United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

November 12, 2026

The Honorable Michael Selig
Chairman
Commodity Futures Trading Commission
Three Lafayette Centre
1155 21st Street, NW
Washington, DC 20581

Dear Chairman Selig,

We write seeking answers about public reporting that Commodity Futures Trading Commission (CFTC) political appointee Arun Mel Gunewardena sought to "retract" an investigative referral into billions of dollars of highly suspicious trading that occurred just minutes before President Trump backtracked on threats against Iran.[1] In May 2026, many of us wrote to you urging the CFTC to conduct a "swift and thorough" investigation into suspicious oil futures trading ahead of major announcements of U.S. military operations concerning Iran.[2] To date, we have not received a response to that request. Mr. Gunewardena's reported intervention raises urgent concerns that political leadership may have interfered with career staff's efforts to investigate potentially unlawful trading, compromising the independence and integrity of the CFTC's enforcement process.

For months, many of us have urged you to investigate a spate of suspicious trades in oil markets, totaling billions of dollars.[3] One incident in particular that we urged the CFTC to investigate involved hundreds of millions in trading shortly before President Trump's March 23, 2026, post on Truth Social that indicated negotiations with Iran had progressed over the weekend and there would be a postponement of strikes for five days.

According to public reporting, CFTC staff examined the suspicious trading activity and determined that a referral to the Division of Enforcement was warranted.

However, Mr. Gunewardena, a political appointee who joined the CFTC on March 2, 2026, reportedly directed career staff to retract the referral. He subsequently assembled a separate team to conduct a new analysis of the trading activity, reportedly excluding the CFTC's career analysts who prepared the original referral.

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[1] Charles Gorrivan, Lydia Beyoud & Nicola M. White, CFTC Staff Were Told to Retract Analysis of Suspicious Oil Trades, BLOOMBERG (Oct. 13, 2026), https://www.bloomberg.com/news/features/2026-10-13/cftc-staff-told-to-retract-analysis-of-suspicious-oil-trades-on-iran.

[2] https://www.warnock.senate.gov/newsroom/press-releases/warnock-colleagues-push-cftc-for-public-update-into-suspicious-oil-futures-trades/

[3] *Id.*

The CFTC has a statutory authority promoting the integrity of America's commodity futures and derivatives markets and has significant enforcement authorities to punish wrongdoing. Since President Trump's second inauguration, the CFTC has already seen an exodus of both senior career Division of Enforcement leadership and staff attorneys. Public reporting also indicates that the number of CFTC enforcement actions has declined substantially compared with previous fiscal years. Mr. Gunewardena's actions raise additional serious questions about whether political appointees have improperly influenced the CFTC's handling of suspicious trading activity and whether such intervention has affected the independence or effectiveness of ongoing enforcement investigations.

Accordingly, we respectfully request that the Commission provide written responses to the following questions no later than November 23, 2026:

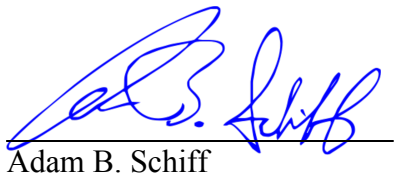
1. Were you aware of these trades prior to the publishing of the October 13, 2026, Bloomberg article "CFTC Staff Told to Retract Analysis of Suspicious Oil Trades"?
    a. When were you made aware that a referral of suspicious trading had been made?
    b. Did you participate in any meetings or calls related to the trades referenced in the article?
    c. When were you made aware that Mr. Gunewardena had sought to retract the referral? Was the referral subsequently withdrawn or modified, and if so, when and at whose direction?
2. How did Mr. Gunewardena communicate with CFTC career staff to retract the referral of suspicious trading related to the conflict with Iran? If in writing, please produce copies of all records of Mr. Gunewardena's request and related communications involving CFTC employees. Please also produce the original referral to the Division of Enforcement, any subsequent amendments or withdrawal instructions, and communications concerning the decision to conduct a separate analysis of the trading activity.
    a. Did you discuss this issue with Mr. Gunewardena or any other CFTC officials prior to Mr. Gunewardena's actions to retract the referral?
3. Public reporting indicates that CFTC leadership determined a broader review of the trading activity was warranted, including examination of additional domestic and international markets. Why would expanding the scope of that review require withdrawing or modifying the original referral to the Division of Enforcement, rather than supplementing the existing referral? Who made that determination, and what was the basis for it?
4. What is CFTC's procedure to refer, evaluate, and investigate suspected violations of the Commodity Exchange Act and related regulations, including insider trading?
5. What precedent, if any, is there for a political appointee or other senior level CFTC official to direct the retraction of an enforcement referral?
6. How many times has a CFTC political or other senior level CFTC official sought to retract, modify, or otherwise intervene in a referral filed with the Division of Enforcement?
7. What standards are used to assess whether such a retraction is appropriate or runs afoul of federal ethics laws or CFTC's procedures?
8. Is CFTC conducting an internal review or investigation of this reported intervention by a political appointee?

9. What steps is CFTC taking to determine whether Mr. Gunewardena's reported intervention complied with agency policies, procedures, and applicable ethics requirements? What corrective actions, if any, have been taken?
10. What assurances can you provide that enforcement determinations will be made independently by enforcement staff, without inappropriate interference from political appointees?
11. Is the Division of Enforcement investigating the suspicious trades at issue?
    a. Is there any information that you can share about the status of that investigation?
    b. Did Mr. Gunewardena's reported intervention delay, narrow, suspend, or otherwise affect the Division of Enforcement's investigation?
    c. Does the Division of Enforcement retain access to the original referral, supporting trading data, and analysis prepared by career Market Oversight staff?
    d. What steps is the CFTC taking to ensure that the investigation proceeds independently and without undue delay?

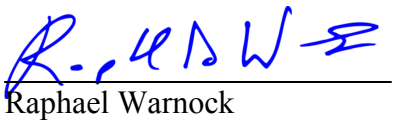
This information and these records are needed for the Senate to exercise its essential oversight and legislative functions. We further request that the Commission preserve all records and communications relating to the topics addressed in this letter, from January 1, 2025, to the present and continue preserving existing and future materials on an ongoing basis. This preservation hold applies to all relevant records within the Commission's possession and any person or entity representing or purporting to be acting on its behalf. This includes, but is not limited to, records and communications via email, whether official or personal; mobile devices; encrypted or disappearing messaging applications; social media; calendar entries; meeting notes; and voicemail and text messages. To the extent that the Commission uses any auto-delete functions, it should immediately suspend auto-delete functions and notify persons with control over potentially relevant records of similar preservation obligations.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. We look forward to your prompt response, including a written confirmation that the Commission is preserving all records related to this congressional inquiry.

Sincerely,



Adam B. Schiff
United States Senator



Raphael Warnock
United States Senator

Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator
Ranking Member, Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry

Ron Wyden
United States Senator

Elissa Slotkin
United States Senator

Michael F. Bennet
United States Senator

Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator

Elizabeth Warren
Ranking Member
Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs

Cory A. Booker
United States Senator

Jack Reed
United States Senator