

United States Senate  
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

November 1, 2022

**VIA ELECTRONIC TRANSMISSION**

The Honorable Roslynn R. Mauskopf  
Director  
Administrative Office of the United States Courts

Dear Judge Mauskopf:

I am writing regarding the escape and recapture of Leonard Glenn Francis, also known as “Fat Leonard,” weeks before his sentencing after pleading guilty to a massive corruption scandal involving the United States Navy.<sup>1</sup> Specifically, Francis pleaded guilty in 2015 to offering Navy officials \$500,000 in cash bribes, among other illegal acts, as part of a scheme to swindle the service branch out of \$35 million.<sup>2</sup> Francis had been released from prison in San Diego on medical furlough where he was placed on supervised house arrest.

The reported circumstances of Mr. Francis’s escape raises many concerns about the conditions under which he was supervised. The U.S. Marshals Service noted that Leonard had “absconded from his San Diego home sometime Sunday morning,” September 4, 2022.<sup>3</sup> Based on reporting, Pretrial Services, the federal agency monitoring Francis, detected that Mr. Francis’ ankle monitor was tampered with sometime that morning, but local police were not called until Francis’ own legal team asked for a welfare check around 1:45 in the afternoon.<sup>4</sup> Other circumstances relating to the escape are concerning as well. According to Supervisory Deputy U.S. Marshal Omar, “[n]eighbors in the gated community told authorities that they had seen U-Haul moving trucks going in and out of Francis’ home in the days leading up to his escape.”<sup>5</sup> If this timeline is accurate, the apparent lack of action after Pretrial Services detected issues with the ankle monitor and after notice of the moving trucks demands explanation.

---

<sup>1</sup> Antonio Planas & Chantal Da Silva, *U.S. Fugitive Known as ‘Fat Leonard’ Apprehended in Venezuela After Weeks on the Run*, NBC News (Sept. 21, 2022, 10:09 PM), available at <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/us-fugitive-known-fat-leonard-apprehended-venezuela-authorities-say-rcna46656>. According to a statement from Carlos Garate Rondon, director general of Interpol Venezuela, Francis “had entered the country from Mexico with a stopover in Cuba. His final destination was Russia.” *Id.*

<sup>2</sup> María Luisa Paúl, *‘Fat Leonard’ Escapes Weeks Before Sentencing in Navy Bribery Scandal*, Wash. Post (Sept. 6, 2022, 6:51 AM), available at <https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2022/09/06/fat-leonard-francis-navy-corruption-scandal-escape/>.

<sup>3</sup> Kristina Davis and Greg Moran, *‘Fat Leonard,’ set to finally be sentenced in long-running Navy bribery scheme, is on the lam*, The San Diego Union-Tribune (Sept. 5, 2022, 3:34 PM), available at <https://www.sandiegouniontribune.com/news/courts/story/2022-09-05/fat-leonard-fugitive>.

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

<sup>5</sup> *Id.*

Moreover, Francis was a flight concern. According to the court record, U.S. District Court Judge Janis Sammartino called for 24 hour security at Francis' home.<sup>6</sup> Notably, the Court had issues with the reliability of the 24 hour security. For example, Judge Sammartino had called a hearing after receiving a report that there was no security guard on site for nearly three hours.<sup>7</sup> Finally, questions have been raised as to whether Francis even still qualified for the medical furlough he had been granted. Local reporting states that "[i]n late 2020, Leonard Francis was given a 'clean bill of health' by a doctor who had been treating the notorious Malaysian defense contractor for more than two years."<sup>8</sup>

Based on reporting, the circumstances of Mr. Francis' escape from supervision raises many questions about the diligence with which Probation and Pretrial Services exercised their obligation to monitor him and whether the issues that occurred in Francis' case are indicative of systemic problems.<sup>9</sup> While the incredible circumstances around Mr. Francis' involvement in possibly the largest bribery scandal to hit the U.S. Navy, his arrest, escape, and re-arrest, has drawn substantial attention to his case, I am concerned about other pre-trial defendants under the supervision of Pretrial Services in light of the apparent lapses in supervision in the Francis matter.

Please respond to these questions by November 23, 2022.

1. Please provide an exact timeline of Mr. Francis' escape, beginning from the first notification that his monitoring bracelet had been tampered with to his re-arrest.
2. What entity was hired for private security? Was the private security vetted or selected by Pretrial Services or the Court, or was Mr. Francis able to select his security provider?
3. Did Mr. Francis reimburse Pretrial Services or the Court for the cost of his security or did he pay his own security directly? How much did the security cost?
4. Please describe how Pretrial Services monitored Mr. Francis from his monitoring bracelet and any coordination with the privately hired security service. For example, how was the ankle bracelet tracked and by whom?
5. How many pre-trial defendants have been released under medical furlough in the past 5 years within the federal court system and how are they monitored to ensure that medical furlough remains a legitimate reason for the release?

---

<sup>6</sup> *Id.*

<sup>7</sup> *Id.*

<sup>8</sup> Greg Moran, *Francis' Health Status Gets New Scrutiny; Medical Furlough Kept Him Out of Jail, Despite 'Clean Bill of Health,'* The San Diego Union-Tribune (Sept. 18, 2022, 6:00 AM), available at <https://www.sandiegouniontribune.com/news/courts/story/2022-09-18/francis-medical-furlough>.

<sup>9</sup> Table H-7—Federal Pretrial Services Statistical Tables For The Federal Judiciary (June 30, 2022), U.S. Courts (Oct. 14, 2022), available at <https://www.uscourts.gov/statistics/table/h-7/statistical-tables-federal-judiciary/2022/06/30>. According to information available from the Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts, Pretrial Services had more than 30,000 defendants under supervision as of June 20, 2022.

6. How many defendants under supervision by Pretrial Services are monitored by private security, and in how many of those instances is that private security paid for by the defendant? How many defendants under supervision by Pretrial Services are monitored by a tracking bracelet of some kind, and how is that monitoring conducted?
7. When private security is used, how is a firm selected and how is their performance monitored to ensure personnel are doing their job?
8. Does Pretrial Services look for any signs that a defendant may intend to escape supervision, such as the presence of moving trucks at a particular location? If not, why not?
9. In light of Mr. Francis' escape and recapture, is Pretrial Services undertaking any review of its supervision procedure? If not, why not?

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



Chuck Grassley  
Ranking Member