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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON
HOMELAND SECURITY AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6250

September 10, 2026

The Honorable Jay Clayton
Director
Office of the Director of National Intelligence
1500 Tysons McLean Drive
McLean, VA 22102

Dear Director Clayton:

I write to express my serious concerns about the Administration's counterterrorism priorities, and to notify you of your records retention obligations to ensure the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI) preserves all relevant records and communications related to the Administration's actions.¹

Recently, as Ranking Member of the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, I released a report titled *Failure to Protect: How the Trump Administration Gutted, Politicized, and Weaponized America's Counterterrorism Infrastructure*, which outlined the Administration's dismantling of critical national security agencies and programs and diversion of significant resources and attention away from the fight against terrorism. The report catalogued the ideologically motivated firings, realignment of personnel, dismantling of key offices, the politicization of critical grants, and the wielding of government resources as a weapon against political opponents that are undermining our nation's security.

The Office of the Director of National Intelligence has been at the forefront of the politicization of intelligence in this Administration. Early in her term, former Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard fired the heads of the National Intelligence Council (NIC) after the leak of details of an analysis that contradicted the Administration's position on the links between Tren de Aragua, designated a foreign terrorist organization, and the Venezuelan government, and efforts by her office to change the analysis.² Further, she placed a close advisor

¹ Federal Records Act, 44 U.S.C. §§ 3101, 3106; Presidential Records Act, 44 U.S.C. §§ 2201 2203; Paperwork Reduction Act, 44 U.S.C. § 3506; 18 U.S.C. § 2071 (concealing, removing, or destroying records is a criminal offense); 39 C.F.R. §§ 261 – 268.

² *Official Pushed to Rewrite Intelligence So It Could Not Be 'Used Against' Trump*, The New York Times (May 20, 2025) (www.nytimes.com/2025/05/20/us/politics/gabbard-intelligence-venezuelans-tren-de-aragua-trump.html); *When Intelligence Stops Bounding Uncertainty: The Dangerous Tilt Toward Politicization under*

in the office of the Intelligence Community Inspector General (IG), a deeply disturbing move that undermines the IG's independence.³

These concerns were heightened by the President's replacement of DNI Gabbard with Acting Director William J. Pulte, despite the fact that Pulte failed to meet the basic statutory requirements to be DNI, and President Trump made it clear that he was there not to ensure that the President would get the necessary intelligence to carry out the President's agenda but to declassify documents and fire as many staff as possible.⁴ As the head of the Federal Housing Finance Agency, Pulte used sensitive data that was available to him to target the President's opponents.⁵ Pulte made it clear that he would use the same approach at ODNI – where he had access to America's most sensitive national security information and systems. Thus far, Congress and the American people do not know who was fired or for what purposes by Pulte during his short tenure.

The latest results of an annual CIA Office of the Ombudsman for Analytic Objectivity internal survey bear out some of these concerns. The survey found that there is a significant increase in the number of CIA employees who are concerned about the objectivity of analysis being undermined by political influence in the past year. Additionally, the written responses showed a majority objected to DNI Gabbard's actions during her tenure, pointing primarily to the baseless revocations of security clearances of more than three dozen current and former national security officials along with the firing of the NIC heads.⁶

All of this is happening while the United States remains in a conflict with a leading state-sponsor of terrorism and its proxies, Americans continue to fear that they will be killed in their own houses of worship, and political violence has spiked across the country. Consistent and clear data about the threat of domestic terrorism to Americans is a major gap, which is why I ensured that Congress established a requirement in the Fiscal Year 2020 National Defense Authorization Act that the FBI and Department of Homeland Security provide Congress and the American people with a yearly strategic assessment so we could ensure the executive branch is properly resourcing and addressing the real threats facing Americans. The Administration's first Annual Intelligence Community (IC) Threat Assessment – the guiding document for the IC – failed to mention domestic terrorism, a notable omission that is inconsistent with previous years of reporting.⁷ The Administration also quietly removed a DOJ study from a DOJ website

Trump, Just Security (Jun. 12, 2025) (www.justsecurity.org/114297/trump-administration-politicized-intelligence/).

³ *Gabbard Placed Top Adviser Inside ODNI's Watchdog Office, Officials Say*, The Washington Post (Jun. 5, 2025) (www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2025/06/05/tulsi-gabbard-odni-watchdog-signalgate/).

⁴ 50 U.S.C. § 3023; *Pulte to be Acting DNI for 'a Month or Two' and Can 'Declassify Almost Everything,' Trump Says*, Politico (July 1, 2026) (www.politico.com/news/2026/07/01/pulte-intelligence-declassification-00983648); *New Acting Intel Czar Bill Pulte Starts Trimming Staff as Trump Urged*, The Washington Post (June 25, 2026) (www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/2026/06/25/new-acting-intel-czar-bill-pulte-starts-trimming-staff-trump-urged/).

⁵ *Government Watchdog Launches Probe Into Bill Pulte Over Mortgage-Fraud Referrals*, CNN (Dec. 4, 2025) (www.cnn.com/2025/12/04/business/government-accountability-office-investigation-bill-pulte-mortgage-referrals).

⁶ *CIA Officers Can Sense the Threat Within*, The Atlantic (www.theatlantic.com/national-security/2026/07/cia-trump-intelligence-survey-gabbard/687865/).

showing that since 1990, far- right extremist attacks have outpaced all other types of terrorism and domestic violent extremism.⁸

At the same time, the Administration has ignored significant evidence-based threats from white supremacists, nihilist violence extremists, and other extremists to instead target its political opponents under the guise of “left-wing extremism.” Despite the lack of evidence that “left-wing extremism” is the most significant domestic terrorism threat to Americans, the President unlawfully “designated” Antifa a domestic terrorist organization and put out National Security-Presidential Memorandum-7 ordering government agencies to focus their resources on this priority.⁹ Former Attorney General Pam Bondi then disseminated an implementation memo to all federal prosecutors, law enforcement agencies, and DOJ grant-making components outlining this as a top priority for DOJ and its agencies.¹⁰ Now Joint Task Force Vanguard is leading these efforts across the government.

The American people deserve to have confidence that their leaders are protecting them from the real threats we face. I therefore direct you to preserve all existing and future records and materials on counterterrorism activities and efforts, including all decisions about personnel, resource allocation and prioritization and any data backing the Administration’s counterterrorism priorities.

The Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs is authorized by Rule XXV of the Standing Rules of the Senate to investigate “the efficiency, economy, and effectiveness of all agencies and departments of the Government.”¹¹ Additionally, Senate Resolution 70 (116th Congress) authorizes the Committee to investigate “the efficiency and economy of operations of all branches of the Government.”¹²

Thank you for your prompt attention and cooperation in this matter. If you have any questions about this request, please contact my staff at (202) 224-2627.

⁷ Office of the Director of National Intelligence, *ANNUAL THREAT ASSESSMENT OF THE U.S. INTELLIGENCE COMMUNITY* (Mar. 2025).

⁸ *DOJ Quietly Removes Study Showing Right Wing Attacks ‘Outpace’ Those by Left*, The Hill (Sep. 17, 2025) (www.thehill.com/homenews/administration/5507682-doj-removes-far-right-extremism-study/).

⁹ *Trump’s Orders Targeting Anti-fascism Aim to Criminalize Opposition*, Brennan Center for Justice (Oct. 9, 2025) (www.brennancenter.org/our-work/research-reports/trumps-orders-targeting-antifascism-aim-criminalize-opposition).

¹⁰ Memorandum For All Federal Prosecutors Law Enforcement Agencies Department Of Justice Grant-Making Components, Implementing National Security Presidential Memorandum-7: Countering Domestic Terrorism and Organized Political Violence; Office of the Attorney General (December 4, 2025).

¹¹ Senate Rule XXV.

¹² S. Res. 70, 116th Cong., 1st Sess. (2019).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Gary C. Peters", is positioned above a horizontal line.

Gary C. Peters

United States Senator
Ranking Member, Committee
on Homeland Security and
Governmental Affairs