



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

February 24, 2017

The Honorable John F. Kelly
Secretary
Department of Homeland Security
Washington, DC 20528

Dear Secretary Kelly:

I write to you today in light of recent media reports regarding President Trump's demand that the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the Department of Justice (DOJ) build legal standing for his Muslim travel ban.¹ The President's reported directive to DHS and DOJ intelligence officials to create evidence is an attempt to justify his desire to ban Muslims from the United States – a campaign promise he pledged to implement as president. Reports have surfaced that a joint intelligence assessment was ordered after the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals found that the Trump administration had shown no security evidence in order to justify the need for a ban of individuals from Iraq, Iran, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, and Yemen². Reports have further elaborated that intelligence officials within DHS' Office of Intelligence and Analysis (I&A) may not agree that blocking travelers from these seven countries is strategic from a security standpoint or makes our country safer.

Timely and tailored assessments, produced by I&A, cover a multitude of security and are invaluable to our federal and international partners. I&A produces valuable threat assessments to mitigate the potential threat of foreign fighters who attempt to travel either to or from countries that the Department has previously called for tighter immigration security. Additionally, I&A has placed great emphasis on information sharing between the Federal government and state and local law enforcement.

¹ Jake Tapper and Pamela Brown, "White House effort to justify travel ban causes growing concern for some intelligence officials," CNN (February 23, 2017), <http://www.cnn.com/2017/02/23/politics/white-house-effort-to-justify-travel-ban-causes-growing-concern-for-some-intel-officials/index.html>.

² Nikita Vladimirov, "CNN: White House wants intel report to back up travel ban," *The Hill* (Feb. 23, 2017), <http://thehill.com/homenews/administration/320946-cnn-wh-wants-intel-report-to-justify-travel-ban>.

As you know, the Department has the third-largest workforce in the Federal government and faces low employee morale. While the results of the 2016 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS) conducted by the U.S. Office of Personnel Management showed an uptick in employee morale, DHS is still at the bottom when compared to the other federal agencies and low retention rates remain a concern. In 2014 the U.S. Government Accountability Office released a report concerning workforce challenges specific to I&A. The analysis found that I&A experienced low morale and high rates of attrition among its analysts. However, under the previous leadership of Francis X. Taylor, I&A saw an increase in morale by restructuring and balancing the workforce to ensure a robust workforce.

I am concerned that this mandate from the White House, which some intelligence officials see as a politicization of intelligence³, will not only reverse the accomplishments of I&A to-date, but also exacerbate already low morale and retention rates. This has an impact on the Department and our Nation's security readiness. The professional intelligence officials serving at DHS must feel vested in the work they do and cannot be ostracized, reprimanded, or used as political pawns to fulfill ill-conceived campaign promises. Therefore, we must be vigilant in our commitment to improve morale and workforce satisfaction, not diminish it. You, President Trump and those under your watch at DHS, have a responsibility to ensure that our country's intelligence and national security policies are based on facts and evidence and neither of those can be altered to fit the narrative of prejudice and discrimination.

Thank you for your time and attention to this matter. If you or your staff have any questions, please contact Hope Goins, Staff Director at 202-226-2616.

Sincerely,



BENNIE G. THOMPSON
Ranking Member

³ Jake Tapper and Pamela Brown, "White House effort to justify travel ban causes growing concern for some intelligence officials," *CNN* (Feb. 23, 2017), <http://www.cnn.com/2017/02/23/politics/white-house-effort-to-justify-travel-ban-causes-growing-concern-for-some-intel-officials/>.