

VIA ELECTRONIC TRANSMISSION

December 9, 2024

Paul Abbate
Deputy Director
Federal Bureau of Investigation
J. Edgar Hoover Building
935 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20535

Dear Deputy Director Abbate:

I write to express concern about reports that Kash Patel was targeted in an Iranian-backed cyberattack.¹ For an Iranian-backed group to have targeted the potential next Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) is extremely alarming. Also alarming is the speed at which sensitive and potentially classified information about this attack spread to the news media.

NBC News specifically reported that two senior law enforcement officials confirmed information about the cyberattack to their news outlet.² Two sources also relayed the information to CNN and CBS who communicated that information to British broadcaster BBC.³ As you know, it is imperative that the FBI and other intelligence agencies maintain confidentiality to ensure the American people are safe from enemies at home and abroad. The release of this information raises major national security and personal safety concerns.

To help better understand how such sensitive information was disclosed in a potentially unauthorized manner to the public, I ask that you respond to these questions by December 20, 2024:

1. Did any employee of the FBI disclose information regarding the cyberattack on Mr. Patel to the news media?
2. Did any employee of the FBI disclose information regarding the cyberattack on Mr. Patel to a third party who would have had the opportunity to pass that information on to the media?

¹ Michael Kosnar and Jake Traylor, *Kash Patel, Trump's pick to be FBI director, targeted in Iranian-backed cyberattack*, NBC News (Dec. 4, 2024), <https://www.nbcnews.com/investigations/kash-patel-trumps-pick-fbi-director-targeted-iranian-backed-cyberattac-rcna182905>.

² *Id.*

³ Kristen Holmes, et al., *Kash Patel, Trump's pick to lead FBI, has been targeted in an Iranian hack, sources say*, CNN (Dec. 3, 2024), <https://www.cnn.com/2024/12/03/politics/kash-patel-targeted-iran-hack/index.html>; and see James FitzGerald, *Trump's FBI nominee targeted in Iran-backed hack, reports say*, BBC (Dec. 5, 2024), <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c5y48757m4qo>.

3. Is any of the information disclosed to the media about the cyberattack deemed classified information, and would an unauthorized disclosure of that classified information to the public be a violation of federal law or FBI procedures?
4. Is any of the information disclosed to the media about the cyberattack not appropriate for public release under FBI guidelines even if that information is not “classified,” and would an unauthorized disclosure of such information to the public be a violation of federal law or FBI procedures?
5. If the information is considered classified or not appropriate for public release and its disclosure to the public is a violation of federal law or FBI procedures, will the FBI commit to conducting an investigation to find the source of the disclosure?

Thank you for your prompt attention to this serious matter. I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Thom Tillis
United States Senator