

HSGAC Minority Response to “Chairman Paul Flash Report”

On September 29, 2025, HSGAC Chairman Rand Paul released a “Flash Report” citing findings related to watchlisting and screening programs, including Quiet Skies.¹ Ranking Member Peters supports rigorous oversight of government watchlisting and travel screening and has proposed specific reforms to increase transparency and accountability.²

No American should be watchlisted for their political views; and the lack of transparency regarding how watchlist determinations are made deserves scrutiny from Congress and the public. However, the Committee should not misrepresent the information it does have to feed a partisan political narrative. HSGAC Minority is releasing the information below in order to provide the public with key facts omitted in the Chairman’s report.

Tulsi Gabbard’s travel triggered an automated Quiet Skies rule because her flight reservation contained information linked with a known or suspected terrorist (KST).

Documents and written responses from the current Trump Administration do not support claims that she was put on Quiet Skies because she criticized Kamala Harris in a Fox News interview on July 22, 2024. In fact, a written response provided to the Committee, excerpted below, clarifies that she first triggered a Silent Partner/Quiet Skies rule on July 20, 2024, prior to that interview.³

9. The date on which former U.S. Representative Gabbard was placed on the Silent Partner List.

Former U.S. Representative Gabbard was first matched by the system and added to the Silent Partner List on July 20, 2024.

10. The date on which former U.S. Representative Gabbard was placed on the Quiet Skies List.

Former U.S. Representative Gabbard was first matched by the system and added to the Quiet Skies List on July 20, 2024.

TSA documents and communications show that Gabbard’s travel matched an automated “affiliate” rule because her travel reservation contained information linked to a KST on the terrorist watchlist.⁴ In a June 2025 briefing, TSA officials told Committee staff that the KST had booked Gabbard’s flight for her and his contact information populated into her reservation.⁵ TSA, under the current Trump Administration, reiterated that Gabbard’s inclusion on Quiet Skies was automated and not influenced by any TSA or DHS officials.⁶ The explanation, in a September 12, 2025 written response to Chairman Paul, is excerpted below.⁷

¹ *Chairman Rand Paul Flash Report: The Weaponization of Quiet Skies and TSA Watch Lists* (Sept. 2025).

² See Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, Majority Staff Report, *Mislabeled as a Threat: How the Terrorist Watchlist & Government Screening Practices Impact Americans* (Dec. 2023), https://www.hsgac.senate.gov/wp-content/uploads/Mislabeled-as-a-Threat_Public_Report-2.pdf.

³ TSA Responses to May 28, 2025 letter from Chairman Rand Paul (Sept. 12, 2025).

⁴ See TSA_HSGAC_8-21-24/5-28-25_T2_0001874; Email from Supervisory Air Marshal (Oct. 2, 2024), TSA_HSGAC_8-21-24_T1_0000257; TSA Responses to May 28, 2025 letter from Chairman Rand Paul (Sept. 12, 2025).

⁵ TSA, Briefing with HSGAC majority and minority staff (June 11, 2025).

⁶ TSA Responses to May 28, 2025 letter from Chairman Rand Paul (Sept. 12, 2025).

⁷ *Id.*

Silent Partner/Quiet Skies executes in automated systems for matching against airline-provided passenger reservation data. This is done to prevent any opportunity for human influence on the outcomes of rule matches. Therefore, there were no TSA officials, DHS officials, or any other individuals involved in the matching of former U.S. Representative Gabbard with any Silent Partner or Quiet Skies rules.

According to TSA documents and written responses, Gabbard was removed from Quiet Skies and moved to the “cleared list” on August 2, 2024, according to the standard protocol where an individual who matches the affiliate rule is cleared after 3 encounters or 20 days, whichever occurs first.⁸

Surveillance of Quiet Skies subjects began in 2018, during the first Trump Administration.

The Quiet Skies program began in 2012, and initially resulted in travelers receiving enhanced screening but did not include surveillance by the Federal Air Marshal Service (FAMS).⁹ TSA changed this practice in March 2018, under the leadership of Trump-appointed TSA Administrator David Pekoske and DHS Secretary Kristjen Nielsen. The decision to begin assigning Special Mission Coverage by Air Marshals to Quiet Skies selectees was memorialized in an Information Bulletin issued by TSA, excerpted below.¹⁰

Information Bulletin – Quiet Skies Selectees

March 15, 2018

Effective Tuesday, March 13, 2018, OLE/FAMS will initiate Special Mission Coverage (SMC) on flights carrying Quiet Skies Selectees.

TSA’s Quiet Skies Program

The purpose of the Quiet Skies Program is to mitigate the threat to commercial aviation posed by unknown or partially known terrorists; and to identify and provide enhanced screening to higher risk travelers before they board aircraft based on analysis of terrorist travel trends, tradecraft and associations.

Through the Quiet Skies Program, TSA’s office of Intelligence and Analysis designates potentially higher risk travelers for enhanced screening and security measures because they engaged in travel fitting intelligence driven, risk-based passenger targeting rules. Quiet Skies rules are triggered when individuals enter the United States from foreign locations.

- TSA I&A currently employs Quiet Skies rules to screen passengers.
- Quiet Skies rules change based on current intelligence.
- Quiet Skies rules target specific travel patterns or affiliations, for example:
 - Rules may target individuals who have spent a certain amount of time in one or more specific countries; or
 - Rules may target individuals whose reservation information includes email addresses or phone numbers associated to watch listed terrorism suspects.

⁸ See TSA Responses to May 28, 2025 letter from Chairman Rand Paul (Sept. 12, 2025); TSA Systems Documentation, TSA_HSGAC_8-21-24_T1_0000237.

⁹ See TSA Memorandum “Implementation of an Intelligence-Driven, Risk-Based Domestic Aviation Security Screening Program (Quiet Skies) (Apr. 11, 2012), TSA_HSGAC_8-21-24/5-28-25_T2_0001882-1897.

¹⁰ “Information Bulletin – Quiet Skies Selectees,” Transportation Security Administration Office of Law Enforcement/Federal Air Marshal Service Law Enforcement Information Coordination Section (March 15, 2018), TSA_HSGAC_8-21-24_T1_0000040.

Silent Partner matches to Republican Members of Congress and candidates occurred during the first Trump Administration, and data is incomplete.

The Chairman’s report cites four examples of Republican Members of Congress, or candidates for Congress, being added to Quiet Skies and Silent Partner. Two of those four examples shown below happened in 2018 and 2019, during the first Trump Administration and under the leadership of TSA Administrator Pekoske and DHS Secretary Nielsen.¹¹ The redacted “TSA Comment” column describes the automated Silent Partner rule that matched to each traveler.¹²

SENSITIVE SECURITY INFORMATION											
GIVENNAME	SURNAME	DOB	TYPE	Affiliation or Appointment at Time of Travel	LIST CREATED	RULE ID	DEPARTURE DATE	AIRCRAFT OPERATOR	DEPARTURE AIRPORTID	PSG TYPE	TSA Comment
			MOC	R ■ House	6/12/2018		6/12/2018			SP	
			MOC	R ■ House	1/7/2019		1/8/2019			SP	
			MOC	R ■ House	12/4/2022		12/4/2022			SP	
			MOC	R ■ House	8/12/2023		8/15/2023			SP	

Additionally, it is not clear whether other Members of Congress of any party matched rules in the past. In written responses to Senator Paul’s inquiry, TSA explains that it did not have a comprehensive list of Members of Congress who matched to Quiet Skies or Silent Partner Rules and conducted a “manual review against open source” information and “the results may not be wholly conclusive.”¹³

¹¹ TSA Responses to May 28, 2025 letter from Chairman Rand Paul (Sept. 12, 2025), Enclosure 15: TSA Categories of Individuals Matched to Silent Partner and Quiet Skies, TSA_HSGAC_8-21-24/5-28-25_T4_0002605.

¹² *Id.*

¹³ TSA Responses to May 28, 2025 letter from Chairman Rand Paul (Sept. 12, 2025).