

United States Senate

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

GABRIELLE D'ADAMO SINGER, STAFF DIRECTOR
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January 15, 2020

The Honorable Chad F. Wolf
Acting Secretary
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
246 Murray Lane, SW
Washington, D.C. 20528

Dear Acting Secretary Wolf:

Two days after the United States killed Qasem Soleimani, the Commander of the Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps-Qods Force and a prolific sponsor of terrorism,¹ the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) issued a National Terrorism Advisory Bulletin warning of potential reprisals by Iran and their proxies.² Soon after, Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and President Hassan Rouhani vowed revenge;³ and Secretary General Nasrallah, the leader of the Iranian-proxy Hizballah, warned that all U.S. military assets are fair targets.⁴ On January 8, Iran launched missile strikes against U.S. personnel located in Iraq, fortunately leading to no casualties.⁵ The U.S. government must remain vigilant against a real threat of violence to the homeland by Iran or any of the foreign terrorist organizations (FTOs) that Iran sponsors. This includes taking steps to ensure that our immigration system adjusts along with this changing threat landscape.

Although the U.S. restricts the visas available to Iranian nationals, individuals associated with Iran-sponsored FTOs may seek to travel to the U.S. from places not subject to these visa restrictions. For example, Lebanese Hizballah members may have Lebanese passports, which allow them to travel into the U.S. more freely.⁶ Additionally, reporting indicates that hundreds of

¹ See, e.g., Jerry Dunlavy, *Qassem Soleimani was responsible for the deaths of hundreds of American soldiers*, Wash. Examiner, Jan. 2, 2020, <https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/news/qassem-soleimani-was-responsible-for-the-deaths-of-hundreds-of-american-soldiers>.

² U.S. Dep't of Homeland Security, *National Terrorism Advisory System Bulletin* (Jan. 4 2020), <https://www.dhs.gov/ntas/advisory/national-terrorism-advisory-system-bulletin-january-4-2020>.

³ Alissa J. Rubin et al., *Outrage in Iran After Killing of Suleimani: Here's What You Need to Know*, N.Y. Times, Jan. 5, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/01/05/world/middleeast/iran-us-trump.html>.

⁴ Anna Ahronheim, *Nasrallah: Trump has started a new type of war in the region*, Jerusalem Post, Jan. 5, 2020, <https://www.jpost.com/Middle-East/Nasrallah-Soleimanis-death-marks-new-era-for-the-Middle-East-613169>.

⁵ Ahmed Aboulenein et al., *Iranian missiles target U.S. troops in Iraq, Trump consults advisers*, Reuters, Jan. 7, 2020, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-iraq-security/us-response-awaited-after-iran-strikes-at-us-troops-in-iraq-to-avenge-generals-killing-idUSKBN1Z60NL>.

⁶ U.S. Dep't of State, Bureau of Consular Affairs, *June 26 Supreme Court Decision on Presidential Proclamation 9645*, https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/us-visas/visa-information-resources/presidential-proclamation-archive/june_26_supreme_court_decision_on_presidential_proclamation9645.html (last visited Jan 10, 2020).

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student visas have been issued to Iranian nationals in FY2019 and thousands in FY2018.⁷ To better understand how DHS is adapting to this dynamic threat environment, I respectfully request the following records and information:

1. Data on the visa denial referrals based on derogatory information learned through the vetting undertaken by DHS and communicated to the Department of State during FY2018 and FY2019.
2. Data on the number of Iranians who were denied entry during FY2018 and FY2019.
3. Data on visa overstays by Iranian citizens, broken down by visa category, for FY2018 and FY2019.
 - a. For each overstay identified above, the status of any open investigations.
4. A list of countries from which Iranian nationals have applied for visas to the U.S. during FY2018 and FY2019, and, for each of those countries, a description of the DHS Visa Security Unit personnel located at the relevant U.S. Embassies and Consulates.
5. A description of DHS' social media vetting of Iranian visa applicants pursuant to Section 5 of Executive Order 13,780.⁸
6. A list and description of all DHS investigations into Hizballah and the Qods Force since FY2018.

Please produce this material as soon as possible, but by no later than 5:00 p.m. on Friday, January 31, 2020. To the maximum extent possible, please provide unclassified responses to these questions. Any classified information provided in response to this letter should be provided under separate cover through the Office of Senate Security. In addition, I request that appropriate Department of Homeland Security staff arrange a briefing with my staff on this matter. Please arrange this briefing by February 14, 2020.

The Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs is authorized by Rule XXV of the Standing Rules of the Senate to investigate “the efficiency, economy, and effectiveness of all agencies and departments of the Government.”⁹ Additionally, Senate Resolution 70 (116th Congress) authorizes the Committee to examine “the efficiency and

⁷ Laura D. Francis, *Iran Visas Exempted From Trump Travel Ban Being Blocked Anyway*, Bloomberg Law News June 27, 2019, <https://news.bloomberglaw.com/daily-labor-report/iran-visas-exempted-from-trump-travel-ban-being-blocked-anyway>.

⁸ U.S. Dep't of State, Bureau of Consular Affairs, *Collection of Social Media Identifiers from U.S. Visa Applicants* (June 4, 2019), https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/News/visas-news/20190604_collection-of-social-media-identifiers-from-U.-S.-visa-applicants.html (last visited Jan 10, 2020).

⁹ S. Rule XXV(k); *see also* S. Res. 445, 108th Cong. (2004).

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economy of operations of all branches the Government.”¹⁰ For purposes of this request, please refer to the definitions and instructions in the enclosure.

If you have any questions about this request, please contact Brian Kennedy of the Committee staff at (202) 224-4751. Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



Ron Johnson
Chairman

cc: The Honorable Gary C. Peters
Ranking Member

¹⁰ S. Res. 70, 116th Cong. §12(e)(I)(A) (2019) (enacted).