

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

January 21, 2025

VIA ELECTRONIC TRANSMISSION

Benjamin Huffman
Acting Secretary
Department of Homeland Security

Dear Acting Secretary Huffman:

We are writing regarding two events that occurred on January 1, 2025—the terrorist attack in New Orleans and the Tesla Cybertruck explosion in front of the Trump International Hotel in Las Vegas.

At approximately 3:15am CST, an individual driving a white Ford pickup truck intentionally rammed his vehicle into a crowd of people standing on Bourbon Street in New Orleans.¹ The attack damaged at least two businesses, injured 57 individuals, and most importantly killed 14 people.² The driver of the truck, later identified as Shamsud-Din Jabbar, was killed in a shootout with police shortly after he plowed through the crowded street and then reportedly exited his vehicle and began shooting.³

New reports on Jabbar’s background indicate that he was a 42-year-old, U.S. citizen from Texas who had served in the U.S. Army from 2007 until 2015.⁴ During that time, Jabbar was apparently deployed to Afghanistan from February 2009 to January 2010.⁵ Later, Jabbar reportedly joined the Army Reserve as an information technology specialist until 2020.⁶

Following the violent attack, reports indicated that law enforcement located an ISIS flag in Jabbar’s truck.⁷ According to the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), two improvised explosive devices (IED) were also recovered from coolers Jabbar had placed near Bourbon

¹ Carol Alvarado and Elizabeth Wolfe, *A visual timeline of the New Year’s attack that left at least 14 dead in New Orleans*, CNN, (Jan. 2, 2025), <https://www.cnn.com/2025/01/02/us/timeline-truck-attack-new-orleans-dg/index.html>; Press Release, *FBI Statement on the Attack in New Orleans*, (Jan. 1, 2025), <https://www.fbi.gov/news/press-releases/fbi-statement-on-the-attack-in-new-orleans>.

² Carol Alvarado and Elizabeth Wolfe, *supra* note 1; and FBI, *FBI Releases Investigative Update in Bourbon Street Attack*, FBI NEW ORLEANS, (Jan. 14, 2025), <https://www.fbi.gov/contact-us/field-offices/neworleans/news/fbi-releases-investigative-update-in-bourbon-street-attack>.

³ *Id.*; Jennifer Calfas, *FBI Clarifies 14 Victims Were Killed in New Orleans Attack*, WALL STREET JOURNAL, (updated Jan. 2, 2025), https://www.wsj.com/livecoverage/new-orleans-truck-attack?mod=WSJ_home_mediumtopper_pos_1.

⁴ Nathan Layne, et al., *Who was Shamsud-Din Jabbar, the suspect in New Orleans truck attack?*, REUTERS, (Jan. 2, 2025), <https://www.reuters.com/world/us/suspect-deadly-new-orleans-truck-attack-served-us-army-2025-01-01/>.

⁵ *Id.*

⁶ *Id.*

⁷ Carol Alvarado and Elizabeth Wolfe, *supra* note 1; FBI Press Release, *supra* note 1.

Street.⁸ According to Chris Raia, Deputy Assistant Director of the FBI's Counterterrorism Division, one cooler was located at the cross section of Bourbon and Orleans Street and the other was at an intersection two blocks away.⁹ Raia stated, "those are the only two devices that we've been able to recover that were functional. Both devices were rendered safe on scene."¹⁰ He noted that the FBI obtained "surveillance footage showing Jabbar placing the devices where they were found."¹¹

In an early morning press conference on January 1, 2025, FBI Assistant Special Agent Alethea Duncan told the public that this heinous act was "not a terrorist event."¹² That same day, the FBI changed its position regarding the attack and stated that it was "an act of terrorism."¹³ It is unclear why the FBI official initially claimed that the attack was not linked to terrorism. Also, during a January 2, 2025, press conference, the FBI told the public that Jabbar acted alone.¹⁴

Prior to the attack, Jabbar had reportedly posted at least five videos on Facebook "saying he was inspired by ISIS and decided to carry out the attack after initially planning to harm his family and friends."¹⁵ Jabbar apparently posted these videos beginning at 1:29am and ending at 3:02am on January 1, 2025.¹⁶

Additionally, legally protected whistleblower disclosures to our offices claim the FBI Special Agent in Charge (SAC) of the New Orleans field office, Lyonel Myrthil, vacationed in Europe from late December to early January, which included New Year's Eve, New Year's Day, and the Sugar Bowl and took multiple days to return to New Orleans after the terrorist attack on January 1, 2025.¹⁷ These are major public events that a SAC should be present for. The FBI failed to note this in any of the joint briefings it provided to Congress and must provide more information. Is this information provided true and accurate? We welcome an explanation.

⁸ Marlene Lenthag, *Timeline of New Orleans driver's whereabouts*, NBC NEWS, (Jan. 2, 2025), <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/live-blog/live-updates-15-dead-new-orleans-attack-fbi-says-driver-wasnt-acting-a-rcna185955>; Fox 8 Staff, *FBI releases photos of terror suspect and explosives packed in cooler, seeking public's help*, FOX8, (Jan. 2, 2025), <https://www.fox8live.com/2025/01/02/fbi-releases-photos-terror-suspect-explosives-packed-cooler-seeking-public-help/>.

⁹ *Id.*

¹⁰ *Id.*

¹¹ *Id.*

¹² Holly Yan and Rebekah Riess, *Why the mayor and FBI might be giving conflicting reports on whether the incident was a "terrorist" attack*, CNN, (Jan. 1, 2025), <https://www.cnn.com/us/live-news/new-orleans-mass-casualty-bourbon-street-01-01-25-hnk#cm5dxaant0000356mnvmcjc0z>.

¹³ FBI Press Release, *supra* note 1.

¹⁴ *Id.*

¹⁵ Christopher Cann, Nick Penzenstadler, and Bart Jansen, *Army record, DUI, social media posts: What we know about suspect in New Orleans attack*, USA TODAY, (updated Jan. 2, 2025), <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2025/01/02/new-orleans-attack-suspect-shamsud-din-jabbar/77396433007/>.

¹⁶ Marlene Lenthag, *supra* note 8.

¹⁷ On file with Comm. staff.

This terrorist attack was not the only public, tragic, and violent incident of that day. At approximately 8:40am PST on January 1, 2025, just hours after the horrific attack in New Orleans, a Tesla Cybertruck exploded in front of the Trump International Hotel in Las Vegas.¹⁸ At least seven people were injured in this incident, and the driver, later identified as Matthew Alan Livelsberger, reportedly shot himself in the head right before the car exploded.¹⁹ Law enforcement identified “gasoline canisters, camp fuel canisters and large firework mortars in the back of the truck” but noted that “they did not know how the explosion had been ignited.”²⁰

According to reports, the Army identified Livelsberger as a 37-year-old Army master sergeant from Colorado Springs. He had “enlisted as a Special Forces trainee and served on active duty from January 2006 to March 2011, then served in the National Guard from March 2011 to July 2012, and in the Army Reserve from July 2012 to December 2012. He re-entered active duty in December 2012, serving with U.S. Army Special Operations.”²¹ Livelsberger was apparently on approved leave from his duty station in Germany when he died.²²

As early as January 2, 2025, the FBI stated that there is “no definitive link between the attack in New Orleans and the one in Las Vegas.”²³ However, similarities do reportedly exist between Jabbar and Livelsberger. For example, both individuals had experience in the U.S. Army and the vehicles in both incidents were rented from the same company, Turo.²⁴ Further, according to reports, authorities claimed Livelsberger and Jabbar “likely overlapped at Fort Bragg and again in Afghanistan.”²⁵ It remains unclear whether there are additional similarities or connections between Jabbar and Livelsberger.

The public deserves complete transparency and the truth regarding the New Orleans terrorist attack and the Las Vegas car explosion. While we understand the investigation into both of these incidents is ongoing, we expect your agencies to be forthcoming and responsive to oversight requests from Congress on this very serious matter. Accordingly, please provide rolling briefing updates to our staffs, starting with an update on January 29, 2025. In addition, please provide the following information by no later than February 4, 2025:

¹⁸ Jacey Fortin, *What We Know About the Cybertruck Explosion in Las Vegas*, N.Y. TIMES, (Jan. 2, 2025), <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/01/02/us/tesla-cybertruck-explosion-las-vegas.html>.

¹⁹ *Id.*

²⁰ *Id.*

²¹ *Id.*

²² *Id.*; and Josh Margolin, et. al., *What we know about Cybertruck explosion suspect Matthew Livelsberger*, ABCNEWS, (Jan. 2, 2025), <https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/cybertruck-explosion-suspect-matthew-livelsberger/story?id=117271048>.

²³ Perry Chiamonte, *FBI Says New Orleans Attacker Acted Alone, No Link Found to Las Vegas Bomber*, NEW YORK SUN, (updated Jan. 2, 2025), <https://www.nysun.com/article/investigators-probe-possible-link-between-las-vegas-bomber-and-new-orleans-attacker>.

²⁴ Aimee Picchi, *Trucks in New Orleans attack and Las Vegas explosion were rented on Turo. Here's what to know.*, CBS NEWS, (Jan. 3, 2025), <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/new-orleans-attack-tesla-cybertruck-explosion-trucks-rented-turo/>.

²⁵ Tony Kovalesski, *Suspects in Vegas explosion, New Orleans attack served at same Army base, police confirm*, DENVER 7 ABC, (updated Jan. 2, 2025), <https://www.denver7.com/news/local-news/suspects-in-vegas-explosion-new-orleans-attack-served-at-same-army-base-sources-tell-denver7-investigates>.

1. Did DHS possess any information prior to the New Orleans attack concerning Jabbar, including but not limited to, tips, suspicious purchases or travel history, or information from state or local law enforcement?
 - a. If so, please describe what information DHS possessed concerning Jabbar prior to the attacks.
 - b. Did DHS share this information with federal, state, and local law enforcement partners?
 - i. If so, please provide a list of the law enforcement partners who received this information, the date the information was shared, and all relevant records.
 - ii. If not, please explain why not.
2. Did DHS possess any information concerning specific threats to New Orleans and the French Quarter specifically on or about January 1, 2025, prior to the attack? If so, please describe what information DHS possessed and provide all records.
3. Has DHS investigated how Jabbar was radicalized into terrorism in support of ISIS? If so, explain the investigation to-date, its findings, and provide all records. If not, why not?
4. Did DHS possess any information concerning Livelsberger prior to the Las Vegas incident, including but not limited to, tips, suspicious purchases or travel history, or information from state or local law enforcement?
 - a. If so, please describe the information that DHS possessed and provide all relevant records.
 - b. Did DHS share this information with federal, state, and local law enforcement partners?
 - i. If so, please provide a list of the law enforcement partners who received this information, and the date the information was shared.
 - ii. If not, please explain why not.
5. Did DHS possess any information concerning specific threats to Las Vegas or the Trump International Hotel Las Vegas prior to the January 1, 2025, attack? If so, please describe what information DHS possessed prior to the attack.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. In your response, please answer according to each corresponding question.

Sincerely,



Ron Johnson
Chairman
Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations



Charles E. Grassley
Chairman
Committee on the Judiciary

cc: The Honorable Richard Blumenthal
Ranking Member
Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations

The Honorable Richard Durbin
Ranking Member
Committee on the Judiciary

The Honorable Joseph Cuffari
Inspector General
Department of Homeland Security