

United States Senate

February 28, 2024

The Honorable Lloyd Austin
U.S. Department of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 20301-1000

Dear Secretary Austin:

I am writing to you regarding an active-duty U.S. airman's self-immolation outside the Israeli embassy in Washington, D.C. on February 25, 2024. You have made it a top priority to address "extremism" amongst our total force, and this act of horrific violence—in support of a terrorist group—raises serious questions about how this individual was allowed to serve on active duty.

Please provide the following information no later than March 7, 2024:

1. The Department has touted its efforts to address "ideological extremism" within its ranks. Was this airman ever identified as exhibiting extremist leanings?
2. Did the Department's anti-extremism training address support for Islamic terrorist groups like Hamas?
3. Did the airman display any concerning behavior prior to this incident? If so, what was the behavior? What actions were taken to address that behavior?
4. Has the Department determined if the airman had access to classified information? If he had access, did he take any actions that compromised U.S. national security prior to February 25?
5. Did you find evidence of support for Islamic terrorist groups in your search for Department of Defense extremists? If so, how did you address that support?
6. Have any other military members participated in anti-Israeli actions that violate Department of Defense policy on restricted political activities? If so, was this behavior appropriately addressed?

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



Tom Cotton
United States Senator