

Failure to Protect: How the Trump Administration Guttled, Politicized, and Weaponized America's Counterterrorism Infrastructure

Findings

- The Administration has made Americans less safe by cutting the federal workforce by thousands and grants by millions of dollars, but also by reallocating staff and refocusing priorities away from countering threats posed by terrorism.
- The Administration has gutted the Department of Justice (DOJ) and the Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI) capabilities. DOJ and FBI have lost more than 15,000 employees and the Administration has specifically targeted more than 200 experienced lawyers and agents who were involved in investigations and prosecutions they disfavor, including those related to the January 6th attack on the Capitol and any investigations tied to President Trump.
- The Administration has eviscerated key Department of Homeland Security (DHS) components –removing more than 1,300 personnel involved in preventing, countering, and responding to terrorism.
- Almost \$1 billion in national security and public safety grants intended to protect communities have been paused, cancelled, and politicized – weakening state, local, Tribal, territorial, and private sector capacity.
- Law enforcement officers and agents, intelligence analysts, and lawyers from across the government have been reassigned to focus on immigration enforcement to the detriment of the national security and homeland security missions from which they were pulled.
- The designation of cartels and gangs as foreign terrorist organizations has redefined terrorism and stretched the capacity of the country's counterterrorism personnel and resources.
- The illegal designation of Antifa as a domestic terrorist organization (a designation that does not exist in law), the politically motivated National Security Presidential Memorandum 7 (NSPM-7), and the Administration's counterterrorism strategy have all further redefined terrorism and redirected counterterrorism resources away from lethal threats to the nation in favor of persecuting the President's political opponents.

Recommendations

- The Administration must immediately stop firing individuals for work they did under previous Administrations and rehire anyone fired for political reasons. An employee's assignments to investigate matters that President Trump and his allies disagree with is not grounds for dismissing employees.
- To ensure proper prioritization of resources, the Administration must immediately provide Congress with the statutorily required report on domestic terrorism that it has failed to produce.
- DOJ and DHS must immediately allocate all grants and remove any unnecessary terms and conditions – or other barriers – that have slowed grant awards out to recipients.
- DHS should restore funding to the *Terrorism and Targeted Violence (T2V) in the United States database* managed by the University of Maryland that was intended to fill a gap in understanding terrorism in the United States.
- The Administration should return law enforcement officers and agents, intelligence analysts, and lawyers from across the government to their primary missions.
- Congress should pass legislation revoking NSPM-7.
- The Administration should preserve all records related to countering, preventing, and responding to terrorism, including decision making regarding staffing, grants, and implementation of NSPM-7.

Executive Summary

Since the first day of his second term, President Trump and his Administration have dismantled critical national security agencies and programs and diverted significant resources and attention away from the fight against terrorism. These actions are the result of a combination of ideologically motivated firings and realignment of personnel and the wielding of government resources – from grants to counterterrorism authorities – as a weapon against political opponents.

The Administration's actions have left Americans far more vulnerable to a potential terrorist attack, and left law enforcement officers and agents without the tools to protect our nation. The Administration has canceled critical funding, fired or reassigned essential national security personnel, and prioritized targeting its political opponents and indiscriminate mass deportations at a time when national security experts warn that the threat of violence from U.S.-based violent extremists and overseas terrorists remains high. Where it has not defunded or deprioritized critical offices within the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the Department of Justice (DOJ), the Administration has turned those resources against its own citizens, wrongfully labeling protestors and political opponents as Antifa, conducting surveillance on American citizens, encroaching on private property without judicial warrants, and violating Americans' constitutional rights.

The Administration started a war with Iran, a leading state sponsor of terrorism, and threatened to topple the Iranian regime – a war from which it has still not found a clean exit. Creating an existential threat to the Iranian regime and using the likelihood of continued bombing as a means of implementing a ceasefire raises the likelihood that Iran or its proxies, including Hezbollah, Shia militias in Iraq, Hamas, the Houthis in Yemen, and others, will use all the tools at their disposal, including terrorism against Americans inside and outside the United States. In May, the potential for terrorism by Iran or its proxies was demonstrated to be an active threat with the indictment of Mohammad Baqer Saad Dawood al-Saadi, a high-level leader of Kata'ib Hezbollah (KH), an Iraqi Shia militia and Iranian proxy.¹ Al-Saadi was indicted for his involvement in terror attacks against U.S. and Israeli interests in Europe and intent to plan attacks in the United States in an effort to compel the United States and Israel to end the war.²

In May, the Administration also released its counterterrorism strategy, which further orients the Administration away from addressing threats based on information and analysis presented by apolitical experts and instead, makes clear that it intends to carry out counterterrorism based on its ideological beliefs, rather than on facts and data.

This report catalogues how, almost 25 years after the attacks of September 11, 2001, the Trump Administration's misalignment of resources and ideologically driven decision-making on what

¹ *Arrest of Iraqi Terror Suspect with Alleged Links to Iran's Quds Force is Astonishing but Not Surprising*, The Guardian (May 16, 2026) (www.theguardian.com/world/2026/may/16/mohammad-baqer-saad-dawood-al-saadi-iran-guards-hayi).

² Complaint (Apr. 30, 2026), *U.S. v. Al-Saadi*, S.D.N.Y. (No. 26 MAG 1622) (www.justice.gov/usao-sdny/media/1440956/dl).

counts as terrorism has created vulnerabilities in America's national security preparedness and, in this moment of great threat, ultimately jeopardizes the safety of the American people.