

**United States Senate**  
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

December 18, 2024

**VIA ELECTRONIC TRANSMISSION**

The Honorable Merrick Garland  
Attorney General  
Department of Justice

The Honorable Christopher A. Wray  
Director  
Federal Bureau of Investigation

Dear Attorney General Garland and Director Wray:

On November 1, 2024, I wrote to the Department of Justice (DOJ), the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), as well as the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and its component agencies, regarding the October 25, 2024, announcement that the FBI and the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) are investigating the “unauthorized access to commercial telecommunications infrastructure” by actors affiliated with China.<sup>1</sup> This attack was reportedly a months-long espionage operation led by hackers from a group called “Salt Typhoon” and targeted data from the phones of former President Trump, vice presidential candidate and Senator J.D. Vance, and members of the Harris campaign.<sup>2</sup> Allegedly, the group was able to collect audio from phone calls and unencrypted communications including text messages.<sup>3</sup> It was also reported that Salt Typhoon targeted major telecom providers including AT&T, Verizon, Lumen, and T-Mobile, as well as the system the federal government uses for court-authorized network wiretapping requests.<sup>4</sup> As a result of this cyberattack, in addition to the letters I sent the

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<sup>1</sup> Press Release, FBI, *Joint Statement by FBI and CISA on People’s Republic of China Activity Targeting Telecommunications* (Oct. 25, 2024), [https://www.fbi.gov/news/press-releases/joint-statement-by-fbi-and-cisa-on-peoples-republic-of-china-activity-targeting-telecommunications?utm\\_campaign=email-Immediate&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_source=national-press-releases&utm\\_content=%5B1916549%5D-%2Fnews%2Fpress-releases%2Fjoint-statement-by-fbi-and-cisa-on-peoples-republic-of-china-activity-targeting-telecommunications](https://www.fbi.gov/news/press-releases/joint-statement-by-fbi-and-cisa-on-peoples-republic-of-china-activity-targeting-telecommunications?utm_campaign=email-Immediate&utm_medium=email&utm_source=national-press-releases&utm_content=%5B1916549%5D-%2Fnews%2Fpress-releases%2Fjoint-statement-by-fbi-and-cisa-on-peoples-republic-of-china-activity-targeting-telecommunications); Letter from Sen. Charles E. Grassley, Ranking Member, Senate Budget Committee, to the Honorable Alejandro Mayorkas, Secretary, Department of Homeland Security, Jen Easterly, Director, Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency, and Ronald L. Rowe, Jr., Acting Director, United States Secret Service (Nov. 1, 2024), [https://www.grassley.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/grassley\\_et\\_altohdhstsaussasifmerchantiranthreatfollowup.pdf](https://www.grassley.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/grassley_et_altohdhstsaussasifmerchantiranthreatfollowup.pdf); Letter from Sen. Charles E. Grassley, Ranking Member, Senate Budget Committee, to the Honorable Merrick Garland, Attorney General, Department of Justice, and the Honorable Christopher Wray, Director, Federal Bureau of Investigation (Nov. 1, 2024), [https://www.grassley.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/grassley\\_to\\_doj\\_and\\_fbi\\_-\\_salt\\_typhoon\\_cyberattack.pdf](https://www.grassley.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/grassley_to_doj_and_fbi_-_salt_typhoon_cyberattack.pdf).

<sup>2</sup> Robert Legare, et al, *Trump, Vance, Harris campaign potential targets in broad China-backed hacking operation*, CBS NEWS (Oct. 25, 2024), <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/trump-vance-potential-targets-china-backed-hacking-operation/>.

<sup>3</sup> Ellen Nakashima, et al, *Chinese hackers said to have collected audio of American calls*, WASHINGTON POST (Oct. 28, 2024), <https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/2024/10/27/chinese-hackers-cellphones-trump/>.

<sup>4</sup> *Id.*; Sarah Krouse, et al, *U.S. Wiretap Systems Targeted in China-Linked Hack*, WALL STREET JOURNAL (Oct. 5, 2024), <https://www.wsj.com/tech/cybersecurity/u-s-wiretap-systems-targeted-in-china-linked-hack-327fc63b?msckid=2c7a053cbcee6f980b4a111fbdfc6ea2>; Megan Morrone, *What you need to know about the Salt Typhoon hack*, AXIOS (Oct. 15, 2024), <https://www.axios.com/2024/10/15/salt-typhoon-hack-china-verizon-att>; Brian Burns, *T-Mobile Addresses ‘Salt Typhoon’ Cyberattack Concerns, Outlines Robust Security Measures*, MSN (Nov. 27, 2024),

federal agencies, I sent letters to AT&T, Verizon, Lumen, and T-Mobile.<sup>5</sup> Unfortunately, I have yet to receive responses from the FBI, DOJ, or DHS and its component agencies.

In light of the responses I have received from these telecommunications companies, I am concerned the FBI has interfered with their compliance with congressional oversight requests. For example, in response to my November 14 letter, Verizon stated that:

Due to the highly sensitive nature of the activity under investigation, [Verizon is] unable to provide [Senator Grassley] with further information at this time. In particular, Verizon has received guidance from the FBI that, for public safety and national security reasons, Verizon should avoid disclosure of information and material regarding this incident.<sup>6</sup>

Additionally, in follow up meetings with my staff, representatives from AT&T stated that the FBI told them to direct certain congressional inquiries to the FBI instead of responding to Congress.<sup>7</sup> This type of behavior from the FBI is obstruction as Congress maintains independent constitutional authorities to oversee and investigate these matters. As I've consistently told the DOJ and FBI, the existence of an ongoing federal investigation is a constitutionally illegitimate basis to withhold information from Congress.<sup>8</sup>

Accordingly, so Congress may conduct objective and independent oversight concerning the October 2024 Salt Typhoon cyberattacks and the DOJ and FBI's communications to the affected companies, please provide answers to the following no later than January 1, 2025:

1. Provide a full and complete response to my November 1, 2024, letter.
2. Has the FBI communicated to any of the affected telecommunications companies not to comply with congressional oversight requests? If yes, which companies? Provide all records.<sup>9</sup>

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<https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/technology/t-mobile-addresses-salt-typhoon-cyberattack-concerns-outlines-robust-security-measures/ar-AA1uRzhA#:~:text=T%20-Mobile%20has%20issued%20a%20detailed%20response%20to,linked%20to%20Chinese%20state-sponsored%20actors%20like%20%E2%80%9CSalt%20Typhoon.%E2%80%9D>.

<sup>5</sup> Letters from Sen. Charles E. Grassley, Ranking Member, Senate Budget Committee, to Kate Johnson, Chief Executive Officer, Lumen Technologies, Hans Vestberg, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, Verizon Communications, and John Stankey, Chief Executive Officer, AT&T Inc. (Nov. 14, 2024),

[https://www.grassley.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/grassley\\_to\\_lumen\\_verizon\\_att\\_-\\_salt\\_typhoon.pdf](https://www.grassley.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/grassley_to_lumen_verizon_att_-_salt_typhoon.pdf); Letter from Sen. Charles E. Grassley, Ranking Member, Senate Budget Committee, to Mike Sievert, President and Chief Executive Officer, T-Mobile US Inc., (Nov. 26, 2024).

<sup>6</sup> Letter on File with Committee Staff.

<sup>7</sup> Notes on File with Committee Staff.

<sup>8</sup> Letter from Sen. Charles E. Grassley, Ranking Member, Senate Budget Committee, to the Honorable Christopher Wray, Director, Federal Bureau of Investigation (Dec. 9, 2024), [https://www.grassley.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/grassley\\_to\\_fbi\\_-\\_failures.pdf](https://www.grassley.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/grassley_to_fbi_-_failures.pdf).

<sup>9</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).

3. Has the FBI communicated to any of the affected telecommunications companies to direct congressional oversight inquiries to the FBI, DOJ, or other federal agencies instead of providing responsive records and responses to Congress? If so, which companies? Provide all records.
4. If the FBI hasn't taken the actions in Questions 2 and 3, what steps will the FBI take to clarify with the affected telecommunications companies that they must respond to congressional oversight requests?

Thank you for your prompt review and responses. If you have any questions, please contact Tucker Akin on my Committee staff at (202) 224-0642.

Sincerely,



Charles E. Grassley  
Ranking Member  
Committee on the Budget