

United States Senate  
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

October 22, 2024

**VIA ELECTRONIC TRANSMISSION**

The Honorable Alejandro Mayorkas  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Homeland Security

Dear Secretary Mayorkas:

On June 25, 2024, I wrote to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) regarding the Department's responsibility to identify, vet, and monitor individuals entering the United States as a result of Operation Allies Welcome (OAW).<sup>1</sup> Specifically, the letter highlighted a DHS Office of the Inspector General (OIG) Management Alert entitled, *DHS Has a Fragmented Process for Identifying and Resolving Derogatory Information for Operation Allies Welcome Parolees*.<sup>2</sup> The Management Alert found vulnerabilities in DHS's process to identify and resolve potential derogatory records for Afghan parolees.<sup>3</sup> As a result of the alert, DHS OIG made five recommendations, all of which DHS concurred with.<sup>4</sup> To date, I have yet to receive a response to the questions I raised in my June 25, 2024, letter. The management alert and recent events, such as the Tawhedi arrest, raise additional questions and substantiate the numerous concerns I've raised over the years.<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Letter from Sen. Charles E. Grassley, Ranking Member, Senate Budget Committee, to the Honorable Alejandro Mayorkas, Director, Department of Homeland Security (June 25, 2024), [https://www.grassley.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/grassley\\_to\\_dhs\\_-\\_afghan\\_evacuees\\_oig\\_report.pdf](https://www.grassley.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/grassley_to_dhs_-_afghan_evacuees_oig_report.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Department of Homeland Security, Office of the Inspector General, *DHS Has a Fragmented Process for Identifying and Resolving Derogatory Information for Operation Allies Welcome Parolees* (OIG-24-24), at 1 (May 6, 2024), <https://www.oig.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/assets/2024-05/OIG-24-24-May24.pdf>.

<sup>3</sup> *Id.*

<sup>4</sup> *Id.* at 21.

<sup>5</sup> Letter from Sen. Charles E. Grassley, *supra* note 1; Letter from Sen. Charles E. Grassley, Ranking Member, Senate Budget Committee, to the Honorable Christopher Wray, Director, Federal Bureau of Investigation (Oct. 10, 2024), [https://www.grassley.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/grassley\\_to\\_fbi\\_-\\_tawhedi.pdf](https://www.grassley.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/grassley_to_fbi_-_tawhedi.pdf); Senator Charles E. Grassley, *Watchdog Report Corroborates Grassley Oversight of DHS, FBI Failures to Properly Vet Afghan Evacuees*, NEWS RELEASES (July 1, 2024), <https://www.grassley.senate.gov/news/news-releases/watchdog-report-corroborates-grassley-oversight-of-dhs-fbi-failures-to-properly-vet-afghan-evacuees#:~:text=Watchdog%20Report%20Corroborates%20Grassley%20Oversight%20of%20DHS.%20FBI>; Senator Charles E. Grassley, *Grassley & Judiciary Committee Colleagues Introduce Bill to Protect Afghan Allies*, NEWS RELEASES (July 21, 2023), <https://www.grassley.senate.gov/news/news-releases/grassley-and-judiciary-committee-colleagues-introduce-bill-to-protect-afghan-allies>; Senator Charles E. Grassley, *Grassley Joins Thune, Risch, Colleagues to Introduce Bill to Release Afghanistan Dissent Cable*, NEWS RELEASES (May 12, 2023), <https://www.grassley.senate.gov/news/news-releases/grassley-joins-thune-risch-colleagues-to-introduce-bill-to-release-afghanistan-dissent-cable>; Senator Charles E. Grassley, *Grassley: Americans Deserve to Know How FBI Is Addressing Afghan Evacuee Vetting Failures*, NEWS RELEASES (Sep. 21, 2022), <https://www.grassley.senate.gov/news/news-releases/grassley-americans-deserve-to-know-how-fbi-is-addressing-afghan-evacuee-vetting-failures>; Senator Charles E. Grassley, *Grassley Statement on DHS Inspector General Finding Deficiencies with Vetting of Afghan Parolees*, NEWS RELEASES (Sep. 7, 2022), <https://www.grassley.senate.gov/news/news-releases/grassley-statement-on-dhs-inspector-general-finding-deficiencies-with-vetting-of-afghan-parolees>; Senator Charles E. Grassley, *Senators Seek Transparency on Flagged Afghan Evacuees Amid Ongoing Concerns of Vetting, Security Failures*, NEWS RELEASES (Aug. 22, 2022), <https://www.grassley.senate.gov/news/news-releases/senators-seek-transparency-on-flagged-afghan-evacuees-amid->

On October 7, 2024, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) arrested Nasir Ahmad Tawhedi in Oklahoma after he allegedly planned an Election Day terrorist attack in the United States on behalf of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS).<sup>6</sup> According to the Department of Justice's (DOJ) criminal complaint and public reporting, Tawhedi entered the United States on September 9, 2021, on a special immigrant visa (SIV) during the same time period as the Biden-Harris administration's OAR and OAW.<sup>7</sup>

Recently, my office obtained a version of Tawhedi's unclassified I-94 Arrival/Departure Record.<sup>8</sup> The document notes that Tawhedi "populated the Operation Allies Welcome (OAW) arrival hotlist" on August 26, 2024.<sup>9</sup> The document notes that derogatory information on Tawhedi was referred to Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) around that time.<sup>10</sup> The document also notes that Tawhedi's visa class is "OPERATION ALLIES REFUGE (PORT OF ENTRY PAROLE – (OAR)) (OAR)."<sup>11</sup> Recent reporting states that Tawhedi was never

---

[ongoing-concerns-of-vetting-security-failures](#); Oversight of the Federal Bureau of Investigation: Hearing before the U.S. Senate Committee on the Judiciary, 117th Cong. (2022), <https://www.judiciary.senate.gov/committee-activity/hearings/08/04/2022/oversight-of-the-federal-bureau-of-investigation>; Senator Charles E. Grassley, *Grassley Statement at FBI Oversight Hearing – Prepared Opening Statement by Senator Chuck Grassley of Iowa*, REMARKS (Aug. 4, 2022), <https://www.grassley.senate.gov/news/remarks/grassley-statement-at-fbi-oversight-hearing>; Senator Charles E. Grassley, *Grassley, Portman, Inhofe Demand Update from FBI on Afghan Evacuees Flagged for Security Concerns, Denounce DHS' Continued Failure to Use All Vetting Tools*, NEWS RELEASES (May 27, 2022), <https://www.grassley.senate.gov/news/news-releases/grassley-portman-inhofe-demand-update-from-fbi-on-afghan-evacuees-flagged-for-security-concerns-denounce-dhs-continued-failure-to-use-all-vetting-tools>; Senator Charles E. Grassley, *Grassley Statement on Watchdog Warnings about Deficient Vetting of Afghan Evacuees*, NEWS RELEASES (Feb. 17, 2022), <https://www.grassley.senate.gov/news/news-releases/grassley-statement-on-watchdog-warnings-about-deficient-vetting-of-afghan-evacuees>; Senator Charles E. Grassley, *Portman, Grassley, Shelby, Risch, Inhofe & Capito Request Biden Administration Provide Overdue Report on Composition & Vetting of Afghan Evacuees*, NEWS RELEASES (Dec. 22, 2021), <https://www.grassley.senate.gov/news/news-releases/portman-grassley-shelby-risch-inhofe-and-capito-request-biden-administration-provide-overdue-report-on-composition-vetting-of-afghan-evacuees>; Senator Charles E. Grassley, *State Dept. AWOL as Americans, Allies Remain Stranded in Afghanistan*, REMARKS (Oct. 28, 2021), <https://www.grassley.senate.gov/news/remarks/state-dept-awol-as-americans-allies-remain-stranded-in-afghanistan>; Senator Charles E. Grassley, *Grassley on Afghanistan Collapse through the Lens of the Inspector General – Prepared Floor Remarks by U.S. Senator Chuck Grassley of Iowa*, REMARKS (Sep. 27, 2021), <https://www.grassley.senate.gov/news/remarks/grassley-on-afghanistan-collapse-through-the-lens-of-the-inspector-general>; Senator Charles E. Grassley, *Grassley Presses Justice Dept., FBI on Terrorist Travel after Afghanistan Withdrawal*, NEWS RELEASES (Sep. 27, 2021), <https://www.grassley.senate.gov/news/news-releases/grassley-presses-justice-dept-fbi-on-terrorist-travel-after-afghanistan-withdrawal>; Senator Charles E. Grassley, *Grassley on President Biden's Afghanistan Failures – Prepared Floor Remarks by U.S. Senator Chuck Grassley of Iowa*, REMARKS (Sep. 15, 2021), <https://www.grassley.senate.gov/news/remarks/grassley-on-president-bidens-afghanistan-failures>; Senator Charles E. Grassley, *Grassley to Biden Admin: Don't Let Bad Actors Take Advantage of Chaotic Afghanistan Withdrawal*, NEWS RELEASES (Aug. 31, 2021), <https://www.grassley.senate.gov/news/news-releases/grassley-to-biden-admin-dont-let-bad-actors-take-advantage-of-chaotic-afghanistan-withdrawal>; Senator Charles E. Grassley, *Grassley Statement on Afghanistan*, NEWS RELEASES (Aug. 26, 2021), <https://www.grassley.senate.gov/news/news-releases/grassley-statement-on-afghanistan>.

<sup>6</sup> *United States v. Tawhedi*, M-27-760-SM (W.D. Okla. 2024) at 1, <https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/25196610-usa-v-tawhedi>; Louis Casiano, *David Spunt, Afghan man in Oklahoma plotted Election Day terror attack in US on behalf of ISIS*, *Justice Department says*, FOX NEWS (Oct. 8, 2024), <https://www.foxnews.com/us/afghan-man-oklahoma-plotted-election-day-terror-attack-us-isis-justice-department-says>.

<sup>7</sup> *United States v. Tawhedi*, *supra* note 2 at 6; Casiano and Spunt, *supra* note 2; John Solomon and Misty Severi, *Biden-Harris team was flagged for weak vetting of Afghan refugees, now one is charged in terror plot*, JUSTTHENEWS (Oct. 8, 2024), <https://justthenews.com/government/security/biden-harris-team-was-flagged-weak-vetting-afghan-refugees-now-one-charged>.

<sup>8</sup> I-94 Arrival/Departure Record, on File with Committee Staff.

<sup>9</sup> *Id.*

<sup>10</sup> *Id.*

<sup>11</sup> *Id.*

approved for a SIV and was “not well known” to the United States at the time of his entry.<sup>12</sup> The sworn FBI affidavit in support of the DOJ complaint stated, “Tawhedi entered the United States on September 9, 2021, on a special immigrant visa and is currently on parole status pending adjudication of his immigration proceedings.”<sup>13</sup>

DHS’s failure to properly vet Afghan evacuees has placed Americans at risk. I welcome additional explanation from your agency to better understand what steps have been taken to vet and verify the facts and details of Tawhedi’s entry into the United States. For Congress to conduct independent oversight, provide a response to the following questions no later than November 5, 2024:

1. Provide answers and all responsive records from my June 25, 2024, letter.<sup>14</sup>
2. What derogatory information was found on Tawhedi and his reported co-conspirator? How and when was that information discovered and when did DHS notify the FBI? Provide all records, including information from the Terrorist Screening Data Set, relating to Tawhedi and his co-conspirator.
3. Prior to DOJ’s filing of the criminal complaint against Tawhedi, did DHS or its component agencies speak with DOJ or FBI about the facts and details relating to Tawhedi’s immigration status, to include how he entered the country? If so, when? Provide all records.
4. The I-94 record shows that derogatory information was first found on Tawhedi between August 26, 2024, and August 29, 2024, and was “referred” on August 29. Is that accurate?
5. The I-94 record says that Tawhedi entered the United States as part of OAR and given parole. Is that accurate?
6. The I-94 record says that Tawhedi populated the OAW arrival hotlist for the first time on August 26, 2024. Is that accurate? What caused his placement on the hotlist? Provide all records.

---

<sup>12</sup> Jacqui Heinrich, Bill Melugin, & Chris Pandolfo, *Afghan National Accused in Terror Plot Was Not Vetted for SIV Status, Despite Past Biden Admin Claims*, FOX NEWS (Oct. 16, 2024), <https://www.foxnews.com/politics/afghan-national-accused-terror-plot-not-vetted-siv-status-despite-past-biden-admin-claims> (“Officials now acknowledge Tawhedi was never vetted or approved for special immigrant (SIV) status, a thorough State Department process which can take years to complete. The State Department has maintained all along it had no role in Tawhedi’s refugee status, despite what a DHS case agent told investigators – leading to its inaccurate mention in the DOJ criminal complaint. Last week, Biden administration officials defended the error, explaining that Tawhedi first entered the country on DHS humanitarian parole – which had its own vetting process – but later applied for SIV status, subjecting him to another round of vetting which he also cleared. Those same officials now admit that claim was wrong, and Tawhedi was never vetted or approved for SIV.”).

<sup>13</sup> I-94 Arrival/Departure Record, *supra* note 8.

<sup>14</sup> “Records” include any written, recorded, or graphic material of any kind, including letters, memoranda, reports, notes, electronic data (emails, 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 they resulted in final documents).

7. Provide all records, including intelligence records, related to the investigation of Tawhedi and his co-conspirator.
8. Provide all communications and investigative material between HSI and the FBI in the Tawhedi matter.
9. Did Tawhedi or his co-conspirator attempt or actually recruit other Afghan evacuees that were part of OAW or OAR? If so, please provide a list of those individuals' names and immigration status.
10. On September 5, 2024, I asked DHS and other agencies whether additional protective measures have been taken to protect current and former government officials from foreign threats. Is DHS aware of any threats that Tawhedi or his co-conspirator posed to current or former government officials? If so, provide all records relating to those threats and explain whether the Secret Service and other relevant agencies have been made aware.
11. Is DHS aware of any ties between and among Tawhedi, his co-conspirator, and foreign governments, to include intelligence services? If so, please explain in detail.

In keeping with Executive Order 13526, please segregate all unclassified materials within the classified documents, and provide all unclassified information directly to the committee, and provide a classified addendum to the Office of Senate Security. Although the committee complies with all laws and regulations governing the handling of classified information, it is not bound, absent its prior agreement, by any handling restrictions.

Thank you for your prompt review and response. In addition to answering the above questions, please schedule a briefing with my staff. A classified briefing can be arranged, if necessary. If you have any questions, please contact Tucker Akin or Silvia Symber on my Committee staff at (202) 224-0642.

Sincerely,



Charles E. Grassley  
Ranking Member  
Committee on the Budget