

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

October 9, 2024

VIA ELECTRONIC TRANSMISSION

The Honorable Alejandro Mayorkas
Secretary
Department of Homeland Security

Mr. Patrick J. Lechleitner
Deputy Director and Senior Official
Performing the Duties of the Director
U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement

Mr. Ronald Rowe
Acting Director
United States Secret Service

Ms. Katrina W. Berger
Executive Associate Director
Homeland Security Investigations

Dear Secretary Mayorkas, Acting Director Rowe, Deputy Director Lechleitner, and Executive Associate Director Berger:

On September 15, 2024, Ryan Wesley Routh reportedly positioned himself at the exterior of former President Trump's golf course in West Palm Beach, Florida with food and a rifle for nearly twelve hours, lying in wait to assassinate him.¹ According to reports, former President Trump's Secret Service detail spotted Routh's rifle in the tree line about 300 yards away from former President Trump, and Secret Service agents opened fire in Routh's direction.² Reportedly Routh fled the scene in his car and was later arrested about 50 miles away.³ The July 13 and September 15 assassination attempts against former President Trump, as well as the plot by Asif Merchant, a Pakistani native with ties to Iran, to assassinate former President Trump and other high-ranking U.S. government officials, raise serious questions about how the Secret Service uses its resources to successfully carry out its no-fail protection mission.⁴

At a September 16, 2024, news conference Acting Director Rowe reportedly said that after the July 13 assassination attempt he "ordered a paradigm shift" at the Secret Service, but its "protective methodologies work and they are sound."⁵ Yet, the Secret Service's utter failure to simply ensure the perimeter of former President Trump's location was patrolled and secured, despite the multiple violent

¹ Adriana Gomez Licon And Will Weissert, *5 things to know about the apparent assassination attempt on Trump*, AP News (Sep. 17, 2024) <https://apnews.com/article/trump-assassination-attempt-what-to-know-564c56e167c3cdc6c50f6a2e91db9a6c>.

² Kerry Breen and Anna Schechter, *What's known about Ryan Wesley Routh, Trump assassination attempt suspect arrested in Florida*, CBS News (Sep. 17, 2024) <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/trump-assassination-attempt-investigation-ryan-wesley-routh-florida/>.

³ *Id.*

⁴ United States Attorney's Office Eastern District of New York Press Release. Pakistani National with Ties to Iran Charged in Connection with Foiled Plot to Assassinate a Politician or U.S. Government Officials (Aug. 6, 2024).

<https://www.justice.gov/usao-edny/pr/pakistani-national-ties-iran-charged-connection-foiled-plot-assassinate-politician-or>; see also United States Attorney's Office Eastern District of New York Press Release of the Indictment (Sept. 11, 2024). <https://www.justice.gov/usao-edny/pr/pakistani-national-ties-iran-indicted-terrorism-charge-connection-foiled-plot>.

⁵ Julia Ainsley, Jake Traylor, Elizabeth Chuck and Rich Schapiro, *Secret Service chief makes remarkable admission: We need a 'paradigm shift'*, NBC News (Sept. 16, 2024) <https://www.nbcnews.com/investigations/secret-service-chief-makes-remarkable-admission-need-paradigm-shift-rcna171390>.

threats and actions made against him, calls those statements into question.⁶ Further, while reports say that the Secret Service has taken steps to use its resources to increase protections for former President Trump, questions remain whether these resources are being used efficiently and effectively.⁷

According to a report released by the Congressional Research Service (CRS), for Fiscal Year (FY) 2024 Congress provided the Secret Service just over \$3 billion in funding, nearly half of which was appropriated for the Secret Service to carry out its protection mission.⁸ Of the approximately \$1.5 billion in protection-specific funding, \$1.03 billion was designated for protection of persons and facilities, and \$244 million was designated for the protection of presidential campaigns and national special security events, a nearly 57% increase in what was appropriated in FY2020 for the Presidential election.⁹ However, according to legally protected whistleblower disclosures provided to my office, the Secret Service has failed to timely and adequately transfer funds to Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) to reimburse expenses paid by HSI agents detailed to HSI “Jump Teams” used to provide the Secret Service with additional manpower in carrying out its protection mission. In addition, there are also questions about whether the number of hours worked by HSI Jump Team agents are accurately reported ensuring agents are properly compensated.

Legally protected whistleblower disclosures provided to my office show that Department of Homeland Security (DHS) officials have told HSI agents not to submit travel authorizations and travel reimbursement vouchers for Jump Team deployments due to the Secret Service failing to transfer money. However, HSI agents are still required to travel for these Jump Teams to support the Secret Service’s protection mission. According to these whistleblower disclosures, HSI agents are deployed, usually on very short notice, across the country on Jump Teams from as short as a few days for as long as multiple weeks, several times throughout the year. The whistleblower disclosures to my office show that even though HSI leadership asked individual agents to “volunteer,” they are effectively required to travel when their name is called to deploy. The whistleblower disclosures further show that in some cases HSI agents have had to pay for their own travel expenses such as flights, food, rental cars, and hotels, and other incidentals, because HSI has delayed reimbursing agents for costs due to the Secret Service failing to transfer funds to HSI. Emails provided to my office appear to support those disclosures. For example, in one email DHS officials said that the account used to reimburse HSI agents for Jump Team travel expenses was down to “\$1,366.43” and they should “hold off on submitting Jump Team authorizations.”¹⁰ In a follow up email to HSI employees, DHS officials said that the account used to reimburse Jump Team travel expenses was down to “\$33” and agents should “not submit or

⁶ Kate Kelly, *Secret Service Admits Not Searching Golf Course Perimeter, Drawing New Scrutiny*, New York Times (Sep. 16, 2024) <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/09/16/us/politics/secret-service-scrutiny-trump.html>; see also, Andres Triay, Nicole Sganga, and Kathryn Watson, *U.S. intelligence detected Iranian plot against Trump, officials say*, CBS News (Jul. 17, 2024) <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/iran-plot-against-trump-detected/>.

⁷ Simone Weichselbaum, Alexandra Chaidez, Andrew Blankstein and Julia Ainsley, *'Agency in crisis': Secret Service has decade-old staffing shortfall*, NBC News (Jul. 20, 2024) <https://www.nbcnews.com/investigations/agency-crisis-secret-service-decade-old-staffing-shortfall-rcna162698>; Michael Ruiz and David Spunt, *Trump assassination attempt: Inexperienced Secret Service agent flying drone called toll-free number for help*, Fox News (Sep. 25, 2024) <https://www.foxnews.com/us/trump-assassination-attempt-inexperienced-secret-service-agent-flying-drone-called-toll-free-number-help>.

⁸ Shawn Reese and William L. Painter, *U.S. Secret Service Protection Mission Funding and Staffing: Fact Sheet*, Congressional Research Service (Jul. 17, 2024) <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/R/R48129>.

⁹ *Id.* at 6.

¹⁰ Attached enclosures.

resubmit Jump Team authorizations.”¹¹ At the end of September, DHS notified HSI employees that it “had over \$371,000 worth of Jump Team Authorizations Fail” the night of September 25, and HSI “will not receive more money for Jump Team[s] this year.”¹² The email says that agents who were able to get their travel authorized should not submit their vouchers for reimbursement if it is higher than the amount listed on the authorization form, and HSI employees will be notified once the agency receives money from the Secret Service.¹³ If you have an explanation to add context to these emails, I welcome it.

Federal regulations require agencies to issue travel authorizations in advance of employee travel, in part, to ensure accountability of taxpayer funds and the agency has sufficient funds on hand to pay for the expenses.¹⁴ Moreover, the Anti-Deficiency Act prohibits federal agencies from creating or authorizing payments in excess of available funds as well as accepting voluntary services from federal employees.¹⁵ If the legally protected whistleblower disclosures are accurate, DHS’s requirement that HSI agents continue Jump Team travel without the funds available to authorize the travel or reimburse its agents for their travel expenses appears to run afoul of the Anti-Deficiency Act as well as federal regulations. Moreover, it also raises serious concerns whether HSI agents are being directed to not accurately and truthfully report Jump Team travel on their time and attendance reports in violation of the law due to their official travel not being approved.¹⁶ Accordingly, are these whistleblower disclosures and records accurate? If so, the Secret Service must fully explain to Congress and the American people why it’s failing to transfer funds to HSI to reimburse its agents deployed on Jump Teams even though it was provided nearly \$1.5 billion for protection related expenses. If accurate, and without additional explanation, these disclosures indicate a massive financial management and internal control failure.

The apparent mismanagement by Secret Service leadership is causing a serious hardship on the hardworking agents of HSI who put themselves in harm’s way to secure our nation. The financial uncertainty and financial stress have decreased morale among HSI agents, and their confidence in HSI, ICE, and DHS leadership. DHS and Secret Service must better manage its resources and ensure enough funds are available to reimburse HSI agents for their Jump Team deployments.

Accordingly, so that Congress may conduct independent oversight, please provide answers to the following no later than October 23, 2024:

¹¹ *Id.*

¹² *Id.*

¹³ *Id.*

¹⁴ See Code of Federal Regulations Title 41, Subtitle F, Chapter 301, Subchapter D, Part 301-71 Agency Travel Accountability Requirements <https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-41/subtitle-F/chapter-301/subchapter-D/part-301-71>.

¹⁵ 31 U.S.C. §§ 1341, 1342; see Government Accountability Office, *Antideficiency Act Resources*, <https://www.gao.gov/legal/appropriations-law/resources>.

¹⁶ See 43 CFR § 20.510 - Fraud or false statements in a Government matter (“An employees shall not, in any matter within the jurisdiction of any department or agency of the United States, knowingly or willfully falsify, conceal or cover up by any trick, scheme, or device a material fact, or make any false, fictitious, fraudulent statements or representations, or make or use any false writing or document knowing the same to contain any false, fictitious or fraudulent statement or entry (18 U.S.C. 1001). ***Special attention is required in the certification of time and attendance reports, applications for employment, request for travel reimbursement, and purchase orders and receiving forms*** [emphasis added].”).

1. From 2021 to the present, provide all records¹⁷ between and among the Secret Service, HSI, ICE, and DHS related to the deployment of HSI Jump Teams.
2. From 2021 to the present, for each month provide:
 - a. How many times has the Secret Service requested HSI detail agents for protection related duties? Describe each of these requests in thorough detail.
 - b. The amount of funding the Secret Service has transferred for HSI Jump Team reimbursement.
 - c. The amount that HSI agents were reimbursed for Jump Team related travel expenses.
 - d. The number of HSI agents deployed to a Jump Team.
3. Provide all DHS, ICE, HSI, and Secret Service travel policies, guidance, and related documents.
4. Who is responsible for making the decision to require HSI agents to travel without sufficient funds to support travel expenses?
5. Provide a list of all components within DHS that support Jump Teams.
6. If the allegations provided by the whistleblower disclosures are accurate, has DHS assessed whether it committed Anti-Deficiency Act violations? Please provide records related to the determination. If so, has DHS transmitted a copy of the violation to President Biden, Vice-President Harris in her capacity as President of the Senate, and the Comptroller General of the United States? If so, please provide a copy of the transmission and accompanying documents.

Thank you for your prompt review and response. If you have any questions, please contact Brian Randolph and Silvia Symbor on my Committee staff at (202) 224-0642.

Sincerely,



Charles E. Grassley
Ranking Member
Committee on the Budget

cc: Kara Lynum
Acting General Counsel
Department of Homeland Security

Stacy Marcott
Acting Chief Financial Officer
Department of Homeland Security

Honorable Joseph Cuffari
Inspector General
Department of Homeland Security

¹⁷ "Records" include any written, recorded, or graphic material of any kind, including letters, memoranda, reports, notes, electronic data (e-mails, email attachments, and any other electronically-created or stored information), calendar entries, inter-office communications, meeting minutes, phone/voice mail or recordings/records of verbal communications, and drafts (whether or not they resulted in final documents).