



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

March 4, 2026

The Honorable Kash Patel
Director
Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI)
Washington, D.C. 20535

Dear Director Patel:

We write about deeply concerning reports that you are once again diminishing the Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI) ability to protect the American people — this time by firing a dozen FBI agents and staff in retribution for investigating President Trump's illegal removal of classified documents during his first term.¹ The counterespionage agents and staff you fired specialize in monitoring and mitigating threats from foreign adversaries, including Iran. Firing these experts just days before President Trump ordered strikes on Iran not only raises questions about coordination across the Trump administration, but also about the FBI's ability to identify and counter dangerous Iranian operations on U.S. soil while our nations are at war.

As you know, Iran's government "has been implicated in assassinations, terrorist plots, and terrorist attacks in more than 40 countries" since 1979.² These include attempted attacks inside the U.S., such as an Iranian Armed Forces-linked 2011 plot to assassinate the Saudi ambassador to the U.S. and plots to kidnap or kill U.S.-based dissidents.³ Furthermore, following a January 2020 U.S. airstrike in Baghdad that killed Iranian Commander Qasem Soleimani, Iranian leaders have vowed to avenge Soleimani's death and have attempted to fulfill that vow on several occasions. In 2021, Iranian Armed Forces attempted "to arrange the murder" of former National

¹ Carol Leonnig, *Kash Patel's latest firings ousted agents with expertise in Iran*, MSNOW (March 2, 2026),

<https://www.ms.now/news/kash-patels-latest-firings-ousted-agents-with-expertise-in-iran>.

² U.S. VIRTUAL EMBASSY IRAN, *Fact Sheet: Iran's Assassinations and Terrorist Activity Abroad* (May 29, 2020),

<https://ir.usembassy.gov/irans-assassinations-and-terrorist-activity-abroad>.

³ Reis Thebault, *Iranian agents once plotted to kill the Saudi ambassador in D.C. The case reads like a spy thriller*, THE WASHINGTON POST (Jan. 4, 2020), <https://www.washingtonpost.com/history/2020/01/04/iran-agents-once-plotted-kill-saudi-ambassador-dc-case-reads-like-spy-thriller/>; Aaron Katersky and Meredith Deliso, *2 men sentenced to 25 years for failed murder-for-hire plot against Iranian dissident Masih Alinejad*, ABC NEWS (Oct. 29, 2025), <https://abcnews.com/US/masih-alinejad-murder-for-hire-plot-sentencing/story?id=126980754>.

Security Advisor John Bolton.⁴ In August 2022, news reports identified former Secretary of State Mike Pompeo as a target of an Iranian-assassination plot and \$1 million bounty.⁵

Following this weekend's attack on Iran, the Department of Homeland Security issued a critical incident note warning that increased U.S. or Israeli operations in Iran could inspire U.S.-based individuals to violence.⁶ So while there is never a good time to undermine the FBI's efforts to protect against foreign spy operations, the timing of your firing of counterespionage agents could not have been worse.

Troublingly, this is not the first time you have harmed the FBI's ability to counter terror threats in the United States. Nearly a year ago, we wrote to you about your decision to transfer FBI agents and intelligence analysts out of FBI's Domestic Terrorism Operations Section and then-acting Deputy Attorney General Emil Bove's directive that FBI Joint Terrorism Task Forces (JTTFs) focus on immigration enforcement.⁷ We asked whether FBI agents supporting JTTFs were directed to pause or stop terrorism investigations, foreign or domestic, whether agents had been reassigned from JTTFs as a result of the apparent deprioritization of domestic terrorism investigations, and how many hours FBI agents supporting JTTFs were spending on terrorism investigations versus immigration-related initiatives, among other things. You have yet to respond to that letter, and you were a no-show at the Committee on Homeland Security's annual worldwide threats hearing, despite having ample time to travel around the world on leisure travel at taxpayer expense.

It is time that you come before the Committee to explain your decisions and answer our questions about how the changes at FBI are making the homeland less safe. We look forward to hearing from you without further delay.

Sincerely,



Bennie G. Thompson
Ranking Member
Committee on Homeland Security



Seth Magaziner
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Counterterrorism and Intelligence

cc: The Honorable Andrew R. Garbarino, Chairman

The Honorable August Pfluger, Chairman, Subcommittee on Counterterrorism and Intelligence

⁴ U.S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE, *Justice Department announces charges and new arrest in connection with assassination plot directed from Iran*, (Jan. 27, 2023), <https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/justice-department-announces-charges-and-new-arrest-connection-assassination-plot-directed>; *Member of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) charged with plot to murder the former National Security Advisor*, (Aug. 10, 2022), <https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/member-irans-islamic-revolutionary-guard-corps-irgc-charged-plot-murder-former-national>.

⁵ Mike Allen, *Source: Iranian Plot had \$1M Pompeo Bounty*, AXIOS (Aug. 10, 2022), <https://www.axios.com/2022/08/10/iran-assassination-pompeo-bolton>.

⁶ U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY, *(U//FOUO) Tehran Responds to US and Israeli Operation with Ballistic Missile Attacks Throughout the Middle East* (Feb. 28, 2026).

⁷ Letter from Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson and Subcommittee on Counterterrorism and Intelligence Ranking Member Seth Magaziner to Secretary of Homeland Security Kristi Noem and FBI Director Kash Patel (April 9, 2025), <https://democrats-homeland.house.gov/news/correspondence/ranking-members-thompson-magaziner-write-dhs-and-fbi-on-trump-administration-scuttling-domestic-terrorism-programs>.