

United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6275

April 8, 2025

The Honorable Kristi Noem
Secretary
Department of Homeland Security
245 Murray Lane SW
Washington, DC 20528

The Honorable Kash Patel
Director
Federal Bureau of Investigation
U.S. Department of Justice
935 Pennsylvania Ave NW
Washington, DC 20535

Dear Secretary Noem and Director Patel:

I write to strongly object to the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) and the Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI) recent diversion of agency resources and institutional focus away from domestic terrorism prevention efforts.

The FBI has reportedly reassigned staff from the Domestic Terrorism Operations Section (DTOS), which provides operational support to all 55 FBI field offices in investigating domestic terrorism threats, and is contemplating "disbanding [the section] entirely."¹ DHS has dismantled a national database used to track domestic terrorism and hate crimes, discern trends in extremist tactics, and develop strategies to address them.² Additionally, DHS has gutted funding for key domestic terrorism prevention programs that help support community groups and law enforcement agencies.³ The choice to downsize these efforts is baffling, given the continued rise in domestic terrorism, including "a 25 percent increase in terrorism and targeted violence" in the first two months of 2025 compared to the same period in 2024, according to the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism.⁴ Taken together, these moves represent a broad institutional pullback from confronting the full scope of domestic terrorism threats at a time when experts continue to warn about intensifying danger,⁵ and the data points to the rising threat of attacks motivated by anti-government ideologies.⁶

¹ Andrew Goudsward & Sarah N. Lynch, *Exclusive: FBI Scales Back Staffing, Tracking Of Domestic Terrorism Probes, Sources Say*, REUTERS (Mar. 21, 2025), <https://www.reuters.com/world/us/fbi-scales-back-staffing-tracking-domestic-terrorism-probes-sources-say-2025-03-21>; FED. BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION & DEP'T OF HOMELAND SEC., STRATEGIC INTELLIGENCE ASSESSMENT AND DATA ON DOMESTIC TERRORISM 26 (May 2021), https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/GOVPUB-J1_14-PURL-gpo155764/pdf/GOVPUB-J1_14-PURL-gpo155764.pdf.

² Ellie Silverman, *Trump Administration Cuts National Database Tracking Domestic Terrorism*, WASH. POST (Mar. 25, 2025), <https://www.washingtonpost.com/dc-md-va/2025/03/25/domestic-extremism-database-trump-cuts>.

³ Hannah Allam, *Killing Grants That Have Saved Lives: Trump's Cuts Signal End to Government Work on Terrorism Prevention*, PROPUBLICA (Mar. 20, 2025), <https://www.propublica.org/article/trump-doge-budget-cuts-terrorism-prevention>.

⁴ Ellie Silverman, *Trump Administration Cuts National Database Tracking Domestic Terrorism*, WASH. POST (Mar. 25, 2025), <https://www.washingtonpost.com/dc-md-va/2025/03/25/domestic-extremism-database-trump-cuts>.

⁵ See e.g., Adiel Kaplan, Kenzi Abou-Sabe & Dan De Luce, *'A Perfect Storm': Extremism Online and Political Polarization Are Increasing the Risk of Attacks, Experts Say*, NBC NEWS (Jan. 4, 2025), <https://www.nbcnews.com/investigations/online-extremism-political-polarization-us-attacks-threat-rcna186017>.

⁶ RILEY MCCABE, CTR. FOR STRATEGIC AND INT'L STUDIES, THE RISING THREAT OF ANTI-GOVERNMENT DOMESTIC TERRORISM: WHAT THE DATA TELLS US (Oct. 21, 2024), <https://www.csis.org/analysis/rising-threat-anti->

Over the past decade, violent extremists have committed numerous ideologically-driven or politically-motivated multiple casualty attacks, including the 2025 New Orleans Bourbon Street Attack and the 2022 mass shooting at a Tops Friendly Markets in Buffalo, New York. In addition, there have been high-profile incidents of political violence, such as the two attempted assassination attempts on then-candidate Donald Trump. According to the Government Accountability Office, the FBI reported a 357 percent increase in domestic terrorism investigations between 2013 and 2021—from 1,981 to 9,049 cases.⁷ According to DHS domestic terrorism data from 2010 through 2021, 35 percent of domestic terrorism incidents committed by individuals during that period were committed by Racially or Ethnically Motivated Violent Extremists (RMVEs) and 32 percent by Anti-Government/Anti-Authority Violent Extremists; RMVEs also committed the most lethal attacks from 2010 through 2021.⁸ In addition, over the past four years, government workers, military, and law enforcement officials have faced an increasing number of attacks. From 2016 to 2023, 49 percent of attacks and plots targeting the government were inspired by “partisan political views.”⁹ Despite these troubling numbers, the federal government has consistently been unable to provide clear statistics on the number of domestic terrorism attacks occurring each year, the number of fatalities, or the number of successful prosecutions.¹⁰ These trends and unanswered questions underscore the need for sustained federal attention and investment in domestic terrorism prevention—not the reduction of force and resources currently being executed by the Administration.

Political violence, no matter the ideological motivation, is unacceptable. It is imperative that both the Administration and Congress continue to address the underlying causes for domestic terrorism and adapt to the rapidly evolving trends and motivating factors inspiring extremists. A diversion of domestic-terrorism focused resources without a clear plan from the Administration on how to combat this evolving threat makes Americans less safe. I strongly urge you to put the safety of the American people first, reverse these resource reallocations, and reaffirm the Administration’s commitment to tackling domestic violent extremism with the full force and attention this significant threat demands.

Pursuant to this Committee’s constitutional obligation to perform oversight over the FBI and DHS, I ask that you please respond to following questions and provide a briefing to committee staff by April 22, 2025:

1. How many FBI personnel are remaining in the DTOS?

government-domestic-terrorism-what-data-tells-us.

⁷ U.S. GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICE, DOMESTIC TERRORISM: FURTHER ACTIONS NEEDED TO STRENGTHEN FBI AND DHS COLLABORATION TO COUNTER THREATS (Feb. 28, 2023), <https://www.gao.gov/products/gao-23-104720>.

⁸ *Id* at 29.

⁹ RILEY MCCABE, CTR. FOR STRATEGIC AND INT’L STUDIES, THE RISING THREAT OF ANTI-GOVERNMENT DOMESTIC TERRORISM: WHAT THE DATA TELLS US (Oct. 21, 2024), <https://www.csis.org/analysis/rising-threat-anti-government-domestic-terrorism-what-data-tells-us>.

¹⁰ *See e.g.*, FED. BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION & DEP’T OF HOMELAND SEC., STRATEGIC INTELLIGENCE ASSESSMENT AND DATA ON DOMESTIC TERRORISM (June 2023), https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/2023-07/23_0724_opa_strategic-intelligence-assessment-data-domestic-terrorism.pdf.

2. What criteria was used to justify the reallocation or reduction of FBI personnel working on domestic terrorism cases? What internal assessments were conducted on the impact of that decision on ongoing investigations?
3. With the reduction in staff, how is the Bureau managing any ongoing investigations or prosecutions previously assigned to DTOS staff?
4. What criteria were used to justify the decision to dismantle the national domestic terrorism database that is used by multiple agencies? What internal assessments were conducted on the impact of that decision?
5. How does DHS intend to compensate for the loss of community-level violence prevention programs?
6. What specific metrics or frameworks will be used to track and report on domestic terrorism threats?
7. When will the congressionally-mandated, delayed “Strategic Intelligence Assessment and Data on Domestic Terrorism” report for 2024 be issued?
8. Has DHS and/or the FBI changed its evaluation of domestic terrorism as a top national security priority? If so, what steps are being taken to ensure that adequate resources, personnel, and strategic coordination remain in place to address it?

Please provide an unclassified, non-law enforcement sensitive response to all of these questions to the greatest extent possible, with any classified or law-enforcement sensitive material under separate cover.

I look forward to your prompt attention to this important request.

Sincerely,



Richard J. Durbin
Ranking Member

cc: The Honorable Charles E. Grassley
Chairman, U.S. Senate Committee on the Judiciary