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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6275

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February 16, 2018

VIA ELECTRONIC TRANSMISSION

Sundar Pichai
Chief Executive Officer
Google Inc.
1600 Amphitheatre Parkway
Mountain View, CA 94043

Dear Mr. Pichai:

I am writing you concerning the mass shooting which occurred on February 14, 2018, at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, FL that took the lives of 17 students and teachers, and which seriously injured over a dozen others. News reports indicate that the FBI received a tip on or about September 24, 2017, that a person with the YouTube username “Nikolas Cruz” posted the comment, “I’m going to be a professional school shooter,” in response to a video posted by a YouTube user named Ben Bennight.¹ It is the Committee’s duty to conduct oversight of the DOJ and FBI and in that light it is important that the Committee understand the steps the FBI took with Google to ascertain Cruz’s identity and what, if any, response Google provided.

Accordingly, please provide a briefing for Committee staff no later than February 23, 2018 to address the following questions:

1. Did Google ever receive a request from the FBI or any other law enforcement agency seeking information regarding the username “Nikolas Cruz”? If so, what law enforcement agency made the request, what was the date of the request, and what information was provided in response to the request?
2. Assuming that a request for information was not received, what information could have been provided to law enforcement agencies to either identify the individual or the individual’s location?

¹ Dakin Andone, “FBI was warned about alleged shooter nearly 5 months ago, tipster says,” CNN (Feb. 15, 2018). Available at: <https://www.cnn.com/2018/02/15/us/nikolas-cruz-fbi-warned/index.html>; Natalie Musumeci and Max Jaeger, “YouTuber: I tipped FBI about alleged Florida shooter last year,” New York Post (Feb. 15, 2018). Available at: <https://nypost.com/2018/02/15/youtuber-i-tipped-fbi-about-alleged-florida-shooter-last-year/>

3. Five months after the threatening post was made by the username “Nikolas Cruz,” is Google still able to provide any information about the identity or location of the user? Since the shooting, what additional information has been provided, and to which law enforcement agencies, about this user and under what legal process?
4. According to news reports, Mr. Bennight reported Mr. Cruz’s comment to YouTube, and it was subsequently removed.² What steps, if any, did Google take to report the comment to law enforcement authorities? If steps were taken, what response, if any, was received? If no steps were taken, why not?

Thank you in advance for your prompt attention to these matters. Please respond in writing to the list of questions no later than March 16, 2018. Should you have any questions, please contact Josh Flynn-Brown of my staff at (202) 224-5225.

Sincerely,



Charles E. Grassley
Chairman
Committee on the Judiciary

Cc:

The Honorable Dianne Feinstein
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on the Judiciary

² Therese Apel, “YouTube comment under name of Florida shooting suspect brings FBI to Mississippian’s door,” The Clarion Ledger (February 15, 2018). Accessible at <https://www.clarionledger.com/story/news/local/2018/02/15/nikolas-cruz-youtube-fbi-mississippi-bail-bondsmans-door/340580002/>