

ONE HUNDRED EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS

# Congress of the United States

## House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY

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August 9, 2024

The Honorable Antony Blinken  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of State  
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Blinken:

On July 12, 2024, law enforcement officials arrested Asif Merchant, a citizen of Pakistan with ties to Iran, after he “orchestrated a plot to assassinate U.S. government officials on U.S. soil.”<sup>1</sup> Federal investigators “believe that [President] Trump and other current and former U.S. government officials were the intended targets of the plot.”<sup>2</sup> The arrest came just one day before the attempted assassination of President Trump at a campaign rally in Butler, Pennsylvania.<sup>3</sup> The complaint was unsealed on August 6, 2024.<sup>4</sup>

According to court records, in April 2024, Merchant flew from Pakistan to Istanbul, Turkey, and then to Houston, Texas, “to recruit individuals to carry out his plot to assassinate U.S. government officials.”<sup>5</sup> Merchant’s “travel records to enter the United States” showed “frequent travel to Iran, Syria, and Iraq.”<sup>6</sup> Once inside the United States, Merchant “contacted a person he believed could assist him with the criminal scheme,” but the person “reported Merchant’s conduct to law enforcement and became a confidential source working with law enforcement.”<sup>7</sup> During the following three months, Merchant continued to plan his assassination plot, until law enforcement arrested him before Merchant planned to depart the United States in July 2024.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See Compl., 3-4, 13, *United States v. Asif Merchant*, No. 24-MJ-00467 (E.D.N.Y. July 14, 2024) [hereinafter Compl.].

<sup>2</sup> Evan Perez & Hannah Rabinowitz, *Pakistani national with ties to Iran charged in connection to a foiled assassination plot potentially targeting Trump*, CNN (Aug. 6, 2024, 5:32 PM), <https://www.cnn.com/2024/08/06/politics/iran-trump-assassination-charges/index.html>.

<sup>3</sup> See, e.g., Audrey Conklin et al., *Trump shooting: Timeline of assassination attempt raises questions about how gunman evaded security*, FOX NEWS (July 15, 2024, 4:26 PM), <https://www.foxnews.com/us/trump-shooting-timeline-assassination-attempt-raises-questions-about-how-gunman-evaded-security>.

<sup>4</sup> See Perez & Rabinowitz, *supra* note 2.

<sup>5</sup> Compl., *supra* note 1, at 4.

<sup>6</sup> *Id.* at 3.

<sup>7</sup> *Id.* at 4.

<sup>8</sup> *Id.* at 5-13.

During a phone call with the Department of Justice (DOJ) on August 6, the Biden-Harris Administration refused to answer many of the Committee's questions about the assassination plot, including about Merchant's immigration status and his method of entry into the United States. Instead, DOJ directed the Committee to court documents. The limited details in the court documents, however, do not substitute for the Committee's need for information to conduct its oversight.

Potential terrorists and enemies of the United States exploit vulnerabilities in our nation's immigration system to the detriment of those in the country.<sup>9</sup> The Committee has documented how the Biden-Harris Administration's border and immigration policies have allowed a known 99 potential terrorists into the country and only increase the likelihood that other dangerous aliens will successfully enter and remain in the country.<sup>10</sup> Pursuant to the Rules of the House of Representatives, the Committee on the Judiciary is authorized to conduct oversight of federal immigration policy and procedures.<sup>11</sup> As such, to assist the Committee with its continued oversight of federal immigration policy and procedures, we ask that you please provide the following information and materials regarding Asif Merchant:


1. Case history information and visa records, including, but not limited to, the alien's immigration history, immigration benefits applications, and the alien file (A-file) or consular files (including all consular notes).

Please provide this information as soon as possible, but no later than 5:00 p.m. on August 23, 2024. If you have any questions, please contact Committee staff at (202) 225-6906. Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Jim Jordan  
Chairman



Tom McClintock  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Immigration  
Integrity, Security, and Enforcement

cc: The Honorable Jerrold L. Nadler, Ranking Member

The Honorable Pramila Jayapal, Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Immigration  
Integrity, Security, and Enforcement

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<sup>9</sup> See, e.g., H. Comm. on the Judiciary, Interim Staff Rep., *Terror at Our Door: How the Biden-Harris Admin.'s Open-Borders Policies Undermine National Sec. and Endanger Americans* (Aug. 5, 2024).

<sup>10</sup> *Id.*

<sup>11</sup> Rules of the U.S. House of Representatives, R. X (2023).