leaders of Germany's antisemitic fringe. For example, Alexander Gauland, co-leader of an intolerant political faction that is boycotted by the German Jewish community over endemic antisemitism, notoriously said, "Hitler and the Nazis are just bird shit in more than 1,000 years of successful German history."² And Björn Höcke, another extremist figure in that movement, criticized Holocaust commemoration entirely, saying, "These stupid politics of coming to grips with the past cripple us - we need nothing other than a 180-degree reversal on the politics of remembrance."³

The United States should not send an ambassador to Germany with the same views as such antisemitic extremists who downplay Nazi crimes and fight against the contemporary German fundamental commitment to respect human dignity.

¹ Em Steck and Andrew Kaczynski, "German Ambassador Pick Disparaged Immigrants and Refugees, Called for Martial Law at US-Mexico Border," *CNN*, August 4, 2020.

(<https://www.cnn.com/2020/08/04/politics/kfile-douglas-macgregor-german-ambassador-pick/index.html>)

² "AfD's Gauland plays down Nazi era as a 'bird shit' in German history," *DW*, June 2, 2018.

(<https://www.dw.com/en/afds-gauland-plays-down-nazi-era-as-a-bird-shit-in-german-history/a-44055213>)

³ Jefferson Chase, "Local AfD Leader's Holocaust Remarks Prompt Outrage," *DW*, January 18, 2017.

(<https://www.dw.com/en/local-afd-leaders-holocaust-remarks-prompt-outrage/a-37173729>)

A nominee with such a view would also be deeply out of touch with the views of the U.S. Congress, which passed the Never Again Education Act (H.R. 943 / S. 2085) by voice vote earlier this year. As part of that bill, which both of you co-sponsored and ADL was proud to endorse, the U.S. Congress declared it “a national imperative to educate students in the United States so that they may explore the lessons that the Holocaust provides for all people, sensitize communities to the circumstances that gave rise to the Holocaust, and help youth be less susceptible to the falsehood of Holocaust denial and distortion” such as “efforts to excuse or minimize the events of the Holocaust.”

We also want to bring to your attention the nominee’s reported statement in 2012 that “what you have are numbers of people who call themselves neocons. They operate in a variety of settings in the government and in the media, and they support or advocate, for all intents and purposes, unconditional support for whatever the Israeli government wants to do. They are by no means the majority and they are by no means representative of what I would call Americans who happen to be Jewish.”⁴

The idea that a small cabal of disloyal Jews in media or government are pushing for slavish support to Israel is an overt expression of antisemitism, and it was condemned overwhelmingly earlier this session of Congress, 407-23 by the House (H. Res. 183) and in a unanimous vote by the Senate (S. Res. 189). It is both offensive and potentially dangerous.

With the clear rise in antisemitism and antisemitic incidents in Europe, Germany has not been immune. The German government’s latest annual statistics documented a 13% rise in antisemitic hate crimes, and ADL’s 2019 public opinion survey found that 42% of respondents in Germany feel that “Jews still talk too much about what happened to them in the Holocaust.”⁵ We need an American ambassador in Berlin who will forcefully push back against antisemitism and the minimizing of the Holocaust, not somebody whose past statements indicate that he might encourage those hateful ideas.

⁴ Anthony Wile, “Exclusive Interviews: Colonel Douglas MacGregor on Two Failed Wars and Why He Supports Ron Paul for President,” *The Daily Bell*, April 15, 2012. (<https://www.thedailybell.com/all-articles/exclusive-interviews/anthony-wile-colonel-douglas-macgregor-on-two-failed-wars-and-why-he-supports-ron-paul-for-president/>)

⁵ Laurenz Gehrke, “Anti-Semitic Crimes Up 13 Percent in Germany,” *Politico Europe*, May 27, 2020. (<https://www.politico.eu/article/anti-semitic-crimes-up-13-percent-in-germany/>); Anti-Defamation League, “Global 100: Germany 2019,” November 21, 2019. (<https://global100.adl.org/country/germany/2019>)

This nominee has also reportedly made disturbing remarks about immigrants and Muslims that raise further concerns about his suitability.⁶

We urge you to ensure that no nominee is confirmed for this important post unless he or she can genuinely allay the fundamental and egregious concerns we have raised and similar ones that may have been raised by others. In our view, the Senate's role in the confirmation process is equally as important as the President's responsibility to nominate suitable U.S. officials.

Thank you for your consideration of our concerns.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jonathan Greenblatt". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Jonathan" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Greenblatt".

Jonathan Greenblatt
CEO and National Director

⁶ Em Steck and Andrew Kaczynski, "German Ambassador Pick Disparaged Immigrants and Refugees, Called for Martial Law at US-Mexico Border," *CNN*, August 4, 2020. (<https://www.cnn.com/2020/08/04/politics/kfile-douglas-macgregor-german-ambassador-pick/index.html>)