

ONE HUNDRED EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY

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August 9, 2024

The Honorable Alejandro Mayorkas
Secretary
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
3017 7th St. S.W.
Washington, DC 20528

Dear Secretary Mayorkas:

On July 12, 2024, law enforcement officials arrested Asif Merchant, a citizen of Pakistan with ties to Iran, after he “orchestrated a plot to assassinate U.S. government officials on U.S. soil.”¹ Federal investigators “believe that [President] Trump and other current and former U.S. government officials were the intended targets of the plot.”² The arrest came just one day before the attempted assassination of President Trump at a campaign rally in Butler, Pennsylvania.³ The complaint was unsealed on August 6, 2024.⁴

According to court records, in April 2024, Merchant flew from Pakistan to Istanbul, Turkey, and then to Houston, Texas, “to recruit individuals to carry out his plot to assassinate U.S. government officials.”⁵ Merchant’s “travel records to enter the United States” showed “frequent travel to Iran, Syria, and Iraq.”⁶ Once inside the United States, Merchant “contacted a person he believed could assist him with the criminal scheme,” but the person “reported Merchant’s conduct to law enforcement and became a confidential source working with law enforcement.”⁷ During the following three months, Merchant continued to plan his assassination

¹ See Compl., 3-4, 13, *United States v. Asif Merchant*, No. 24-MJ-00467 (E.D.N.Y. July 14, 2024) [hereinafter Compl.].

² Evan Perez & Hannah Rabinowitz, *Pakistani national with ties to Iran charged in connection to a foiled assassination plot potentially targeting Trump*, CNN (Aug. 6, 2024, 5:32 PM), <https://www.cnn.com/2024/08/06/politics/iran-trump-assassination-charges/index.html>.

³ See, e.g., Audrey Conklin et al., *Trump shooting: Timeline of assassination attempt raises questions about how gunman evaded security*, FOX NEWS (July 15, 2024, 4:26 PM), <https://www.foxnews.com/us/trump-shooting-timeline-assassination-attempt-raises-questions-about-how-gunman-evaded-security>.

⁴ See Perez & Rabinowitz, *supra* note 2.

⁵ Compl., *supra* note 1, at 4.

⁶ *Id.* at 3.

⁷ *Id.* at 4.

plot, until law enforcement arrested him before Merchant planned to depart the United States in July 2024.⁸

During a phone call with the Department of Justice (DOJ) on August 6, the Biden-Harris Administration refused to answer many of the Committee's questions about the assassination plot, including about Merchant's immigration status and his method of entry into the United States. Instead, DOJ directed the Committee to court documents. The limited details in the court documents, however, do not substitute for the Committee's need for information to conduct its oversight.

Potential terrorists and enemies of the United States exploit vulnerabilities in our nation's immigration system to the detriment of those in the country.⁹ The Committee has documented how the Biden-Harris Administration's border and immigration policies have allowed a known 99 potential terrorists into the country and only increase the likelihood that other dangerous aliens will successfully enter and remain in the country.¹⁰ Pursuant to the Rules of the House of Representatives, the Committee on the Judiciary is authorized to conduct oversight of federal immigration policy and procedures.¹¹ As such, to assist the Committee with its continued oversight of federal immigration policy and procedures, we ask that you please provide the following information and materials regarding Asif Merchant:

1. Case history information, including, but not limited to, the alien's immigration history, immigration benefits applications, the alien file (A-file) or consular file (including all consular notes), and immigration detention status and history.
2. Information regarding the time, date, and place of any and all of the alien's entries into the United States.
3. Information regarding the alien's processing by U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officials, including whether CBP officials were alerted to derogatory information about the alien and what questions were asked of the alien during the screening process.

⁸ *Id.* at 5-13.

⁹ *See, e.g.*, H. Comm. on the Judiciary, Interim Staff Rep., *Terror at Our Door: How the Biden-Harris Admin.'s Open-Borders Policies Undermine National Sec. and Endanger Americans* (Aug. 5, 2024).

¹⁰ *Id.*

¹¹ Rules of the U.S. House of Representatives, R. X (2023).

The Honorable Alejandro Mayorkas

August 9, 2024


Page 3

Please provide this information as soon as possible, but no later than 5:00 p.m. on August 23, 2024. If you have any questions, please contact Committee staff at (202) 225-6906. Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Jim Jordan
Chairman



Tom McClintock
Chairman
Subcommittee on Immigration
Integrity, Security, and Enforcement

cc: The Honorable Jerrold L. Nadler, Ranking Member

The Honorable Pramila Jayapal, Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Immigration
Integrity, Security, and Enforcement