About the Center for International Policy

The Center for International Policy (CIP) is an independent nonprofit center for research, public education and advocacy on U.S. foreign policy. CIP works to make a peaceful, just and sustainable world the central pursuit of U.S. foreign policy. CIP was founded in 1975 in the wake of the Vietnam War by former diplomats and peace activists who sought to reorient U.S. foreign policy to advance international cooperation as the primary vehicle for solving global challenges and promoting human rights. Today, we bring diverse voices to bear on key foreign policy decisions and make the evidence-based case for why and how the United States must redefine the concept of national security in the 21st century.

About the Foreign Influence Transparency Initiative

While investigations into Russian influence in the 2016 election regularly garner front-page headlines, there is a half-billion-dollar foreign influence industry working to shape U.S. foreign policy every single day that remains largely unknown to the public. The Foreign Influence Transparency Initiative is working to change that anonymity through transparency promotion, investigative research, and public education.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report would not have been possible without the hard work and support of a number of people. First, Nia Harris and Ryan Summers, who tirelessly read through all of the Qatar FARA filings in 2018 and collected nearly all of the data mentioned here. The report also could not have been completed without the exemplary work of Morgan Palumbo and Jessica Draper. Morgan assisted with data collection, fact-checking, and editing of this report while Jessica helped with editing and formatting. Salih Booker and William Hartung of the Center for International Policy consistently supported this project, all the way from idea inception through editing and completion of this report. This report also benefitted from the financial support provided to the Foreign Influence Transparency Initiative through the Open Society Foundations and the Arca Foundation.

Report cover photo is an Official White House Photo taken by Shealah Craighead of President Donald J. Trump meeting with the Emir of Qatar, Tamin bin Hamad Al Thani, on Tuesday, July 9, 2019, in the Oval Office of the White House.
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In June 2017, member states of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), led by Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, severed diplomatic ties and blockaded Qatar, purportedly because of Qatar’s ties to funding terrorist organizations. While Qatar had strained relations with some of its neighbors in the Middle East for years, particularly Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, the blockade blindsided the wealthy oil-power. Just as importantly, when the blockade was announced, Qatar found itself significantly behind its Saudi and Emirati adversaries on a critical metric of power in the Middle East—influence in Washington, D.C. According to Foreign Agents Registration Act (FARA) records, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates each spent nearly four times what the Qatars spent on lobbying and public relations firms in the year before the blockade began. And, President Trump quickly sided with the Saudis and Emiratis in the GCC spat.

Yet, less than a year later, on April 10, 2018, Trump met with the Emir of Qatar in the Oval Office, describing him as a “friend” and “great gentleman.” The Emir, in turn, thanked the President for “supporting us during this blockade.”

What happened in just those ten months after the GCC spat erupted? Qatar did what many countries do when faced with an international crisis involving the U.S.—they hired an army of lobbyists and public relations professionals. After the GCC spat broke out, Qatar quickly and aggressively built its own influence operation in America to rival the entrenched Saudi and Emirati influence operations. This report attempts to provide an overview of that Qatari influence operation. To do that, the Foreign Influence Transparency Initiative (FITI), a program of the Center for International Policy, analyzed every FARA filing made by organizations working on behalf of clients in Qatar in 2018. From this analysis we found:

- 33 different firms served as Qatar’s registered foreign agents in the U.S.;
- Reported spending of more than $18 million by Qatar on FARA registered firms;
- 2,472 political activities done on behalf of Qatar by those firms;
- Qatari foreign agents contacted the offices of more than two-thirds of all members of Congress;
- Nearly 1,000 campaign contributions from those firms, totaling more than $1.2 million;
- 59 members of Congress received campaign contributions from firms that had contacted their offices on behalf of Qatar;
- Three cases in which a contact and contribution occurred on the same day.
The timing of many of these political contributions and contacts coincided closely with key congressional events concerning Qatar, including Congressional trips to the country and votes on arms sales. Yet, within our current campaign finance system, such contributions are perfectly legal. This analysis also revealed that Qatari influence expands well beyond the halls of Congress, as we also found considerable evidence of Qatari agents working with the media, think tanks, higher education, and non-profit organizations.

The extraordinary influence operation documented here hasn't abated since 2018, either. As of May 2020, the Qataris still have more than two dozen lobbying and public relations firms on their payroll. This expansive influence operation has allowed Qatar to not only keep the U.S. on the sidelines of the GCC spat, but to dramatically increase ties to the U.S. The U.S. military base at Al-Udeid is growing and trade between the U.S. and Qatar grew by a whopping 35% in 2019, according to the U.S. embassy's charge d'affaires in Qatar.

In short, U.S.-Qatar relations are, arguably, better than they've been in decades and the lobbying and public relations firms on the Qataris' payroll unquestionably played a major role in making that possible. And, based on the FARA registered firms still working for the Qataris, it appears that this extraordinary Qatari influence operation is here to stay.
INTRODUCTION

When Donald Trump became President of the United States in early 2017, Qatar had been enjoying a quiet, but close, relationship with the U.S. for decades. The small oil-producing state was relishing deep ties with American businesses, higher education, and the U.S. military.

Qatar’s economy is fueled by petroleum and natural gas exports, and American oil and gas companies—like ExxonMobil—have been partnering with the Qatars for decades. On the education front, Qatar is, by far, the largest foreign donor to American universities. It also hosts the branch campuses of a number of prominent universities—including Carnegie Mellon, Georgetown, and Texas A&M—at Education City in Doha, Qatar. Qatar is also home to the largest military base in the Middle East at al Udeid, Qatar, which hosts around 10,000 members of the U.S. military.

Despite these strong connections, just five months after Trump became President, Qatar’s cozy relationship with America was upended. In June 2017, member states of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), led by Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, severed diplomatic ties and blockaded Qatar, purportedly because of Qatar’s ties to funding terrorist organizations. Most importantly for U.S.-Qatar relations, President Trump quickly sided with the Saudis—whom he had just visited on his first trip abroad as President—and blasted Qatar on Twitter.

Less than a year later, on April 10, 2018, Trump met with the Emir of Qatar in the Oval Office, describing him as a “friend” and “great gentleman.” The Emir, in turn, thanked the President for “supporting us during this blockade.”

What happened in just those ten months after the GCC spat erupted? Qatar did what many countries do when faced with an international crisis involving the U.S.—they hired an army of lobbyists. The first, and perhaps only, winner in this spat between Qatar and the rest of the GCC was K Street, as both sides immediately began a hiring spree, adding numerous D.C. lobbying and public relations firms to their payrolls. The Foreign Influence Transparency Initiative’s (FITI) previous reports have documented this extraordinary surge in spending for Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, but little has been written about Qatar’s similarly spectacular increase in its influence operations in Washington. This report aims to remedy that and provide an analysis of Qatari influence in Washington, D.C.

FITI, a program of the Center for International Policy, analyzed every Foreign Agents Registration Act (FARA) filing made by organizations working on behalf of clients in Qatar in
2018. From this analysis we found:

- 33 different firms served as Qatar’s registered foreign agents in the U.S.;
- Reported spending of more than $18 million by Qatar on FARA registered firms;
- 2,472 political activities done on behalf of Qatar by those firms;
- Qatari foreign agents contacted the offices of more than two-thirds of all members of Congress;
- Nearly 1,000 campaign contributions from those firms, totaling more than $1.2 million;
- 59 members of Congress received campaign contributions from firms that had contacted their offices on behalf of Qatar;
- Three cases in which a contact and contribution occurred on the same day.

The timing of many of these political contributions and contacts coincided closely with key congressional events concerning Qatar. Yet, within our current campaign finance system, such contributions are perfectly legal.

A number of contributions appear to be directly tied to local interests of members of Congress. For example, Husch Blackwell Strategies contacted Representative Billy Long (R-MO), on behalf of the Qatari interests, and made a contribution to his campaign that very same day, while also linking Qatari interests with Missouri, Long’s home state. When HR 2712, the “Palestinian International Terrorism Support Prevention Act of 2017,” singled out Qatar for supporting Hamas, Husch Blackwell warned that the bill could threaten a potential arms sale from Boeing to Qatar that, “will provide an estimated economic impact of $164 million in Missouri and will include 3,000 well paying jobs.”

Today, though the GCC spat has abated somewhat, Qatar still finds itself at odds with Saudi Arabia and the UAE, and that battle continues to be waged in D.C. by lobbyists and public relations professionals working for both sides. As of May 2020, the Qatari influence operation has allowed Qatar to not only keep the U.S. on the sidelines of the GCC spat, but to dramatically increase ties to the U.S. The U.S. military base at Al-Udeid is growing and trade between the U.S. and Qatar grew by a whopping 35% in 2019, according to the U.S. embassy’s charge d’affaires in Qatar. This report attempts to tell the story of how the Qatari lobby has been essential in bringing the U.S. and Qatar closer together.

To tell this story, we at FITI analyzed every FARA filing made by organizations working on behalf of clients in Qatar in 2018. From these documents, we recorded every single “political activity” done for Qatari clients and every campaign contribution mentioned in these FARA filings. Because FARA does not have fiscal years or standardized reporting periods, firms...
representing Qatar submit their Supplemental Statements at different times throughout the year. Unless otherwise noted, all political activity and campaign contributions mentioned here were reported by these firms in 2018. Supplemental Statements cover a six-month reporting period, therefore some of the political activities and contributions reported in 2018 occurred in the second half of 2017. Similarly, some of the activities and contributions that occurred in late 2018 were only reported in 2019, and are thus not part of this analysis.

POLITICAL ACTIVITIES

FARA requires registered foreign agents to report all of their “political activities,” which the statute defines broadly to include anything that will, “influence any agency or official of the government of the United States or any section of the public within the United States with reference to...the domestic or foreign policies of the United States or with reference to the political or public interests, policies, or relations of a government of a foreign country or a foreign political party.” 13 This covers much of the lobbying and public relations work FARA registrants do on behalf of their foreign clients. Thus, collectively, the reports of these activities provide a fairly comprehensive picture of what a country’s FARA registered influencers are doing in America, and according to the filings made by Qatar’s registered foreign agents in 2018, they were doing quite a lot. Specifically, firms reported engaging in 2,472 political activities on behalf of clients in Qatar. This is comparable to the level of activity we’ve seen from FARA registered agents working for the Saudis and Emiratis, as we previously reported. 14

In this section we break down these 2,472 political activities, identifying the most active firms and the most contacted organizations, media outlets, and congressional offices.

The Firms

Thirty-three different firms or individuals were registered under FARA to represent Qatari interests at some point in 2018. The range of political activity reported by these registrants was immense. On one end, some firms didn’t report any political activity despite receiving substantial revenue from the government of Qatar. For example, the Ashcroft Law Firm—founded by former U.S. Attorney General, Governor, and U.S. Senator John Ashcroft—reported receiving $2.5 million from the Embassy of the State of Qatar, but did not report a single political activity, simply noting the firm performed “legal services.” 15

At the top end of this wide range of reported political activities was Mercury Public Affairs, which reported conducting 524 political activities on behalf of the Qatars. As Table 1 shows, Mercury was the busiest firm in terms of reported political activities, but nine other firms
also reported more than 100 political activities conducted on behalf of Qatari clients in their 2018 FARA filings.

The firms representing the Qatari are amongst the most influential lobbying and public relations firms in the U.S. and the world. The list is topped by Mercury, a self-described “bipartisan consultancy” which boasts of 22 offices worldwide and a client list that includes Microsoft, NBC/Universal, and the United Nations. Mercury is joined on the roster of firms working for the Qatari by powerhouses like McDermott, Will, and Emery—one of the largest law firms in the world, representing 81% of the Fortune 100—and Husch Blackwell, which has more than 700 lawyers on its payroll just in the U.S.

While all of these firms play important roles in raising Qatari influence in America, they take decidedly different approaches to advance Qatar’s agenda. For example, the vast majority of Mercury’s work—369 of their 524 reported activities—was directed at influencing members of Congress and prominent think tank experts. Mercury was unique in its heavy focus on think tanks, but many other firms listed in Table 1 similarly focused on lobbying Congress. Specifically, McDermott, Will & Emery, Stonington Strategies, and The Gallagher Group directed almost all of their political activities towards influencing Congress on behalf of the Qatari.

Portland PR, on the other hand, was overwhelmingly focused on shaping the media narrative on behalf of the Qatari government, with 368 of their 382 political activities being directed at journalists and media outlets. Portland also was in the curious, though not unique, position of being registered under FARA to represent Qatari and Saudi interests in 2018. In addition to representing the Qatar Communications Office, the firm also represented the Education Above All Foundation, which was founded by the consort of the former emir of Qatar, Sheikha Moza bint Nasser, and the King Abdullah Foundation that promotes “the life and legacy of the late King” of Saudi Arabia. Like Portland PR, S.G.R. and Conover + Gould directed almost all of their work on behalf of the Qatari at the media.

There’s also a decidedly bipartisan approach to Qatari influence in America. As previously mentioned, Mercury describes itself as a bipartisan consultancy. But other firms have clear partisan leanings. For example, the Qatari lobby has strong connections to Republicans through firms like Stonington Strategies, which is headed by a former aide to Senator Ted Cruz (R-TX), Nick Muzin, who courted 250 Trump influencers to change the President’s stance on Qatar. The Qatari influence the other side of the aisle through firms like McDermott, Will & Emery, which counts Jim Moran, a former Democratic member of Congress from Virginia, amongst their lobbyists representing Qatar. Not surprisingly, Moran predominantly contacted his former Democratic colleagues in Congress on behalf of the Qatari.
Table 1: Top Ten Firms in Terms of Political Activities Reported on Behalf of Qatari Clients in 2018

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Firm Name</th>
<th>Contacts Made</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mercury Public Affairs</td>
<td>524</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portland PR</td>
<td>382</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McDermott Will &amp; Emery</td>
<td>249</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stonington Strategies</td>
<td>211</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gallagher Group</td>
<td>208</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nelson, Mullins, Riley, Scarborough</td>
<td>153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Husch Blackwell Strategies</td>
<td>149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avenue Strategies Global</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S.G.R.</td>
<td>139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conover + Gould Strategic Communications</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It’s important to note that there are considerable differences in the level of transparency firms provide in their FARA filings, and this has a direct impact on the public’s ability to track their work and our ability to quantify the level of political activity of the firms in Table 1. Though regulations governing FARA require firms to report activities to a “degree of specificity necessary to permit meaningful public evaluation of each of the significant steps taken by a registrant to achieve the purposes,” of their representation of a foreign client, some firms provided little or no information about the work they did on behalf of Qatar.

As previously mentioned, the Ashcroft Law Firm reported receiving $2.5 million from the Embassy of the State of Qatar, but did not report a single political activity, simply noting the firm performed “legal services.” Similarly, Pillsbury, Winthrop, Shaw, Pittman was paid $300,000 by the Embassy of Qatar to assist the Embassy, “with communications and public affairs matters,” yet stated “there was no reportable political activity performed on behalf of the Embassy of Qatar.” Other firms, like the Friedlander Group, whose contract with a Qatari regime insider specifically mentions the firm will “arrange meetings with different members of Congress,” reported no political activity on behalf of its Qatari client.

And, even amongst firms that do provide information about the work they conduct on behalf of their Qatari clients, there are considerable disparities in what they disclose. Some firms, like Mercury, provide fairly comprehensive accounts of their political activities, listing whom they contacted, what issues they discussed, and the precise date of the interaction.
Other firms, like McDermott, Will & Emery, provide fairly detailed accounts of the work done for the Qatari, but only list the month, not the day, the work was completed in.\textsuperscript{27}

Until Congress or the Justice Department demand equivalent levels of transparency from FARA registrants, it’s safe to assume that the number of political activities reported here is a floor, not a ceiling, for the work done on behalf of Qatar by foreign agents in the U.S.

### Organizations Contacted

As Table 2 shows, slightly more than half of all political activity reported by Qatar’s foreign agents—1251 of 2470 activities—was directed at Congress, according to 2018 FARA filings. Media outlets were their next most likely targets, with 656 political activities being directed at TV, radio, print, and social media outlets. While interactions with Congress and the media constituted more than 80% of all the activities reported by Qatari foreign agents, they also had significant interactions with think tanks and non-profits (184), executive branch agencies (40), and American universities (30).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Times Contacted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>U.S. House of Representatives</td>
<td>1206</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media</td>
<td>656</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S. Senate</td>
<td>245</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Think Tanks and Non-Profits</td>
<td>184</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Executive Branch Agencies</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Universities</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

House and Senate offices were the most likely targets of Qatari foreign agents’ political activity, with 1206 and 245 contacts, respectively. By far the most cited reasons for contacting congressional offices by Qatar lobbyists in 2018 were related to congressional delegations to visit Qatar. One trip, which Qatar’s foreign agents helped organize, included members of Congress meeting with Qatari officials on the sidelines of the Doha Forum.\textsuperscript{28} Other trips were part of the Mutual Economic and Cultural Exchange Act (MECEA) which effectively means, as a Qatari lobbyist explained in letters to congressional staff inviting them on the trip, “the trip is paid for by the Government of Qatar,” under the MECEA.\textsuperscript{29} On trips like these, members of Congress and congressional staff are effectively lobbied by foreign government officials themselves, who explain “the benefits of deep political,
economic, educational and military cooperation between the U.S. and Qatar,” according to Maxine Waters (D-CA), who led a bipartisan delegation to Qatar in 2019.30

The second most common subject of Qatari foreign agents’ political activity was also related to a trip—this time from Qatar to the U.S.—when the Emir of Qatar, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, came to Washington, D.C. in early April 2018. Qatar’s foreign agents helped to facilitate the trip, worked with media outlets covering the Emir’s trip, and worked diligently to drive up attendance at key events. Their work was remarkably successful. During the trip, the Emir met at the White House with Trump, who described the Emir as a “friend” and “great gentleman,” and the Emir, in turn, thanked the President for “supporting us [Qatar] during this blockade.”31 That night, the Chamber of Commerce hosted an event with the Emir of Qatar, U.S. Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin, U.S. Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross, and scores of members of Congress that had been invited by Qatari lobbyists.32

At the event, the Emir pledged to double his country’s investments in the U.S. to $250 billion.33

Qatar’s foreign agents’ role in facilitating attendance at the Chamber event—inviting more than 50 different representatives and senators—and organizing several congressional trips to Qatar, were just part of an extraordinary congressional outreach campaign in 2018. All told, in 2018 Qatari lobbyists reported contacting the offices of more than two-thirds of all members of Congress.

The most contacted congressional offices and committees are listed in Table 3. While the table is dominated by Republicans, Qatar’s lobbyists reach out to Republican and Democratic offices with near equal fervor and, as is discussed below, make considerable campaign contributions to both Democrats and Republicans. Unlike many issues in U.S. politics, foreign influence is a bipartisan affair.
### Table 3: Top Ten Congressional Offices and Committees Contacted by Qatari Lobbyists

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Office</th>
<th>Times Contacted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Senate Foreign Relations Committee</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bill Keating (D-MA)</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Billy Long (R-MO)</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kevin McCarthy (R-CA)</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>House Foreign Affairs Committee</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roger Wicker (R-MS)</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael McCaul (R-TX)</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gerry Connolly (D-VA)</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Boozman (R-AR)</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frank LoBiondo (R-NJ)</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition to individual offices, Qatar’s lobbyists spent considerable time attempting to influence staff on the Senate Foreign Relations and House Foreign Affairs Committees, two key committees for a number of issues of interest to the Qatari monarchy. Most notably, the House Foreign Affairs Committee marked up HR 2712, the Palestinian International Terrorism Support Prevention Act, which lambasted Qatar for providing “significant financial and military support,” to Hamas.\(^\text{34}\) The bill, however, never became law, perhaps due in no small part to Qatari lobbyists contacting nearly two dozen House offices, including then House Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy (R-CA), about the bill.

After Congress, the media was the greatest focus of Qatar’s foreign agents. In total, media outlets were contacted 656 times by Qatari agents in 2018. The most contacted media outlets are listed in Table 4. Not surprisingly, the largest outlets got the largest attention from the public relations side of Qatar’s influence operation in 2018, with *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and *The Washington Post* topping the list. Qatar’s foreign agents contacted media outlets for a variety of reasons, including: pitching op-eds by Qatari royals, inviting journalists to events, arranging interviews with Qatari officials, sharing press releases, and generally discussing Qatar-related media.
Table 4: Top Ten Media Organizations Contacted by Qatari Foreign Agents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Times Contacted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New York Times</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wall Street Journal</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washington Post</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CNN</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reuters</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McClatchy News</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NBC</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AP</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Politico</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Public Radio</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After Congress and the media, the most likely target of Qatar’s foreign agents were D.C. think tanks, whom they contacted at least 184 times, according to 2018 FARA filings. Much of this work was public relations focused, ostensibly to shape the narrative coming out of think tanks related to Qatar. In other cases, it was outreach related to think tank scholars who were invited on all-expenses-paid trips to Qatar. Qatari foreign agents were also helping to pave the way for events at a number of prominent think tanks in D.C. This included Qatar’s Minister of State for Defense speaking at the Heritage Foundation and “event coordination” with the Center for Strategic and International Studies, Wilson Center, and many other think tanks.

Table 5: Top Ten Think Tanks Contacted by Qatari Agents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Think Tank</th>
<th>Times Contacted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Council on Foreign Relations</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States Institute of Peace</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woodrow Wilson Center</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Center for Strategic and International Studies</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New America</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
POLITICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

The FARA Supplemental Statements, from which we tracked all political activities done on behalf of Qatar, also require those firms and their registered foreign agents to report any political contributions they make. We recorded all of the contributions that FARA registered firms working for Qatar reported in 2018. Note that, given the six-month reporting periods of FARA Supplemental Statements, some of the contributions that were reported in 2018 actually occurred in 2017.\(^\text{37}\)

In total, we tracked and analyzed just over $1.2 million in political contributions made to more than 500 different campaigns by firms representing Qatar and their registered foreign agents. These contributions went predominantly to sitting senators and representatives and their challengers in the 2018 election. But Qatar’s foreign agents also reported making contributions to state governors like Mike Dewine (R-OH) and Ralph Northam (D-VA), and even local politicians.

They also gave $275,000 to political action committees, which can’t be traced directly back to individual candidates or the Parties. However, we followed the remainder of the money. Table 5 lists the top ten recipients of campaign contributions from Qatar’s foreign agents.

Table 6: Top Ten Recipients of Campaign Contributions from Firms Representing Qatar

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recipient</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Republican National Committee</td>
<td>$100,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee</td>
<td>$34,900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robert Menendez (D-NJ)</td>
<td>$14,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mike DeWine (R-OH)</td>
<td>$12,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dean Heller (R-NV)</td>
<td>$11,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paul Ryan (R-WI)</td>
<td>$10,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ralph Northam (D-VA)</td>
<td>$8,987</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jon Tester (D-MT)</td>
<td>$8,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marsha Blackburn (R-TN)</td>
<td>$8,250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mitt Romney (R-UT)</td>
<td>$8,100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The top recipient of contributions from firms representing the Qatari government was the Republican National Committee (RNC), which received $100,000 in contributions. The RNC is followed on the list by the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee (DSCC), which received $34,900 from Qatari firms. The remainder of the list is filled by a bipartisan list of prominent senators, governors, and former Speaker of the House, Paul Ryan (R-WI).

While 33 firms were registered under FARA to work for the Qatari government in 2018, almost all of the campaign contributions made by those firms came from just the five listed in Table 7.

**Table 7: Campaign Contributions by FARA Registered Firms Representing Qatar**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Firm</th>
<th>Total Contributions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nelson, Mullins, Riley &amp; Scarborough</td>
<td>$505,844</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Squire, Patton, Boggs LLC</td>
<td>$268,020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ballard Partners</td>
<td>$144,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mercury Public Affairs LLC</td>
<td>$47,427</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Venable LLC</td>
<td>$37,234</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

One trend apparent here is that all the firms listed in Table 5 are significantly larger than other firms representing the Qatari government, so there are simply more resources at these firms to devote to contributions. Another trend apparent within this contributions data is that individual donors at these firms give mostly to one political party, but overall, there doesn’t appear to be a strong partisan bias in terms of whom foreign agents working at firms hired by Qatar donate to. As previously mentioned, Qatar has amassed a decidedly bipartisan influence operation in Washington.

The firms listed in Table 6 also reported some of the highest levels of political activity on behalf of the Qatari government and, as we detail below, there appears to be a strong correlation between campaign contributions and political activities conducted on behalf of the Qatari government for many of these firms.

**CONNECTING POLITICAL ACTIVITIES TO CONTRIBUTIONS**

Separately analyzing political activities and campaign contributions made by firms working for the Qatari monarchy in itself is telling, but considering these activities together reveal that Qatar’s lobbyists often make campaign contributions to the exact same members of
Congress they’re contacting on behalf of the Qatari’s.

Firms registered under FARA to represent the Qatari’s made 92 campaign contributions, totaling $118,000, to members of Congress they had contacted on behalf of the Qatari’s. In all, 59 members of Congress received campaign contributions from firms, or their lobbyists, that had contacted them on behalf of Qatar.

This is just a conservative estimate of the flow of money from firms representing the Qatari’s to members of Congress they contacted on behalf of Qatar. Of the $1.2 million in campaign contributions we tracked, nearly half cannot be traced to individual members of Congress. This money was given to PAC’s, party organizations like the RNC and DSCC, state officials like governors, and challengers in 2018 elections who were not then members of Congress. This data also only reflects direct campaign contributions made from these agents to members of Congress and does not reflect other fundraising activities like bundling, which allow lobbyists to solicit contributions for candidates from friends, family, or literally anyone.

What we find here, then, is that approximately one in every six campaign contributions made to a sitting member of Congress went to a member whose office had been contacted by that very same firm on behalf of the Qatari’s. Moreover, the timing of these contributions is especially telling—a third came within a month of the lobbyists contacting that member’s office and, in three cases, firms made campaign contributions to a member of Congress on the exact same day they contacted them on behalf of their Qatari client. Those members were Representatives Billy Long (R-MO), Mia Love (R-UT), and Senator Rob Portman (R-OH).

### Same Day Contacts and Contributions

On March 6th, 2018, Gregg Hartley of Husch, Blackwell Strategies reached out to the office of Rep. Billy Long (R-MO) on behalf of the Embassy of Qatar. Hartley discussed the congressman’s upcoming trip to Qatar with Long’s chief of staff, Joe Lillis. That interaction was reported in Husch Blackwell’s FARA filing along with a $500 campaign contribution the firm made to Rep. Long that exact same day. Hartley himself reported making a $2,000 contribution to Long on March 22 and a $3,600 contribution to Long on March 23.

Less than a month later, Long was in Qatar meeting with the Deputy Prime Minister and the Foreign Minister.

And, Husch Blackwell Strategies had previously contacted Long, on behalf of the Qatari’s, linking Qatari interests with Missouri, Long’s home state. When HR 2712, the “Palestinian International Terrorism Support Prevention Act of 2017,” singled out Qatar for supporting Hamas, Husch Blackwell warned that the bill could threaten a potential arms sale from
Boeing to Qatar, which, in turn, would lead to the loss of 3,000 jobs in Missouri.\textsuperscript{42}

This same-day contact and contribution epitomizes the strong correlation between the Congressional outreach Husch Blackwell did on behalf of the Qatari and the campaigns the firm contributed to. In fact, in addition to Long, at least six members of Congress—John Carter (R-TX), Ron Johnson (R-WI), Darin LaHood (R-IL), John Rutherford (R-FL), Jason Smith (R-MO), and Roger Wicker (R-MS)—received a campaign contribution from Husch Blackwell or one of its foreign agents within two weeks of the firm contacting their office on behalf of the Qatari.\textsuperscript{43}

Husch Blackwell wasn’t the only firm who was making campaign contributions to members of Congress it was contacting on behalf of Qatar. The Gallagher Group’s campaign contributions went almost exclusively to members of Congress the firm contacted on behalf of the Embassy of Qatar.

On May 16th, 2018, James Gallagher, founder of the Gallagher Group, met with former Representative Mia Love (R-UT) on behalf of the Embassy of Qatar to discuss, “Qatar/Haiti Initiatives.”\textsuperscript{44} On the same day, James Gallagher donated $500 to Mia Love’s reelection campaign. According to the Gallagher Group’s FARA filings, this was the only time Gallagher met with Love in 2018 and the only contribution he made to her in 2018.\textsuperscript{45}

This wasn’t the last time Gallagher made a campaign contribution to a member on the same day he contacted their office on behalf of the Qatari. On September 6th, 2018, Gallagher met with Wayne Jones, the National Security Advisor for Senator Rob Portman (R-OH), to discuss the Al Udeid Air Base and Qatar Airways. On the same day Gallagher met with Jones, he donated $500 to Senator Portman’s election campaign, according to the Gallagher Group’s FARA filing.\textsuperscript{46} In 2019 Qatar Airways announced they’d awarded a lucrative contract to GE Aviation, based in Ohio, for airplane engines and Portman explained that, “this contract will benefit GE and my home town of Cincinnati.”\textsuperscript{47}

In many other examples, Gallagher’s campaign contributions to members of Congress coincide extremely closely with him contacting those member’s offices on behalf of the Qatari.

On September 26th, 2018, Gallagher met with former Representative Dana Rohrabacher (R-CA) to provide a “Qatar Update” and made a $500 contribution to Rohrabacher’s reelection campaign four days later.\textsuperscript{48} The day before he met with Rohrabacher, on September 25, 2018, Gallagher made a contribution to Senator Martha McSally’s reelection campaign, whom he’d met with just days prior on behalf of Qatar.\textsuperscript{49} Shortly afterwards, on October 4, 2018, Gallagher met with Representative Mike Gallagher (R-WI), to discuss Qatar, and made a contribution to him just eleven days later on October 15th.\textsuperscript{50}
All told, Gallagher reported making contributions to just seven politicians in 2018 and within a month of each contribution he met with all but one of them on behalf of the Qatari.\footnote{51}

**CONCLUSION: QATAR’S INFLUENCE IN AMERICA TODAY**

To be sure, this report documents just one part of Qatari influence in the U.S. This report, for example, only tangentially discussed the fact that Qatar is one of the top foreign donors to D.C. think tanks,\footnote{52} and did not at all discuss Qatar being, by far, the top foreign donor to American universities.\footnote{53} Yet, the Qatari influence operation reported here is immense, and includes:

- 33 different firms served as the Qatari registered foreign agents in the U.S.;
- Reported spending of more than $18 million by Qatar on FARA registered firms;
- 2,472 political activities done on behalf of Qatar by those firms;
- Qatari foreign agents contacted the offices of more than two-thirds of all members of Congress;
- Nearly 1,000 campaign contributions from those firms, totaling more than $1.2 million;
- 59 members of Congress received campaign contributions from firms that had contacted their offices on behalf of Qatar;
- Three cases in which a contact and contribution occurred on the same day.

The extraordinary influence operation documented here hasn’t abated, either. As of May 2020, the Qatari still have more than two dozen lobbying and public relations firms on their payroll.\footnote{54} This expansive influence operation has allowed Qatar to not only keep the U.S. on the sidelines of the GCC spat, but to dramatically increase ties to the U.S. The U.S. military base at Al-Udeid is growing\footnote{55} and trade between the U.S. and Qatar grew by a whopping 35% in 2019, according to the U.S. embassy's charge d'affaires in Qatar.\footnote{56}

In short, U.S.-Qatar relations are, arguably, better than they’ve been in decades and the lobbying and public relations firms on the Qatari’s payroll unquestionably played a major role in making that possible. And, based on the FARA registered firms still working for the Qatari’s, it appears that this extraordinary Qatari influence operation is here to stay.
ENDNOTES


7. @realDonaldTrump. “During my recent trip to the Middle East I stated that there can no longer be funding of Radical Ideology. Leaders pointed to Qatar - look!” June 6, 2017. https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/872062159789985792;

@realDonaldTrump. “So good to see the Saudi Arabia visit with the King and 50 countries already paying off. They said they would take a hard line on funding...” June 6, 2017. https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/872084870620520448


28. @QNAEnglish. “Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs met with a delegation of members of the US Congress, on the sidelines of the 18th Doha Forum. The meeting discussed the strategic cooperation relations between Qatar and the U.S., and issues of common concern.” December 16, 2018. https://twitter.com/QNAEnglish/status/1074381270388494436?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etweetembed%7Ctwterm-1074381270388494436&ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.conservativerreview.com%2Fnews%2Fdemocrat-congressmen-take-clandestine-weekend-trip-to-qatar%2F


37. Also, note that we have included contributions from all foreign agents working at these firms, not just those registered to represent Qatari clients. The reason for this is simply that the value of campaign contributions extends beyond individuals, and firms can benefit from the contributions of all their lobbyists. For example, a large donor to a specific Member can easily introduce a lobbyist colleague to them even if the latter hasn’t donated to that Member.

38. This is a floor, not a ceiling, of campaign contributions that went to Members contacted on behalf of Qatari clients for a variety of reasons. First and foremost, this analysis relies on the self-reporting of campaign contributions and political activities by the firms in question. Thus, any contributions or political activities omitted would not be captured here. Second, even if all contacts and contributions are reported firms vary in how they report them, which can make it challenging to keep the coding of them consistent, and particularly to match a contact of a Members office with a contribution to a Member’s campaign. For example, some firms report contacting Lindsey Graham, while others report contacting Senator Graham, and still others report contacting Senator Lindsey Graham. While we maintained rigorous coding standards throughout our analysis and checked for errors in coding extensively, we realize that mistakes might still remain and would thus lead to not capturing every single instance where a contribution went to a Member of Congress that was contacted by a Qatari lobbyist at that firm.


