

Dear Director Wray:

On June 14, 2017, James Hodgkinson opened fire on Republican Members of Congress at Eugene Simpson Stadium Park in Alexandria, Virginia, during the final practice before the annual Congressional Baseball Game. One week later, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) released initial findings from the investigation, including previous complaints of target practice on the attacker's property in Illinois, two firearms on the scene, hundreds of rounds of ammunition in a storage locker, a social media history of anti-Republican views, and a potential "hit list" of six Members of Congress – Republicans Trent Franks, Jim Jordan, Morgan Griffith, Scott DesJarlais, Jeff Duncan, and Mo Brooks – in his pocket. Prior to opening fire, he even asked if the Members on the field that morning were Republican or Democrat and was assured that the Members were Republicans. One week after the shooting, the FBI said that it was "investigating this shooting as an assault on a member of Congress and an assault on a federal officer."¹

We were the ones on the field that morning, and were it not for the heroism of Majority Whip Steve Scalise's security detail, the events that day could have been much worse. Hodgkinson did not know police would be at the field as both officers were in plain clothes and were sitting in an unmarked vehicle. United States Capitol Police (USCP) officers David Bailey and Crystal Griner saved the lives of Members, staff, and civilians who were present.

Despite these facts, on November 16, 2017, FBI personnel verbally briefed members of the team that Hodgkinson's motivation for opening fire was "suicide by cop." What is even more astounding about this assertion is that this information was given more than month after the Commonwealth's Attorney for Alexandria found that "[t]he evidence in this case establishes beyond a reasonable doubt that the suspect, fueled by rage against Republican legislators, decided to commit an act of terrorism as that term is defined by the Code of Virginia," and continuing, "The suspect...ambushed a peaceful assembly of people practicing baseball and began to fire indiscriminately in an effort to kill and maim as many people as possible."²

Many of us attended this FBI briefing. All of us who were present at the ballfield, as well as those targeted on Hodgkinson's "list," write to you today demanding answers and accountability from the FBI.

Today, there is a heightened focus on violent domestic extremism in the United States. We all agree that violent extremism of any kind must be rooted out and addressed by our law enforcement agencies. But we cannot presume to understand the scope of this issue if our law enforcement agencies do not investigate all instances of extremism, regardless of motivating ideology, with equal vigor.

We fear that the FBI's inability or unwillingness to fully investigate this shooting as a matter of domestic extremism four years ago leaves a blind spot within the Bureau in fully assessing risks we face today. The FBI telling us that James Hodgkinson's attempt to assassinate dozens of Members of Congress was simply "suicide by cop" does nothing to alleviate this concern. The need for the FBI to review its original conclusion is heightened by the determinations by the Commonwealth's Attorney for Alexandria, as well as recent reports from the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI) and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), clearly show that this was a domestic violent extremism event.

¹ <https://www.fbi.gov/contact-us/field-offices/washingtondc/news/press-releases/law-enforcement-shares-findings-of-the-investigation-into-the-june-14-alexandria-virginia-shooting>

² <https://www.alexandriava.gov/uploadedFiles/commattorney/info/17-001%20-%20Simpson%20Field%20Shooting%20-%20FINAL%2010.06.17.pdf>

Director Wray, you stated at the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence (HPSCI) hearing on April 15, 2021, that “the FBI’s reputation is something that matters deeply” to you. It matters to us, too. And it matters to the American people.

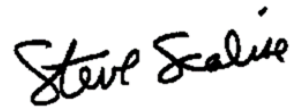
That is why we ask that you review the FBI’s findings of the 2017 attack, interview all witnesses who were present that morning, update the conclusions of the FBI’s investigation, if warranted, and publicly release the findings. We also urge you to conduct an internal investigation into how the FBI reached the conclusion of “suicide by cop” and who was behind that process and determination.

We request your prompt attention to this issue and look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Brad R. Wenstrup, D.P.M.
Member of Congress
*Attended the 11.16.17 briefing



Steve Scalise
Member of Congress

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