

United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6275

February 24, 2026

Orice Williams Brown
Acting Comptroller General
U.S. Government Accountability
Office
441 G Street, NW
Washington, DC 20548

Don R. Berthiaume
Acting Inspector General
U.S. Department of Justice
Office of the Inspector General
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
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Dear Ms. Williams Brown and Mr. Berthiaume:

This letter serves as a follow-up to my May 7, 2025, letter requesting that the Government Accountability Office (GAO) conduct a comprehensive review of the Department of Justice's (DOJ) use of government-controlled aircraft by senior executives.¹ Since his confirmation as Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), Kash Patel has seemingly engaged in what amounts to irresponsible joyriding on DOJ and FBI-operated aircraft at the expense of the American taxpayer and to the detriment of ongoing Bureau operations. I request that the GAO's ongoing review address the new information outlined below and that the Department of Justice's Office of the Inspector General (DOJ OIG) investigate Director Patel's misuse or mismanagement of government resources.

On February 21, 2026, FBI spokesperson Ben Williamson repeated the false claim that the Director did not go to Italy "to hang out at the Olympics on the taxpayer dime."² However, by the Director's own admission and video accounts,³ on February 22, 2026, he celebrated with the gold medal-winning U.S. Men's Olympic Hockey Team after their victory.

As I noted in my earlier letter, the President has typically designated two executives within DOJ as "required use" travelers—the Attorney General and the FBI Director—due to their need for special protective security measures and secure communications while in flight.⁴ However, the Director's personal leisure activities and travel bucket list should not dictate work travel, nor should it have a material impact on the Bureau's time-sensitive operations and investigations.

¹ Letter from Sen. Durbin to Comptroller General Dodaro (May, 7, 2025), <https://www.durbin.senate.gov/newsroom/press-releases/durbin-requests-probe-into-justice-department-use-of-aircraft-for-personal-or-political-purposes>.

² See @WilliamsonBen, X.COM (Feb. 21, 2026, 10:07 PM), https://x.com/_williamsonben/status/2025407001367335302?s=51&t=WQHxQAG1Ze--nnrxRYvjDQ; and Alan Feuer et. al, *F.B.I. Director Celebrates Hockey Victory as Bureau Stares Down Crises*, N.Y. TIMES (Feb. 22, 2026), <https://www.nytimes.com/2026/02/22/us/politics/fbi-director-patel-olympics-mar-a-lago.html>.

³ See Ken Dilanian & Carol Leonnig, *FBI Chief Shown in Raucous Locker Room Celebration During Olympics Trip*, MSNNow (Feb. 22, 2026), <https://www.ms.now/news/fbi-chief-shown-in-raucous-locker-room-celebration-during-olympics-trip>; @WilliamTurton, X.COM (Feb. 22, 2026, 6:38 PM), <https://x.com/williamturton/status/2025716894636929264?s=51&t=WQHxQAG1Ze--nnrxRYvjDQ>; @Kash_Patel, X.COM (July 3, 2025, 4:28 AM), https://x.com/Kash_Patel/status/1940689160656114026?s=20; and @Kash_Patel, X.COM (Feb. 22, 2026, 7:56 PM), https://x.com/Kash_Patel/status/2025736412125855918?s=20.

⁴ Government Accountability Office, GAO-13-235, Department of Justice: Executives' Use of Aircraft for Nonmission Purposes (Feb. 2013), at p. 3, <https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-13-235.pdf>.

Unfortunately, as a credible source described to my staff, the tone was set early during Director Patel's tenure when he said in a meeting with the field offices last year, "If you have golf, hockey, fishing, or hunting and beautiful sights, you're going to see a lot of me." As has been reported, the Director's frequent misuse of the FBI's Gulfstream jets for personal travel has even frustrated White House and DOJ senior staff.⁵

Through additional, credible whistleblower disclosures, I have learned how the Director's decisions related to DOJ or FBI-controlled aircraft have negatively impacted high-profile criminal investigations. For example, in the immediate aftermath of the murder of Charlie Kirk, the FBI's shooting reconstruction team was asked to fly to Utah to aid the investigation and process the scene. However, the team's deployment was delayed by at least a day because of a Bureau plane and pilot shortage caused by the Director's personal flights. FAA rules dictate the maximum flight duty, cumulative travel, and rest periods for pilots, and the FBI team could only travel after the pilots' mandated rest periods were completed.⁶

The Director's misplaced priorities and poor management of the FBI's resources—including its aircraft—also harmed the FBI's ability to respond to the shooting at Brown University on December 13, 2025. Once again, the shooting reconstruction team was set to respond to the scene immediately, but was unable to fly out of Richmond, Virginia, using one of the FBI's planes. According to a whistleblower, the Director made the call that he wanted the Hostage Rescue Team (HRT) on standby to respond to the shooting. HRT is the FBI's full time specialized counterterrorism unit and is generally activated for situations that one of the FBI's 56 SWAT teams cannot handle. Notably, the Boston Field Office, which has responsibility for Providence, Rhode Island, has an enhanced SWAT team, as does the New York Field Office. All the SWAT teams in the region would have been aware of the Brown University shooting and ready to respond if needed—not requiring HRT to be put on standby. The Director's decision caused immediate confusion because 1) that order was not communicated to HRT; 2) it upended the responsibility typically assigned to the local field office closest to the incident in question—in this case Boston or New York City—to provide immediate support; and 3) it froze the aircraft's usage by any other FBI team until the Director removed the hold. The whistleblower described how the team had to drive from Quantico, Virginia to Providence, Rhode Island overnight during a winter storm to reach the scene by 9:00 a.m. the following morning to immediately process evidence.

It also cannot be ignored that the Director's latest personal jaunt occurred on the same weekend an armed intruder attempted to breach President Trump's Mar-a-Lago residence. The man was allegedly carrying a gas can and a shotgun, and he was killed on the scene by law enforcement.⁷ This potential threat and concerning security breach follows two other assassination attempts on President Trump's life since 2024. While the Director issued a statement claiming the Bureau is "dedicating all necessary resources" to investigating the incident and will work closely with

⁵ See Sadie Gurman et. al, *Kash Patel's 'Effen Wild' Ride as FBI Director*, WALL ST. J. (Nov. 11, 2025), <https://www.wsj.com/politics/policy/kash-patel-private-jet-flights-fbi-197da8fd>.

⁶ See 14 CFR Parts 117, 121, & 135.

⁷ Ashley Carnahan, Sophia Compton, & Greg Wehner, *Suspect Identified After Fatal Shooting at Trump's Mar-A-Lago Estate: Officials*, FOX NEWS (Feb. 22, 2026), <https://www.foxnews.com/politics/suspect-identified-fatal-shooting-trumps-mar-a-lago-estate-officials>.

federal and state partners,⁸ it is not yet known if those resources have been delayed or diminished by the Director's misuse or mismanagement of government resources—as was the case in the Charlie Kirk and Brown University shootings.

As I noted in my previous letter, the Director's frequent and unapologetic use of DOJ or FBI-controlled aircraft for personal travel raises concerns about whether he is complying with applicable regulations and reimbursement requirements for non-mission-related travel and whether the Department has sufficient internal controls to track and enforce those obligations. Moreover, the information provided by credible whistleblowers makes it clear that not only are the Director's misuse and mismanagement of these aircraft problematic to taxpayers, they materially harm the mission of the very agency he has sworn to lead. As federal law enforcement is navigating multiple crises—including Americans facing significant danger after a prominent cartel leader was killed in Mexico—the FBI cannot afford to have its resources further stretched by a Director who views its staff and aircraft as a means to support his jet-setting lifestyle. The problematic nature of the Director's conduct is highlighted by his own hypocritical criticism of his predecessor's use of the same aircraft for personal travel in a 2023 interview, when he stated, “Chris Wray doesn't need a government funded G5 jet to go to vacation. Maybe we ground that plane. \$15,000 every time it takes off.”⁹

Therefore, I ask that the GAO's ongoing review incorporate the Director's latest international travel and the aforementioned whistleblower information disclosed to my staff. I also ask that the DOJ OIG immediately investigate Director Patel's misuse or mismanagement of government resources.

Sincerely,



Richard J. Durbin
Ranking Member

⁸ @FBI DirectorKash, X.COM (Feb. 22, 2026, 10:40 AM), <https://x.com/FBIDirectorKash/status/2025596613738000645?s=20>.

⁹ @RonFilipkowski, X.COM (Nov. 2, 2025, 9:27 PM), <https://x.com/RonFilipkowski/status/1985171835923685809?s=20>; see also Daniel Klaidman, *Kash Patel Once Called for Ending FBI Director's Government Jet Use. Now He Won't Reveal if He's a Frequent Flyer*, CBS NEWS (April 22, 2025), <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/patel-fbi-director-government-jet/>; and Alex Kaplan, *On a Fair-Right Podcast, Kash Patel Previously Called on Congress to Ground Then-FBI Director Christopher Wray's Government Funded Jet if the FBI Didn't Answer Congressional Questions*, MEDIA MATTERS (Nov. 5, 2025), <https://www.mediamatters.org/kash-patel/far-right-podcast-kash-patel-previously-called-congress-ground-then-fbi-director>.