

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

December 12, 2024

VIA ELECTRONIC TRANSMISSION

The Honorable Alejandro Mayorkas
Secretary
Department of Homeland Security

The Honorable David Pekoske
Administrator
Transportation Security Administration

Mr. Ronald L. Rowe, Jr.
Acting Director
United States Secret Service

Dear Secretary Mayorkas, Administrator Pekoske, and Acting Director Rowe:

On August 9, 2024, Senator Grassley wrote to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) regarding Asif Raza Merchant, a Pakistani native with ties to Iran.¹ Merchant was arrested on July 12, 2024, after law enforcement reportedly discovered his plans to assassinate President Trump and other high-ranking government officials.² In that letter, Senator Grassley raised concerns regarding Merchant's arrival in Houston, where he was reportedly interviewed by the Joint Terrorism Task Force (JTTF) because he was reportedly flagged by DHS with the identifier "WATCH LIST" and listed as a "Lookout Qualified Person of Interest."³ Reportedly, despite being flagged, Merchant was granted "Significant Public Benefit Parole by DHS."⁴ To date, this letter has yet to receive a response.

Additionally, on September 9, 2024, Senators Grassley and Paul wrote to the Justice Department and FBI regarding the unclassified FD-302 relating to Merchant that was provided to his office through legally protected whistleblower disclosures.⁵ Specifically, Senators Grassley and Paul requested documents and asked questions related to the investigation and vetting of Merchant, and the steps the government has taken to substantiate the claims in the unclassified FD-302.⁶ To date, this letter has yet to receive a response.

¹ Letter from Sen. Charles E. Grassley, Ranking Member, Senate Budget Committee, to the Honorable Alejandro Mayorkas, Secretary, Department of Homeland Security (Aug. 9, 2024), https://www.grassley.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/grassley_to_dhs_-_asif_merchant.pdf.

² Aaron Katersky and Jack Date, *Pakistani national charged with alleged plot to assassinate Donald Trump, other public officials: DOJ*, ABC News (Aug. 6, 2024), <https://abcnews.go.com/US/pakistani-national-charged-alleged-plot-assassinate-donald-trump/story?id=112617075>.

³ John Solomon and Steve Richards, *FBI let suspect in plot to kill Trump into U.S. on parole despite terror ties, Iran trip, memos show*, JustTheNews (Aug. 8, 2024), <https://justthenews.com/government/security/fbi-let-suspect-plot-kill-trump-us-parole-despite-terror-ties-iran-trip-memos#article>.

⁴ *Id.*

⁵ July 17, 2024, FD-302 obtained by Congress relating to Asif Merchant.

⁶ Letter from Sen. Charles E. Grassley, *supra* note 1.

More recently, a Politico article calls into question how DHS and its component agencies are investigating the Iran threat, the seriousness of the threats, and what protections are in place for current and former government employees facing threats from Iran.⁷ According to the Justice Department, “Iran has made it very clear that they are determined to seek retaliation against former officials in connection with the [Qasem] Soleimani strike.”⁸ Further, according to former government officials, “the U.S. government is still coming to grips with the Iranian threat and hasn’t yet found a sustainable way to protect all those who are at risk for as long as they need — creating an opening for Tehran to make good on its threats.”⁹

Given the reported threats, we want to know what rubric is used to assess the threat and provide a protective detail, including an explanation with respect to why that hasn’t been done in all cases.¹⁰ The lack of security calls into question how the USSS assesses threats from Iran and how those threat assessments are used to decide who receives protection and what type of security measures are included.¹¹

We welcome additional explanation from your agencies to better understand what steps have been taken to protect the United States, its citizens, and its current and former government officials from Iran and other foreign adversaries. For Congress to conduct independent oversight, provide a response to the following questions no later than December 26, 2024:

1. Provide answers and all responsive records to Senator Grassley’s August 9, 2024, letter and Senators Grassley and Senator Paul’s September 9, 2024, letter.¹²
2. Provide a classified and unclassified briefing on the Iran threat to current and former government officials.
3. How many and what kind of active threats is DHS and its component agencies tracking from Iran? Provide all records and describe all joint intelligence sharing with other agencies.
4. To what extent is Iran working with criminal organizations and transnational criminal organizations to carry out assassination attempts? Explain in detail.
5. Provide a list of current and former government officials that are under active threat from Iran. Have these officials been notified? If so, when? If not, why not?
6. Provide a full and complete list of current and former government officials that are receiving protection from the USSS.

⁷ John Sakellariadis, *Iran has a hit list of former Trump aides. The U.S. is scrambling to protect them*, POLITICO (Oct. 11, 2024), <https://www.politico.com/news/2024/10/11/iran-trump-assassination-plans-00183488>.

⁸ *Id.*

⁹ *Id.*

¹⁰ *Id.*

¹¹ *Id.*

¹² “Records” include any written, recorded, or graphic material of any kind, including letters, memoranda, reports, notes, electronic data (emails, email attachments, and any other electronically created or stored information), calendar entries, inter-office communications, meeting minutes, phone/voice mail or recordings/records of verbal communications, and drafts (whether they resulted in final documents).

7. What is the DHS's current process for developing threat assessments against current and former government officials? Provide all records.
8. Provide a detailed description with respect to the threat assessment rubric used to justify and deploy protective details to government and non-government protectees.¹³ In your answer, precisely describe if and how the unclassified FD-302 obtained by Congress relating to Asif Merchant altered and impacted former President Trump's and any other current or former government officials' protective detail.
9. Does USSS receive consistent intelligence from DOJ and FBI related to threats posed by Iran? If so, are routine briefings provided? Provide all records, including briefing materials and a description sufficient to illustrate the extent of information sharing.
10. Provide all communications between FBI and DOJ with the USSS related to Iranian threats, including against all former and current government officials.
11. Did the FBI or DOJ advise the USSS on threat levels for individual former and current government officials? If so, when and how? Provide all records.
12. Has the USSS withdrawn security from current or former government officials that are facing threats from Iran? If so, a list of officials with an explanation for the decision.
13. Provide a list of current and former government officials that have been subject to cyberattacks and cyber-threats from Iran. Provide a complete list of current and former government officials that are receiving protection from cyberattacks and cyber-threats from Iran.
14. Provide a list of resources that DHS, USSS and other agencies have made available to support and protect current and former government officials (e.g. identity protection services, IT support, protection for events, protective services abroad through coordination with international partners) facing threats from Iran in the United States and abroad. Provide all records. If DHS and USSS do not have a list of resources available, why not?
 - a. Provide an overview of funding used for these purposes.
 - b. Provide a breakdown of the types of support and protection that has been offered to current and former government officials and how determinations to offer resources were made with resources offered broken down by individual.
 - c. Please provide a list of federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies that support DHS and USSS throughout this process.

In keeping with Executive Order 13526, please segregate all unclassified materials within the classified documents, and provide all unclassified information directly to the committees, and provide a classified addendum to the Office of Senate Security. Although the committees comply with all laws and regulations governing the handling of classified information, they are not bound, absent prior agreement, by any handling restrictions.

¹³ John Sakellariadis, Politico, *Iran has a hit list of former Trump aides. The U.S. is scrambling to protect them* (Oct. 11, 2024), <https://www.politico.com/news/2024/10/11/iran-trump-assassination-plans-00183488>.

Thank you for your prompt review and response. If you have any questions, please contact Tucker Akin of Senator Grassley's staff at (202) 224-0642, Kendal Tigner of Senator Paul's staff at (202) 228-0813, or Brian Downey of Senator Johnson's staff at (202) 224-2627.

Sincerely,



Charles E. Grassley
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on the Budget



Rand Paul, M.D.
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on
Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs



Ron Johnson
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on
Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs