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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON
HOMELAND SECURITY AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6250

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August 14, 2024

The Honorable Alejandro Mayorkas
Secretary
Department of Homeland Security

The Honorable Christopher Wray
Director
Federal Bureau of Investigation

Dear Secretary Mayorkas and Director Wray:

On July 24, 2024, as part of this Committee’s bipartisan investigation into the assassination attempt on former President Donald Trump, we requested documents and information from the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), including any intelligence regarding a series of enumerated threats known or being investigated in advance of the July 13, 2024 rally.¹ We reiterate that request, which remains outstanding. Since our initial request, on August 6, 2024, the Department of Justice (DOJ) announced charges against Asif Merchant, a 46-year-old Pakistani national with ties to Iran, who “orchestrated a plot to assassinate a politician or U.S. government officials on U.S. soil.”² Press reports indicate that former President Donald Trump was one of Merchant’s

¹ Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee and Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations letters to Honorable Christopher Wray, Director, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Department of Justice and Undersecretary Kenneth L. Wainstein, Department of Homeland Security, Office of Intelligence and Analysis (July 24, 2024). These letters requested information on:

- “Potential threats to the July 13, 2024, event, generated or received by FBI in advance of the event;
- The perpetrator of the attempted assassination of former President Trump generated or received by FBI in advance of the event;
- A potential assassination plot by Iran or any of its proxies against former President Trump generated or received by FBI in advance of the event; and
- Elections threat environment generated or received by FBI in the last two years.
- [and] how and when such intelligence was disseminated by or to FBI; who the intelligence was shared with, both internally and externally; and what actions were taken in response to the intelligence. Please provide copies of all documents supporting these statements.”

² Press release, Pakistani National with Ties to Iran Charged in Connection with Foiled Plot to Assassinate a Politician or U.S. Government Officials, Dep’t of Justice, Aug. 6, 2024, <https://www.justice.gov/usao-edny/pr/pakistani-national-ties-iran-charged-connection-foiled-plot-assassinate-politician-or>.

potential targets.³ Merchant was arrested on July 12, 2024 just before he was going to leave the United States.⁴

According to recently unsealed court documents, Merchant had been orchestrating his assassination plot since at least April 2024 when he “flew from Pakistan to Istanbul and then on to Houston, Texas on or about April 13, 2024, to recruit individuals to carry out his plot to assassinate U.S. government officials.”⁵ These documents state that shortly after arriving in the U.S., he began interacting with a confidential source (CS) working with law enforcement. Merchant traveled from Texas to New York to meet with the CS and then eventually returned to Texas.⁶ In June 2024, Merchant flew from Texas to LaGuardia Airport in New York to meet with the CS again.⁷ During this meeting, the complaint alleges that Merchant told the CS he needed the CS to arrange a meeting for Merchant to meet hitmen in New York.⁸ According to the complaint, on June 10, 2024, Merchant and the CS met with two undercover law enforcement officers posing as hitmen.⁹ After the meetings, Merchant traveled to Boston, Massachusetts, and then “[o]n or about June 21, 2024, Merchant traveled from Boston to New York to make the advance payment to the hitmen for the assassination plot.”¹⁰

According to a press report, law enforcement sources said that the “FBI had eyes on Merchant before he arrived in the U.S. and needed him to physically enter the country so they could build a case and arrest him. If they arrested him at customs, they would not have been able to gather evidence and information about his plot[.]”¹¹ The unnamed law enforcement sources reportedly said that Merchant “was admitted into the United States via immigration parole for the ‘significant public benefit’”¹² and noted that the “FBI sponsored his parole for ‘security interests[.]’”¹³

In light of this new information and to understand the extent of FBI’s and DHS’s awareness of Merchant and his plot, including the justification to allow him to enter the U.S., please provide the following information:

1. When and how was the FBI initially made aware of Merchant?

³ Louis Casiano, et al., Pakistani man accused of plotting political assassination admitted into US via immigration parole: sources, Fox News, Aug. 7, 2024, <https://www.foxnews.com/us/pakistani-man-accused-plotting-political-assassination-admitted-us-immigration-parole-sources>.

⁴ *Id.*

⁵ United States of America against Asif Merchant, Complaint and Affidavit in Support at 4.

⁶ *Id.* at 5.

⁷ *Id.*

⁸ *Id.*

⁹ *Id.* at 8.

¹⁰ *Id.* at 12.

¹¹ Louis Casiano, et al., Pakistani man accused of plotting political assassination admitted into US via immigration parole: sources, Fox News, Aug. 7, 2024, <https://www.foxnews.com/us/pakistani-man-accused-plotting-political-assassination-admitted-us-immigration-parole-sources>.

¹² *Id.*

¹³ *Id.*

- a. At the time that the FBI first became aware of Merchant, what did the FBI know about Merchant?
2. What, if any, information did the FBI share with the U.S. Secret Service (USSS) about the apparent assassination plot targeting U.S. politicians or government officials on U.S. soil? When was this information shared with the USSS?
3. Did the FBI sponsor Merchant's Significant Public Benefit Parole (SPBP) for "security interests"?¹⁴ On what date was Merchant's SPBP approved and when would it expire? Was Merchant's parole renewed or extended and if so, when and by what agency? Was Merchant ever previously in the country under other authorities?
4. What information did the FBI provide to DHS components involved in making a determination about whether to allow Mr. Merchant into the country in advance of this determination? Did FBI inform DHS about Merchant's assassination plot? When and how did DHS officials become aware of Merchant?
5. Was Merchant on any government watchlists? If so, what watchlists, when was he added, which agency or agencies added him, why was he added, and what, if any, additional information or identifiers was included with his name in the watchlists?
6. Was FBI or DHS aware of Merchant's travel within the U.S. from April 2024 to July 2024?
 - a. What, if any, concerns did FBI or DHS officials raise about Merchant's entry to and travel within the U.S.?
7. Was Merchant ever previously denied entry to the U.S.? If so, when and why?
8. Merchant was apparently in Texas when he was arrested.¹⁵ Does Merchant have ties to Texas? According to the court documents, law enforcement searched Merchant's "place of residence" after he was arrested. Where was Merchant's place of residence? Does anyone else reside at Merchant's place of residence?¹⁶
9. Provide all records shared between the FBI and DHS referring or relating to Merchant and his assassination plot.

¹⁴ Louis Casiano, et al., Pakistani man accused of plotting political assassination admitted into US via immigration parole: sources, Fox News, Aug. 7, 2024, <https://www.foxnews.com/us/pakistani-man-accused-plotting-political-assassination-admitted-us-immigration-parole-sources>.

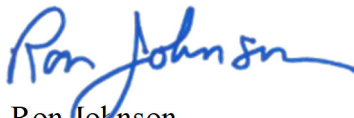
¹⁵ United States of America against Asif Merchant, Complaint and Affidavit in Support at 14.

¹⁶ *Id.* at 13.

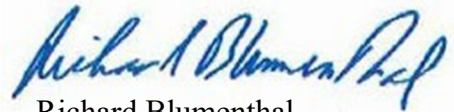
10. According to public reports, “[o]fficials said they had no evidence indicating [Merchant’s] plot was connected to the shooting in Butler, Pa.”¹⁷ Please explain what, if any, steps federal law enforcement has taken to investigate any connection between Merchant’s assassination plot and the July 13, 2024 assassination attempt of former President Donald Trump. Provide all records referring or relating to any investigative activity regarding potential connections between Merchant’s plot and the July 13, 2024 assassination attempt of former President Donald Trump.

Please provide this information as soon as possible, but no later than August 28, 2024. In addition, please provide a briefing on the requested information by no later than August 21, 2024. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Ron Johnson
Ranking Member
Permanent Subcommittee
on Investigations



Richard Blumenthal
Chairman
Permanent Subcommittee
on Investigations



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



Gary Peters
Chairman
Homeland Security
and Government Affairs

cc: The Honorable Joseph Cuffari
Inspector General
Department of Homeland Security

The Honorable Michael Horowitz
Inspector General
Department of Justice

¹⁷ Glenn Thrush, Justice Dept. Charges Pakistani Man in Alleged Plot to Kill U.S. Leaders, N.Y. Times, Aug. 6, 2024, <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/08/06/us/politics/justice-dept-assassination.html>; Evan Perez and Hannah Rabinowitz, Pakistani national with ties to Iran charged in connection to a foiled assassination plot potentially targeting Trump, CNN, Aug. 6, 2024, <https://www.cnn.com/2024/08/06/politics/iran-trump-assassination-charges/index.html>.