



One Hundred Nineteenth Congress
Committee on Homeland Security
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

September 1, 2026

The Honorable Andrew R. Garbarino
Chairman
Committee on Homeland Security
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Garbarino:

As we approach the 25th anniversary of the September 11, 2001, attacks, I write to urge you to convene a hearing on worldwide threats to the homeland — consistent with the Committee’s longstanding practice — to receive testimony from Secretary of Homeland Security Markwayne Mullin, Federal Bureau of Investigation Director Kash Patel, and National Counterterrorism Center Acting Director Joseph Weirsky.

As you are undoubtedly aware, the bipartisan National Commission on the Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States (9/11 Commission) ultimately assessed “[t]he most important failure was one of imagination.”¹ It observed that “[t]errorism was not the overriding national security concern for the U.S. government under either the Clinton or the pre-9/11 Bush administration,” and that leaders did not “understand the gravity of the threat.”² Accordingly, none of the national security policies in place on September 11, 2001, “disturbed or even delayed the progress of the al Qaeda plot.”³ I am concerned we are on the same path today.

The threats facing the United States have changed dramatically since December 11, 2025, when the Committee held its last hearing on “Worldwide Threats to the Homeland.” In January 2026, the United States launched a military operation to oust from office and arrest Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro. On February 28, 2026, President Trump — without consulting Congress and absent a compelling reason — launched military strikes against Iran. Projected to last “four to five weeks,” the war wages on to this day.⁴ Iran is apparently retaliating in cyberspace, attacking critical

¹ National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States, THE 9/11 COMMISSION REPORT: FINAL REPORT OF THE NATIONAL COMMISSION ON TERRORIST ATTACKS UPON THE UNITED STATES: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY, at 9 (2004).

² *Id.*

³ *Id.*

⁴ Zolan Kanno-Youngs, *Trump Says War Could Last Weeks and Offers Contradictory Visions of New Regime*, N.Y. TIMES (Mar. 1, 2026), <https://www.nytimes.com/2026/03/01/us/politics/trump-iran-war-interview.html>.

infrastructure Americans rely on every day.⁵ Increasingly powerful artificial intelligence (AI) models and advances in quantum computing are challenging the security frameworks upon which governments and the private sector have long relied and potentially providing new tools of destruction to our adversaries.

Seemingly unfazed by the potential homeland security consequences of these developments, the Trump administration has continued to be guided by its obsession with executing violent and draconian immigration operations,⁶ stifling dissent,⁷ building records on Americans,⁸ and exacting retribution on the President's political foes.⁹ Instead of investing in the cybersecurity of State and local governments or vulnerable critical infrastructure, the President has chosen to arm Immigration and Customs Enforcement personnel with shock gloves¹⁰ and purchase empty warehouses — some of which ICE is now trying to offload — to detain noncitizens.¹¹ Instead of improving lawful collaboration within the Intelligence Community, the President is devoting Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI) and Department of Justice (DOJ) resources to proving false claims about the 2016 and 2020 elections and DHS's resources to building an illegal and inaccurate voter roll vetting database.¹² And instead of providing grants to State and local governments to build first responder capabilities and facilitate recovery from disasters, the administration is withholding grant funds unless States adopt election guidelines it has no authority to impose to punish States for voting for a candidate other than the President in 2024.¹³ The fact

⁵ Jenna McLaughlin, *Are Hacks of U.S. Water Facilities a New Front of the Iran War?* NPR (Aug. 12, 2026), <https://www.npr.org/2026/08/12/nx-s1-5927437/cyberattack-water-iran-war>; Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency, *CISA, FBI, EPA and U.S. Government Partners Update Warning of Iran-Affiliated Threat Actors Targeting Critical Infrastructure Programmable Logic Controllers* (Jul. 22, 2026), <https://www.cisa.gov/news-events/news/cisa-fbi-epa-and-us-government-partners-update-warning-iran-affiliated-threat-actors-targeting>.

⁶ Naureen Shah & Denise Bell, *The Chaos and Cruelty of ICE*, TIME (Aug. 6, 2026), <https://time.com/article/2026/08/06/the-chaos-and-cruelty-of-ice/>.

⁷ Alan Feuer & Ernesto Lodoño, *U.S. Investigated Left-Leaning Groups During Minnesota Immigration Crackdown*, N.Y. TIMES (Aug. 13, 2026), <https://www.nytimes.com/2026/08/13/us/politics/dhs-inquiry-immigration-protests-minnesota.html>; The Editorial Board, *Trump's Stifling of Dissent Reaches a New Level*, N.Y. TIMES (Feb. 6, 2026), <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2026/02/06/opinion/ice-minnesota-democracy-america.html>.

⁸ Hannah Critchfield & Shane Shifflett, *How ICE IS Weaponizing Social Media Against Its Critics*, WALL ST. J. (Aug. 3, 2026); Kat Lonsdorf, et al., *ICE Has Spun a Massive Surveillance Web. We Talked to People Caught in It*, NPR (Mar. 5, 2026), <https://www.npr.org/2026/03/04/nx-s1-5717031/ice-dhs-immigrants-surveillance-confrontation-deportation-mobile-fortify>.

⁹ Peter Charalambous, et al, *Here's A List of the Individuals, Including James Comey, Targeted by the Trump Administration*, ABCNEWS (Jul. 10, 2026), <https://abcnews.com/US/list-individuals-including-lisa-cook-targeted-trump-administration/story?id=124968309>.

¹⁰ Meg Anderson, *ICE Plans to Outfit Officers With Electric Shock Gloves*, NPR (Aug. 12, 2026), <https://www.npr.org/2026/08/12/nx-s1-5929545/ice-buys-electric-shock-gloves>.

¹¹ Hamed Aleaziz, *ICE Spent \$700 Million on 7 Warehouses. Now It Wants to Get Rid of Them.*, N.Y. TIMES (Jun. 18, 2026), <https://www.nytimes.com/2026/06/18/us/politics/ice-warehouses-immigration.html>.

¹² Jeremy Roebuck, *Blanche as AG Face Pressure from Trump, Skeptical Courts, Low Staff Morale*, WASH. POST (Aug. 9, 2026), <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2026/08/09/todd-blanches-next-challenges-trumps-attorney-general/>; Nicholas Kerr & Elise Spenner, *System that DHS Is Urging States to Use to Assess Voter Rolls Known to Return Faulty Results; Reports*, ABCNEWS (Jul. 19, 2026), <https://abcnews.com/Politics/system-dhs-urging-states-assess-voter-rolls-return/story?id=134863557>; Merrill Matthews, *The Real Reason Bill Pulte Was Named Director of National Intelligence*, THE HILL (Jun. 9, 2026), <https://thehill.com/opinion/white-house/5915290-trump-pulte-dni-election-fraud/>; Bernd Debusmann, Jr., *Gabbard Says Declassified Report 'Exposes' Obama Administration*, BBC (Jul. 23, 2025), <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cx2l01ek0y7o>.

¹³ Josh Marcus, *Trump Rejected \$227m in Disaster Relief to Blue States After FEMA OK'd the Money*, THE INDEPENDENT (Jul. 29, 2026), <https://www.the-independent.com/news/world/americas/us-politics/trump-fema->

is, Trump is siphoning resources away from detecting and addressing novel threats and preparing communities across the country to respond to them in favor of shock and awe tactics aimed at impressing his base, intimidating his critics, and boosting his ego. Unfortunately, homeland security does not appear to be a consideration.

While the 9/11 Commission identified failure of imagination as the most important government failure leading up to the attacks, the Commission also identified failures in management. Toward that end, it is worth noting that the homeland security enterprise has been in a state of upheaval under Trump. Earlier this year, the President soured on then-Secretary of Homeland Security Kristi Noem, after she wasted \$220 million on a taxpayer-funded ad campaign and following public outrage over homeland security officials shooting and killing three U.S. citizens.¹⁴ Republicans and Democrats alike criticized her gross mismanagement of the Department of Homeland Security, and it will likely take years to repair the damage. Today, there are rumors the President is dissatisfied with Noem's replacement, Secretary Markwayne Mullin, an individual with limited experience in the space.¹⁵

Weeks after firing Noem, the President abruptly turned on former Attorney General Pam Bondi, fired her, and installed Todd Blanche, his former personal attorney, as the Acting Attorney General.¹⁶ Now confirmed to serve as Attorney General, Mr. Blanche inherits an agency "ravaged by firings, departures and low morale," with "its traditional independence from the White House . . . evaporated," and "demands to pursue sweeping, politically charged investigations of [the President's] foes."¹⁷

Finally, in March, Joe Kent resigned as the Director of the National Counterterrorism Center, which falls under ODNI, in protest of President Trump's war of choice with Iran, which Kent said, "posed no imminent threat to our nation."¹⁸ Three months later, Kent's boss, former Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard, left her post to care for her sick husband following growing rifts with the President.¹⁹ Trump temporarily replaced Gabbard with Bill Pulte, an individual with

disaster-aid-states-rejected-b3024120.html; Carter Walker, *Democratic States, Leaders Sue Trump Administration for Conditioning Grant Money on Election Policies*, VOTEBEAT (Jul. 24, 2026),

<https://www.votebeat.org/national/2026/07/24/democratic-states-trump-election-priorities-fema-grants-lawsuit/>;

¹⁴ Ximena Bustillo, *Trump Fires Kristi Noem as DHS Chief, Names Sen. Markwayne Mullin to Replace Her*, NPR (Mar. 5, 2026), <https://www.npr.org/2026/03/05/nx-s1-5667546/kristi-noem-homeland-security-fired>.

¹⁵ Andrew Feinberg, *A Short Tenure? Trump Frustrated and MAGA Furious with DHS Head Markwayne Mullin: report*, THE INDEPENDENT (Aug. 10, 2026), <https://www.the-independent.com/news/world/americas/us-politics/trump-markwayne-mullin-dhs-immigration-b3030519.html>.

¹⁶ Jennifer Jacobs, et al., *Trump Fired Pam Bondi as Attorney General, Installs Todd Blanche as Acting AG*, CBS NEWS (Apr. 2, 2026), <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/trump-pam-bondi-attorney-general/>; Sam Gauntt, *Todd Blanche is Officially the Nation's Top Law Enforcement Official*, GOV. EXEC. (Aug. 11, 2026), <https://www.govexec.com/management/2026/08/todd-blanche-officially-nations-top-law-enforcement-official/415335/?oref=ge-featured-river-secondary>.

¹⁷ Jeremy Roebuck, *Blanche as AG Face Pressure from Trump, Skeptical Courts, Low Staff Morale*, WASH. POST (Aug. 9, 2026), <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2026/08/09/todd-blanches-next-challenges-trumps-attorney-general/>.

¹⁸ Joe Kent, X (March 17, 2026), <https://x.com/joekent16jan19/status/2033897242986209689>.

¹⁹ Jacob Knutson, *Trump Says Bill Pulte, New Intel Chief, Will Probe 'Rigged Elections,'* DEMOCRACY DOCKET (Jun. 4, 2026), <https://www.democracydocket.com/news-alerts/trump-bill-pulte-acting-intel-chief-probe-elections/>; Meg Kinnard, et al., *Tulsi Gabbard Resigns as Trump's National Intelligence Director*, PBS NEWS (May 22, 2026), <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/politics/tulsi-gabbard-resigns-as-trumps-national-intelligence-director>.

no relevant credentials other than his loyalty to the President and his willingness to pursue the President's long-debunked conspiracy that the 2020 election was stolen.²⁰ Ultimately, former U.S. Attorney and Securities and Exchange Commission Chairman Jay Clayton was confirmed to serve as the Director of National Intelligence following a confirmation hearing during which he refused to say who won the 2020 election.²¹ Leadership changes and the resulting tumult are bad for the homeland security enterprise and its important mission. More disturbingly, the single most important criteria for these positions appears to be blind loyalty to the President and a willingness to do his dirty work, not a commitment to the American people or the Constitution.

To make matters worse, the President has drastically diminished the workforce supporting the national security and homeland security enterprise. Over the summer, Acting Director of National Intelligence Bill Pulte reassigned or terminated 200 personnel from the ODNI, exacerbating staffing cuts carried out earlier in the Trump administration.²² Today, ODNI, which was established in direct response to the 9/11 attacks, is less than half the size it was in January 2025, limiting its ability to provide critical analysis on pressing national security matters.²³ DHS's Office of Intelligence and Analysis, also established in the wake of the 9/11 attacks to better integrate homeland security intelligence, has lost nearly half its workforce under the Trump administration. The administration likewise gutted law enforcement agencies at DOJ, with the workforce at FBI losing more than 2,600 people since fiscal year 2024, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives losing 14 percent of its workforce, and DOJ's National Security Division losing 38 percent of its staff.²⁴

As both Democrats and Republicans have lamented, the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency lost nearly one-third of its workforce over the past 18 months, and by late last year the former Acting Director said that the nearly 40 percent vacancy rate across key mission areas limited the agency's "ability to fully support national security imperatives and administration priorities."²⁵ Now the Agency is racing against the evolution of highly consequential technologies to onboard new employees who can help the government and critical infrastructure owners manage the associated risks.²⁶

While I appreciate the activities you have scheduled to observe the anniversary of the horrific 9/11 attacks, none of them are an adequate substitute for an open hearing during which the Committee

²⁰ Merrill Matthews, *The Real Reason Bill Pulte Was Named Director of National Intelligence*, THE HILL (Jun. 9, 2026), <https://thehill.com/opinion/white-house/5915290-trump-pulte-dni-election-fraud/>.

²¹ Nick Schiffrin, et al., *Trump's Intelligence Nominee Refuses to Say Who Won 2020 Election*, PBS NEWS (Jul. 15, 2026), <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/trumps-intelligence-nominee-refuses-to-say-who-won-2020-election>.

²² Warren P. Strobel, *U.S. Intelligence Agency Quietly Cut About 200 Jobs Since June 1*, WASH. POST (Jul. 23, 2026), <https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/2026/07/23/us-intelligence-agency-quietly-cut-about-200-jobs-since-june-1/>.

²³ *Id.*

²⁴ Brad Heath & Andrew Goudsward, *Trump's DOJ Has Cut Thousands of Law-Enforcement Jobs While Vowing to Get Tough on Crime*, REUTERS (Apr. 23, 2026), <https://www.reuters.com/world/trumps-doj-has-cut-thousands-law-enforcement-jobs-while-vowing-get-tough-crime-2026-04-23/>.

²⁵ Eric Geller, *CISA, Eyeing China, Plans Hiring Spree to Rebuild Its Depleted Ranks*, CYBERSECURITYDIVE (Nov. 17, 2025), <https://www.cybersecuritydive.com/news/cisa-hiring-workforce-strategy/805733/>; Justin Doubleday, *CISA Eyes Plan for More Than 300 New Hires*, FED. NEWS NETWORK (Mar. 25, 2026), <https://federalnewsnetwork.com/cybersecurity/2026/03/cisa-eyes-plan-for-more-than-300-new-hires/>.

²⁶ *Id.*

can interrogate the administration's assessment of threats to the homeland and evaluate its plans to address them. As leaders of this Committee, we owe it to the Americans who perished during the 9/11 attacks to ensure the administration is focused on the most pressing threats facing the Nation so that, together, we can help defend the homeland against them.

I implore you to schedule the Committee's annual hearing on worldwide threats to the homeland without delay. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Bennie G. Thompson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Bennie" being more prominent.

Bennie G. Thompson
Ranking Member
Committee on Homeland Security