



**One Hundred Seventeenth Congress
Committee on Homeland Security
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515**

June 30, 2022

The Hon. Bennie G. Thompson
Chairman
Committee on Homeland Security
H2-176 Ford House Office Building
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Thompson,

I write to request the Committee on Homeland Security hold a full committee hearing on the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) encounters with individuals determined to be within the Terrorist Screening Database (TSDB) at the United States' land borders.

It was recently reported that Isnardo Garcia-Amando, an individual present within the TSDB, was released into the United States by Customs and Border Protection (CBP) after being encountered at the Southwest Border. Following his release, he remained in the country for two weeks after it was known that he was on the watchlist, but before he was arrested by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE).¹

Additionally, just last month, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) arrested Shihab Ahmed Shihab, who allegedly was planning to assassinate former President George W. Bush. At the core of this plot was the "attempt to provide material support to a designated foreign terrorist organization, specifically ISIS." According to the FBI, Shihab intended to legally support the plotters transit into Mexico and then illegally smuggle them over the U.S. border into Texas.²

These recent stories are unsurprising given the ever-growing security risks at the southern border. U.S. Border Patrol (USBP) TSDB encounters between ports of entry of non-U.S. citizens for FY 2017 was two, for FY 2018 it was six, FY 2019 it was three, and FY 2020 it was also three. In FY2021 that number jumped to 16 and from October through May of 2022 USBP encountered 50. We recently learned that in the last month alone, USBP encountered 15 of these individuals.³

¹ Laco, K. & Shaw, A. *Rep. Hinson calls for answers over release of suspected terrorist into US by Border Patrol*. Fox News. <https://www.foxnews.com/politics/rep-hinson-suspected-terrorist-us-border-patrol>

² Larson, E. *The FBI Says It Foiled a Plot to Assassinate George W. Bush in Revenge for the Iraq War*. TIME. <https://time.com/6180711/george-w-bush-assassination-plot/>

³ *CBP Enforcement Statistics Fiscal Year 2022*. (2022, June 15). U.S. Customs and Border Protection. <https://www.cbp.gov/newsroom/stats/cbp-enforcement-statistics>

The numbers cited above are especially concerning when we consider ‘got away’ statistics. During the FY 2017 through FY 2020 timeframe, there was an average of around 130,000 got aways per year. Just recently, *Fox News* reported that there have been 440,000 known got aways since October alone.⁴ So, my concern is this: **what don’t we know – how many watchlisted individuals are possibly getting away?**

It took 19 terrorists to hijack four commercial airliners and murder 2,977 people on September 11, 2001. Thousands more were injured, and we remain haunted by those events to this day. We have been successful in warding off an attack of that magnitude up until now, but these increased encounters on our borders are indicative of a greater threat to come. In the wake of 9/11, the nation was told by former Director George Tenet that “the system was blinking red.” We cannot place ourselves in a similar situation. It is imperative that we hold a hearing to understand the full scope of this threat and take action to prevent any harm from coming to our homeland.

Thank you for your consideration and accommodation. Should you or your staff have any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out to Adrienne Spero on the Committee staff at (202) 226-8417.

Sincerely,



AUGUST PFLUGER
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on
Intelligence and Counterterrorism



MAYRA FLORES
Member of Congress

cc:

The Hon. Elissa Slotkin
Chairwoman, Subcommittee on Intelligence and Counterterrorism

⁴ Shaw, A. & Melugin, B. *Migrant encounters at southern border hit new record in May, as numbers keep rising*. Fox News. <https://www.foxnews.com/politics/migrant-encounters-southern-border-record-may>