

**United States Senate**  
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

January 21, 2025

**VIA ELECTRONIC TRANSMISSION**

Robert Salesses  
Acting Secretary  
Department of Defense

Dear Acting Secretary Salesses:

We are writing regarding two events that occurred on January 1, 2025—the terrorist attack in New Orleans and the Tesla Cybertruck explosion in front of the Trump International Hotel in Las Vegas.

At approximately 3:15am CST, an individual driving a white Ford pickup truck intentionally rammed his vehicle into a crowd of people standing on Bourbon Street in New Orleans.<sup>1</sup> The attack damaged at least two businesses, injured 57 individuals, and most importantly killed 14 people.<sup>2</sup> The driver of the truck, later identified as Shamsud-Din Jabbar, was killed in a shootout with police shortly after he plowed through the crowded street and then reportedly exited his vehicle and began shooting.<sup>3</sup>

New reports on Jabbar’s background indicate that he was a 42-year-old, U.S. citizen from Texas who had served in the U.S. Army from 2007 until 2015.<sup>4</sup> During that time, Jabbar was apparently deployed to Afghanistan from February 2009 to January 2010.<sup>5</sup> Later, Jabbar reportedly joined the Army Reserve as an information technology specialist until 2020.<sup>6</sup>

Following the violent attack, reports indicated that law enforcement located an ISIS flag in Jabbar’s truck.<sup>7</sup> According to the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), two improvised explosive devices (IED) were also recovered from coolers Jabbar had placed near Bourbon

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<sup>1</sup> Caroll Alvarado and Elizabeth Wolfe, *A visual timeline of the New Year’s attack that left at least 14 dead in New Orleans*, CNN, (Jan. 2, 2025), <https://www.cnn.com/2025/01/02/us/timeline-truck-attack-new-orleans-dg/index.html>; Press Release, *FBI Statement on the Attack in New Orleans*, (Jan. 1, 2025), <https://www.fbi.gov/news/press-releases/fbi-statement-on-the-attack-in-new-orleans>.

<sup>2</sup> Caroll Alvarado and Elizabeth Wolfe, *supra* note 1; and FBI, *FBI Releases Investigative Update in Bourbon Street Attack*, FBI NEW ORLEANS, (Jan. 14, 2025), <https://www.fbi.gov/contact-us/field-offices/neworleans/news/fbi-releases-investigative-update-in-bourbon-street-attack>.

<sup>3</sup> *Id.*; Jennifer Calfas, *FBI Clarifies 14 Victims Were Killed in New Orleans Attack*, WALL STREET JOURNAL, (updated Jan. 2, 2025), [https://www.wsj.com/livecoverage/new-orleans-truck-attack?mod=WSJ\\_home\\_mediumtopper\\_pos\\_1](https://www.wsj.com/livecoverage/new-orleans-truck-attack?mod=WSJ_home_mediumtopper_pos_1).

<sup>4</sup> Nathan Layne, et al., *Who was Shamsud-Din Jabbar, the suspect in New Orleans truck attack?*, REUTERS, (Jan. 2, 2025), <https://www.reuters.com/world/us/suspect-deadly-new-orleans-truck-attack-served-us-army-2025-01-01/>.

<sup>5</sup> *Id.*

<sup>6</sup> *Id.*

<sup>7</sup> Caroll Alvarado and Elizabeth Wolfe, *supra* note 1; FBI Press Release, *supra* note 1.

Street.<sup>8</sup> According to Chris Raia, Deputy Assistant Director of the FBI's Counterterrorism Division, one cooler was located at the cross section of Bourbon and Orleans Street and the other was at an intersection two blocks away.<sup>9</sup> Raia stated, "those are the only two devices that we've been able to recover that were functional. Both devices were rendered safe on scene."<sup>10</sup> He noted that the FBI obtained "surveillance footage showing Jabbar placing the devices where they were found."<sup>11</sup>

In an early morning press conference on January 1, 2025, FBI Assistant Special Agent Alethea Duncan told the public that this heinous act was "not a terrorist event."<sup>12</sup> That same day, the FBI changed its position regarding the attack and stated that it was "an act of terrorism."<sup>13</sup> It is unclear why the FBI official initially claimed that the attack was not linked to terrorism. Also, during a January 2, 2025, press conference, the FBI told the public that Jabbar acted alone.<sup>14</sup>

Prior to the attack, Jabbar had reportedly posted at least five videos on Facebook "saying he was inspired by ISIS and decided to carry out the attack after initially planning to harm his family and friends."<sup>15</sup> Jabbar apparently posted these videos beginning at 1:29am and ending at 3:02am on January 1, 2025.<sup>16</sup>

Additionally, legally protected whistleblower disclosures to our offices claim the FBI Special Agent in Charge (SAC) of the New Orleans field office, Lyonel Myrthil, vacationed in Europe from late December to early January, which included New Year's Eve, New Year's Day, and the Sugar Bowl and took multiple days to return to New Orleans after the terrorist attack on January 1, 2025.<sup>17</sup> These are major public events that a SAC should be present for. The FBI failed to note this in any of the joint briefings it provided to Congress and must provide more information. Is this information provided true and accurate? We welcome an explanation.

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<sup>8</sup> Marlene Lenthang, *Timeline of New Orleans driver's whereabouts*, NBC NEWS, (Jan. 2, 2025), <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/live-blog/live-updates-15-dead-new-orleans-attack-fbi-says-driver-wasnt-acting-a-rcna185955>; Fox 8 Staff, *FBI releases photos of terror suspect and explosives packed in cooler, seeking public's help*, FOX8, (Jan. 2, 2025), <https://www.fox8live.com/2025/01/02/fbi-releases-photos-terror-suspect-explosives-packed-cooler-seeking-public-help/>.

<sup>9</sup> *Id.*

<sup>10</sup> *Id.*

<sup>11</sup> *Id.*

<sup>12</sup> Holly Yan and Rebekah Riess, *Why the mayor and FBI might be giving conflicting reports on whether the incident was a "terrorist" attack*, CNN, (Jan. 1, 2025), <https://www.cnn.com/us/live-news/new-orleans-mass-casualty-bourbon-street-01-01-25-hnk#cm5dxaant0000356mnmvcjc0z>.

<sup>13</sup> FBI Press Release, *supra* note 1.

<sup>14</sup> *Id.*

<sup>15</sup> Christopher Cann, Nick Penzenstadler, and Bart Jansen, *Army record, DUI, social media posts: What we know about suspect in New Orleans attack*, USA TODAY, (updated Jan. 2, 2025), <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2025/01/02/new-orleans-attack-suspect-shamsud-din-jabbar/77396433007/>.

<sup>16</sup> Marlene Lenthang, *supra* note 8.

<sup>17</sup> On file with Comm. staff.

This terrorist attack was not the only public, tragic, and violent incident of that day. At approximately 8:40am PST on January 1, 2025, just hours after the horrific attack in New Orleans, a Tesla Cybertruck exploded in front of the Trump International Hotel in Las Vegas.<sup>18</sup> At least seven people were injured in this incident, and the driver, later identified as Matthew Alan Livelsberger, reportedly shot himself in the head right before the car exploded.<sup>19</sup> Law enforcement identified “gasoline canisters, camp fuel canisters and large firework mortars in the back of the truck” but noted that “they did not know how the explosion had been ignited.”<sup>20</sup>

According to reports, the Army identified Livelsberger as a 37-year-old Army master sergeant from Colorado Springs. He had “enlisted as a Special Forces trainee and served on active duty from January 2006 to March 2011, then served in the National Guard from March 2011 to July 2012, and in the Army Reserve from July 2012 to December 2012. He re-entered active duty in December 2012, serving with U.S. Army Special Operations.”<sup>21</sup> Livelsberger was apparently on approved leave from his duty station in Germany when he died.<sup>22</sup>

As early as January 2, 2025, the FBI stated that there is “no definitive link between the attack in New Orleans and the one in Las Vegas.”<sup>23</sup> However, similarities do reportedly exist between Jabbar and Livelsberger. For example, both individuals had experience in the U.S. Army and the vehicles in both incidents were rented from the same company, Turo.<sup>24</sup> Further, according to reports, authorities claimed Livelsberger and Jabbar “likely overlapped at Fort Bragg and again in Afghanistan.”<sup>25</sup> It remains unclear whether there are additional similarities or connections between Jabbar and Livelsberger.

The public deserves complete transparency and the truth regarding the New Orleans terrorist attack and the Las Vegas car explosion. While we understand the investigation into both of these incidents is ongoing, we expect your agencies to be forthcoming and responsive to oversight requests from Congress on this very serious matter. Accordingly, please provide rolling briefing updates to our staffs, starting with an update on January 29, 2025. In addition, please provide the following information by no later than February 4, 2025:

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<sup>18</sup> Jacey Fortin, *What We Know About the Cybertruck Explosion in Las Vegas*, N.Y. TIMES, (Jan. 2, 2025), <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/01/02/us/tesla-cybertruck-explosion-las-vegas.html>.

<sup>19</sup> *Id.*

<sup>20</sup> *Id.*

<sup>21</sup> *Id.*

<sup>22</sup> *Id.*; and Josh Margolin, et. al., *What we know about Cybertruck explosion suspect Matthew Livelsberger*, ABCNEWS, (Jan. 2, 2025), <https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/cybertruck-explosion-suspect-matthew-livelsberger/story?id=117271048>.

<sup>23</sup> Perry Chiramonte, *FBI Says New Orleans Attacker Acted Alone, No Link Found to Las Vegas Bomber*, NEW YORK SUN, (updated Jan. 2, 2025), <https://www.nysun.com/article/investigators-probe-possible-link-between-las-vegas-bomber-and-new-orleans-attacker>.

<sup>24</sup> Aimee Picchi, *Trucks in New Orleans attack and Las Vegas explosion were rented on Turo. Here's what to know.*, CBS NEWS, (Jan. 3, 2025), <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/new-orleans-attack-tesla-cybertruck-explosion-trucks-rented-turo/>.

<sup>25</sup> Tony Kovalesski, *Suspects in Vegas explosion, New Orleans attack served at same Army base, police confirm*, DENVER 7 ABC, (updated Jan. 2, 2025), <https://www.denver7.com/news/local-news/suspects-in-vegas-explosion-new-orleans-attack-served-at-same-army-base-sources-tell-denver7-investigates>.

1. Is DoD aware of any interactions between Livelsberger and Jabbar at Fort Bragg or in Afghanistan?
2. Did Livelsberger and Jabbar have similar acquaintances at Fort Bragg or in Afghanistan? For example, did they have the same instructors, chaplains, and/or chain of command?
3. Was anyone ever made aware of, or were concerns ever expressed about Jabbar's affiliation with or sympathies for ISIS, Islamic terrorism, or any other terror organization? If so, what steps were taken in response to this knowledge or these concerns?
4. All records referring or relating to Jabbar's and Livelsberger's military service, including but not limited to the status of their service prior to their deaths, including copies of any DD214.
5. Was Jabbar and/or Livelsberger ever subjected to any disciplinary actions or investigations during the course of military service? If so, please provide all records relating to any such disciplinary action or investigation.
6. A description of Jabbar and Livelsberger's roles and responsibilities throughout the course of their military services, including any responsibilities following discharge in the reserves.
7. Did Jabbar access or attempt to access any DoD facility or system after his separation or discharge?
  - a. If so, please provide the name of the facility or system Jabbar accessed or attempted to access, as well as the date.
  - b. Was Jabbar employed as a contractor performing duties for DoD at any point? If so, please provide information and related records.
8. Did Jabbar ever hold a security clearance? If so, please provide the dates and level of clearance held by Jabbar.
9. Please provide a record of Livelsberger's requests for and use of mental health treatment through the U.S. Special Operation Command's Preservation of the Force and Family program and any other mental health program DoD is aware of.<sup>26</sup>
10. For what reason was Livelsberger on personal leave before his death? Was the leave prescribed to Livelsberger, requested by Livelsberger, or scheduled as a matter of course? Please explain.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. In your response, please answer according to each corresponding question.

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<sup>26</sup> See, David Charns, *Las Vegas hotel car bomber sought mental health treatment before Army leave*, 8 NEWS NOW INVESTIGATIONS, (updated Jan. 6, 2025), <https://www.8newsnow.com/investigators/las-vegas-hotel-car-bomber-sought-mental-health-treatment-before-army-leave/> (Showing an Army spokesperson confirmed Livelsberger "used the U.S Special Operation Command's Preservation of the Force and Family program and 'did not display any concerning behaviors.'").

Sincerely,



Ron Johnson  
Chairman  
Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations



Charles E. Grassley  
Chairman  
Committee on the Judiciary

cc: The Honorable Richard Blumenthal  
Ranking Member  
Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations

The Honorable Richard Durbin  
Ranking Member  
Committee on the Judiciary

The Honorable Robert P. Storch  
Inspector General  
Department of Defense