

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-2509

October 18, 2023

The Honorable Alejandro Mayorkas  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Homeland Security  
2707 Martin Luther King Jr. Ave SE  
Washington, D.C. 20528

Dear Secretary Mayorkas,

I write with alarm regarding the uptick in potential terrorist-linked illegal aliens encountered at the southern border. This development follows the barbaric attack perpetrated by Hamas terrorists on innocent American and Israeli civilians. It is imperative that you address this issue immediately to ensure the safety of American citizens, especially Jewish Americans, who are facing increased threats to their physical safety following the Hamas attack.

As you are well aware, the United States has experienced an unprecedented wave of illegal immigration across our southern border during the Biden Administration, totaling 6.2 million illegal alien encounters.<sup>1</sup> This figure includes record numbers of aliens who have been listed on the Terrorist Screening Database (TSDB) or traveled from countries known to be state sponsors of terrorism. In fiscal year 2023, Border Patrol encountered 154 TSDB aliens attempting to cross the border between ports of entry—more than the last six years combined.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, it is virtually certain that terrorist-linked individuals are among the estimated 1.6 million illegal aliens who have successfully evaded Border Patrol in entering the United States since President Biden took office.

Your Department's recently published threat assessment acknowledges this danger. For example, the assessment notes that "individuals with terrorism connections are interested in using established travel routes and permissive environments to facilitate access to the United States."<sup>3</sup> Meanwhile, U.S. Customs and Border Protection agents are encountering a growing number of "special interest aliens" from countries known to harbor terrorists—including Iran, Syria, and Lebanon.<sup>4</sup> Just this week, four Iranians were apprehended in Texas by Border Patrol.<sup>5</sup>

Illegal aliens with potential ties to terrorist organizations such as Hamas and Hezbollah have no place in the United States. In the wake of Hamas's attack on Israel, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) is already alerting Americans about an elevated number of violent threats

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.cbp.gov/newsroom/stats/southwest-land-border-encounters>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.foxnews.com/politics/hamas-terror-attack-fuels-republican-border-security-concerns-migrant-crisis>

<sup>3</sup> [https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/2023-09/23\\_0913\\_ia\\_23-333-ia\\_u\\_homeland-threat-assessment-2024\\_508C\\_V6\\_13Sep23.pdf](https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/2023-09/23_0913_ia_23-333-ia_u_homeland-threat-assessment-2024_508C_V6_13Sep23.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.foxnews.com/us/us-customs-confirms-iranian-special-interest-alien-apprehended-month-eagle-pass-texas>

<sup>5</sup> <https://freebeacon.com/latest-news/fourth-iranian-arrested-illegally-crossing-us-border-this-month/>

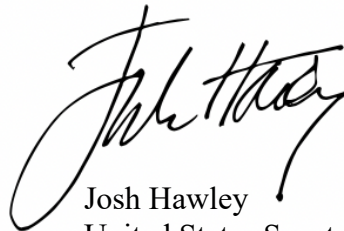
against civilians, including antisemitic threats.<sup>6</sup> It is therefore critical that you abandon your radical open border policies, and instead, take immediate action to secure the border. As Secretary, your number one priority should be protecting American citizens against potential terrorist entering our country.

As a member of the Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, I request that you immediately respond to the following questions to disclose what you know to the American people:

1. How many “special interest aliens” have been released into the United States in the past two years? Please disaggregate the figures by country of origin.
2. What steps has DHS taken to heighten security standards at the southern border following Hamas’ attack on Israel?
3. Is the Department of Homeland Security actively working with the FBI to monitor organizations with links to Hamas’ terrorism activities operating within the United States?

Thank you for your attention to this critical matter of homeland security.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Josh Hawley". The signature is stylized and cursive, with a large initial "J" and "H".

Josh Hawley  
United States Senator

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/10/15/world/middleeast/threats-jewish-muslim-americans-israel-attack.html>