

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

August 25, 2026

VIA EMAIL

The Honorable Markwayne Mullin
Secretary of Homeland Security
2707 Martin Luther King Jr. Ave SE
Washington, DC 20528

Dear Secretary Mullin:

We write to request documents and information regarding the Department of Homeland Security's ("DHS" or "the Department") purchase of 10 airplanes for \$464 million via a no-bid contract.¹ DHS justified this purchase by claiming that these aircraft were urgently needed to operate noncitizen removal flights, but recent reporting reveals that most of these airplanes have sat idle, and one was made available to Federal Bureau of Investigation ("FBI") Director Kash Patel.² That these aircraft have been parked for months or redistributed for purposes inconsistent with DHS's claimed reason for acquiring the planes significantly undermines the Department's explanation for bypassing a full and fair competitive contracting process and raises troubling questions about whether DHS overpaid for these aircraft, as well as about the Department's growing and alarming reliance on no-bid contracts since the beginning of the second Trump Administration. We are also concerned that DHS awarded this no-bid contract to a company led by William Walters. A separate company that Mr. Walters has ties to, engaged in contract dealings with DHS that have raised allegations of solicitation of corrupt kickback payments to former DHS official Corey Lewandowski.

Recent reporting reveals that, beginning in the fall of 2025, DHS pursued and eventually awarded a no-bid contract to purchase 10 aircraft, including three "luxury business jets" and seven "Boeing 737 passenger jets," and that most of these aircraft have sat idle for months since DHS acquired them.³ Although DHS claims that the contract was undertaken during Secretary Noem's tenure, contracting records indicate that the cost of the contract "increased by \$303 million on the day that Mr. Mullin was sworn in as secretary."⁴ DHS justified "the enormous price tag" for the aircraft by claiming "it had no time to consider other offers" because "[t]he planes were needed urgently for deportation flights."⁵ The apparent waste generated by idle, multi-million-dollar government assets belies the Department's claim of urgency. To date, there is no public indication that any of these aircraft have ever been used for DHS's claimed purpose of removing noncitizens

¹ Contract Summary from Department of Homeland Security to Daedalus Aviation Corporation, USASPENDING.gov, https://www.usaspending.gov/award/CONT_AWD_70QS0326C00005002_7001_-NONE_-NONE-.

² David A. Fahrenthold, et al., *Homeland Security Paid \$464 Million for Airplanes. Then It Parked Them*, N.Y. TIMES, (Aug. 13, 2026), <https://www.nytimes.com/2026/08/13/us/politics/homeland-security-parked-airplanes.html>.

³ *Id.*

⁴ *Id.*

⁵ *Id.*

from the United States. One of the luxury jets was leased to the FBI for use by Director Kash Patel who, in February 2026, incurred estimated costs of \$75 million to fly to the Olympic Winter Games in Italy, using the same make of luxury aircraft as the one reportedly leased to the FBI.⁶

The waste generated by parking most of these aircraft compounds the loss of taxpayer funds involved in the suspect, no-bid process the Department hurriedly implemented to buy these jets. DHS purchased the aircraft through a \$464 million no-bid contract to Daedalus Aviation Corporation (“Daedalus”), a Virginia-based company led by chairman William Walters.⁷ Mr. Walters “has emerged as a vocal Trump supporter” who made at least one \$10,000 donation to a political action committee supporting former DHS Secretary Kristi Noem during her tenure as governor of South Dakota.⁸ Former Secretary Noem and Corey Lewandowski reportedly traveled the country in 2025 on a separate, \$70 million luxury 737 MAX 8 that was leased to DHS by a separate company with ties to Mr. Walters, Valkyrie Aviation Holdings Group.⁹ In fact, Mr. Walters has allegedly created “a web of companies,” that subsequently received government contracts despite having no prior government contracting experience.¹⁰ Companies with ties to Mr. Walters include Salus Worldwide Solutions Corporation (“Salus”), which, in 2025, received a hastily-awarded contract worth \$915 million “for air operations to support the administration’s effort to persuade millions of undocumented immigrants to ‘self-deport.’”¹¹ Public reporting alleges that a representative of Salus repeatedly approached a prospective subcontracting firm with proposals to undertake work for DHS only if the firm would direct millions in kickbacks to Corey Lewandowski or consulting firms connected to him.¹²

The no-bid contract awarded to purchase these aircraft is only the latest in the Department’s growing abuse of a contracting shortcut designed to meet genuinely urgent necessity. The “urgency exception” permits bypassing full competition only when an agency’s “need for the supplies or services is of such an unusual and compelling urgency that the Government would be seriously

⁶ *Id.*; Carol Leonnig & Ken Dilanian, *Kash Patel heads to Milan for the Olympics — on the FBI jet*, MSNOW (Feb. 19, 2026), <https://www.ms.now/news/kash-patel-headed-to-milan-for-the-olympics-on-the-fbi-jet>.

⁷ Fahrenthold, et al., *supra* note 2.

⁸ Nick Schwellenbach & Dan Friedman, *Unraveling the Corporate Ties to DHS’s “Big, Beautiful Jet”*, POGO (Mar. 10, 2026), <https://www.pogo.org/investigates/unraveling-the-corporate-ties-to-dhss-big-beautiful-jet>.

⁹ *Id.*; Michelle Hackman, Josh Dawsey, & Tarini Parti, *A Pilot Fired Over Kristi Noem’s Missing Blanket and the Constant Chaos Inside DHS*, WALL ST. J. (Feb. 12, 2026), <https://www.wsj.com/politics/policy/chaos-kristi-noem-homeland-security-f095ac95>; Allison Detzel, *Inside the \$70 million luxury jet DHS says it needs for deportation flights*, NBC NEWS (Feb. 20, 2026), <https://www.wsj.com/politics/policy/chaos-kristi-noem-homeland-security-f095ac95>.

¹⁰ Schwellenbach & Friedman, *supra* note 8.

¹¹ Dan Friedman & Nick Schwellenbach, *Massive DHS “Self-Deportation” Contract Challenged as Secretive and “Unlawful”*, POGO (Oct. 10, 2025), <https://www.pogo.org/investigates/massive-dhs-self-deportation-contract-challenged-as-secretive-and-unlawful>.

¹² Julia Ainsley, Matt Dixon, Jonathan Allen & Laura Strickler, *Some DHS contractors told White House officials they were asked to pay Corey Lewandowski*, NBC NEWS (Mar. 19, 2026), <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/dhs-contractors-told-white-house-officialsasked-pay-corey-lewandowski-rca263744>; see Letter from Sens. Adam Schiff, Richard Blumenthal, & Peter Welch to William A. Walters, CEO, Salus Worldwide Solutions Corp. (Mar. 24, 2026), <https://www.schiff.senate.gov/wp-content/uploads/2026/03/20260324-Letter-to-Salus-Worldwide-re-Lewandowski.pdf>.

injured” unless permitted to move forward on a no-bid basis.¹³ Despite the narrow set of circumstances when bypassing money-saving competition might be justified, “[t]he exemption accounts for nearly two-thirds of the \$34 billion that [DHS] has spent on contracts signed in 2026,” which “is up sharply from past years.”¹⁴ In 2024, only one percent of DHS contracts were awarded under the urgency exception.¹⁵

Congress and the American people deserve the Department’s full and prompt transparency with respect to the shocking waste of taxpayer funds and potential corruption involved in the Department’s aircraft purchase and widespread no-bid contracting. Our offices are reviewing allegations of misconduct arising from federal contract awards to assess whether and the extent to which laws and regulations governing honest services and federal procurement may require legislative reform. In order for us to better understand the award of this contract, plans for these airplanes moving forward, and remedial measures for the American taxpayer, please provide the following information by September 8, 2026:

1. How did DHS initiate conversations with Daedalus to act as broker for the purchase of 10 airplanes?
 - a. Which DHS officials were involved in initiating these conversations?
2. How did DHS ascertain the number and type of airplanes necessary for purchase?
3. How did DHS evaluate and conclude that purchasing aircraft would be more cost effective than leasing or otherwise engaging a contractor to operate removal flights?
 - a. What metrics did DHS evaluate for cost effectiveness before arriving to its decision to purchase these aircraft?
4. How does DHS plan to use the 10 purchased airplanes moving forward?
5. How much has DHS spent to store, retrofit, convert, move, and maintain the 10 aircraft since their purchase?
6. Has DHS implemented changes to its contracting procedures as it relates to the use of exemptions for full and open competition?

Please also provide the following records¹⁶ by September 8, 2026:

7. All communications¹⁷ regarding the award of the \$464 million contract to Daedalus, including but not limited to communications with Daedalus, William Walters, Secretary Mullin, former Secretary Noem and Corey Lewandowski or any of their staff;

¹³ FAR 6.302-2(a)(2).

¹⁴ *Fahrenthold et al.*, *supra* note 2.

¹⁵ *Id.*

¹⁶ For purposes of this request, “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), direct messages, chats, calendar entries, inter-office communications, meeting minutes, phone/voice mail or recordings/records of verbal communications, and drafts (whether or not they resulted in final documents).

¹⁷ For purposes of this request, “communications” include any records, as defined above, transmitted in any way between two or more individuals or entities.

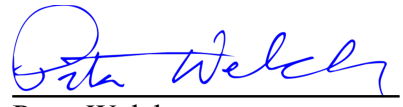
8. All communications regarding the purchase of each individual airplane, including but not limited to communications with Daedalus, William Walters, Secretary Mullin, former Secretary Noem and Corey Lewandowski or any of their staff;
9. All communications regarding plans for the use of each airplane after purchase;
10. All flight logs and passenger logs for each airplane purchased under the contract.

Please contact our offices if you have questions about responding to this request. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

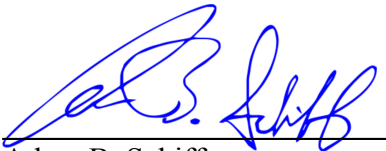
Sincerely,



Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator
Ranking Member, Permanent
Subcommittee on
Investigations



Peter Welch
United States Senator



Adam B. Schiff
United States Senator