

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

August 9, 2024

VIA ELECTRONIC TRANSMISSION

The Honorable Alejandro Mayorkas
Secretary
Department of Homeland Security

Dear Secretary Mayorkas:

According to reports, Asif Raza Merchant, a Pakistani native who recently visited Iran, was arrested after it was discovered he planned to assassinate President Trump, as well as other high-ranking government officials.¹ According to a Justice Department filing, on April 13, 2024, Merchant arrived in Houston, Texas, and began recruiting individuals to carry out his assassination plot.² The government further alleges that on or about April 22, 2024, Merchant arrived in New York City and met with an individual, who the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) identified as a confidential source, to discuss help with a clothing business Merchant and his uncle owned.³ During this visit, Merchant told the confidential source that he traveled to Iran two weeks prior to arriving to the United States.⁴ On June 3, 2024, Merchant flew back to New York City to meet with the confidential source and discussed killing a politician or government official.⁵ Further, on June 10, 2024, Merchant met with two hitmen, who the FBI later identified as undercover agents, requesting their assistance to “kill somebody” and that the person was a “political person.”⁶ On June 21, 2024, Merchant paid the undercover agents to carry out the plot.⁷ Finally, on July 12, 2024, Merchant was arrested by law enforcement after he made flight arrangements and planned to travel outside of the country.⁸

According to a recent article, upon his arrival in Houston on April 13, 2024, Merchant was interviewed by the Joint Terrorism Task Force (JTTF) because he was flagged by a Department of Homeland Security (DHS) database with the identifier “WATCH LIST” and

¹ Aaron Katerski and Jack Date, ABC NEWS, *Pakistani national charged with alleged plot to assassinate Donald Trump, other public officials: DOJ* (Aug. 6, 2024), <https://abcnews.go.com/US/pakistani-national-charged-alleged-plot-assassinate-donald-trump/story?id=112617075>.

² United States v. Merchant, 24-mj-00467 (E.D.N.Y. 2024) at 4, <https://www.justice.gov/usao-edny/media/1362826/dl>.

³ *Id.*

⁴ *Id.*

⁵ *Id.* at 5.

⁶ *Id.* at 8.

⁷ *Id.* at 9; *see also supra* note 1.

⁸ *Id.* at 13. (“[L]aw enforcement agents observed MERCHANT place his luggage in the trunk of a vehicle outside his place of residence.”)

listed as a “Lookout Qualified Person of Interest.”⁹ Reportedly, despite being flagged in the database, Merchant was granted Significant Public Benefit Parole on April 13, 2024, by DHS.¹⁰ Merchant’s parole status was set to expire on May 11, 2024, which he overstayed.¹¹

Accordingly, in order to better understand the federal government’s decision-making process in this matter, please provide a response to the following questions no later than August 23, 2024:

1. Did DHS grant Merchant Significant Public Benefit Parole before or after his placement on the terrorist watchlist and being listed as a “Lookout Qualified Person of Interest”? Provide all records.¹²
2. On what basis was Merchant granted Significant Public Benefit Parole? Explain in detail and provide all records.
3. Provide the entire Alien Registration File (A-File) for Asif Raza Merchant.
4. How many individuals on the Terrorist Screening Database has DHS granted parole and allowed entry into the United States? Provide all records.

Thank you for your prompt review and response. 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

⁹ John Solomon and Steve Richards, JUST THE NEWS., *FBI let suspect in plot to kill Trump into U.S. on parole despite terror ties, Iran trip, memos show* (Aug. 8, 2024), <https://justthenews.com/government/security/fbi-let-suspect-plot-kill-trump-us-parole-despite-terror-ties-iran-trip-memos#article>.

¹⁰ *Id.*

¹¹ *Id.*

¹² “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).