

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

August 8, 2024

VIA ELECTRONIC TRANSMISSION

The Honorable Merrick Garland
Attorney General
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20530

Attorney General Garland:

During your confirmation hearing you gave a “commit[ment] to transparency and explaining Justice Department decision making.”¹ Unfortunately, you and the Justice Department are failing to uphold your promise.

In October 2021, I informed you that, on the rare occasion I received a response from the Justice Department, those responses were, at best, evasive, deficient, and several months late.² You and your department have ignored that letter too, and even more concerning, its warnings against politicizing the Justice Department. I questioned whether you sought input from experienced prosecutors to avoid partisan policies and odd misstatements.³

Since then, I have continued to write for information and received increasingly peculiar responses. For example, it may alarm you to learn the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) is actively investigating a man who has been dead for nearly 14 years and is, therefore, unable to respond to my request for information.⁴ Either this is a staggering waste of resources, or a stunning indication the Justice Department neither fully reads nor responds to congressional inquiries.

¹ The Nomination of the Honorable Merrick Brian Garland to be Attorney General of the United State: Day 1 (Feb. 22, 2021), [The Nomination of the Honorable Merrick ... | United States Senate Committee on the Judiciary](#)

² Senator Grassley to Attorney General Merrick Garland (Oct. 22, 2021), [Judiciary-Full_electronic proof.pdf \(senate.gov\)](#).

³ *Id.*

⁴ Letter from Assistant Attorney General Uriarte to Senator Grassley, (November 11, 2023) https://www.grassley.senate.gov/download/doj-to-grassley_-garcia-luna; Robin Emmott, *Drug Hitmen in Suits Kill Key Witness in Mexico*, Reuters (Dec. 1, 2009), <https://www.reuters.com/article/world/drug-hitmen-in-suits-kill-key-witness-in-mexico-idUSTRE5B10LS/>

Then, in January 2024, I requested information on the closed case against Alex Saab.⁵ Mr. Saab laundered illicit proceeds for narco-terrorist Nicolás Maduro and was a key connection between Venezuela and Iran. President Biden fully pardoned Mr. Saab as part of the Biden-Harris administration's hostage negotiation with the criminal Maduro regime, in a failed attempt to secure democratic elections in Venezuela. Maduro has since declared himself the victor in a sham election and has detained thousands of dissenting Venezuelans—all while his top crony runs free.⁶ This is the disastrous foreign policy of the Biden-Harris administration at work.

The political decision to release Saab was not based on “the law and the facts”, as your denial of my request falsely suggests.⁷ To the contrary, the *Washington Post* reported that before granting clemency President Biden told his aides, “I want to get a read from the Hill”, and consulted a Democrat politician on the decision.⁸ President Biden gave Democrats more input into the pardon of Alex Saab than he gave the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), the agency tasked with dismantling the Maduro narco-terrorist regime. The DEA was not consulted.⁹

It appears the Justice Department's “longstanding principles and duty... to avoid even a perception that [DOJ] efforts are influenced by anything other than the law and the facts” only applies when Republicans request information about the Justice Department's political decisions after-the-fact. Your response also raised concerns about the privacy interests of uncharged third parties and investigative targets. To address those concerns, I have included a link in the footnotes with step-by-step instructions on blacking out text in PDF files for public releases.¹⁰ Further, as you know, Congress often receives information not otherwise available to the public as a part of its oversight and legislative responsibilities.

With this guidance in mind, I ask that you revisit your response to my January 25, 2024 letter regarding Alex Saab. Please provide a status update by September 2, 2024.

Sincerely,



Charles E. Grassley

⁵ Letter from Senators Grassley, Risch, and Rubio to Attorney General Merrick Garland (January 25, 2024), https://www.grassley.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/grassley_risch_rubio_to_garland_-_alex_saab.pdf

⁶ Vivian Sequera and Mircely Guanipa, *Venezuela Launches Investigation Against Opposition Leaders Amid Protest Crackdown*, Reuters (Aug. 5, 2024), <https://www.reuters.com/world/americas/maduro-security-forces-round-up-venezuelans-involved-protests-operation-knock-2024-08-05/>

⁷ Letter from Attorney General Merrick Garland to Senator Grassley (Aug. 8, 2024), [DOJ to Grassley - Alex Saab \(senate.gov\)](https://www.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/grassley_to_garland_-_alex_saab.pdf)

⁸ Tyler Page, *That One Last Phone Call Joe Biden Always Needs To Make*, The Washington Post (Mar. 8, 2024), <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2024/03/08/that-one-last-phone-call-joe-biden-always-needs-make/>

⁹ Press Release, *Grassley Highlights Nexus Between Chinese Money Laundering And State-Sanctioned Marijuana At Senate Drug Caucus Hearing* (Apr. 30, 2024), <https://www.grassley.senate.gov/news/news-releases/grassley-highlights-nexus-between-chinese-money-laundering-and-state-sanctioned-marijuana-at-senate-drug-caucus-hearing>

¹⁰ How To Black Out Text in PDF Files, Adobe (last accessed Aug. 6, 2024), <https://www.adobe.com/acrobat/hub/how-to-black-out-text-in-a-pdf-file.html>

Cc:

The Honorable Anne Milgram
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The Honorable Christopher Wray
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