

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM

2157 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING

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<http://oversight.house.gov>

August 3, 2016

Mr. Paul Wiedefeld
General Manager
Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority
600 5th Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20001

Dear Mr. Wiedefeld:

On August 3, 2016, a Metro Transit Police Department (MTPD) officer was arrested in Fairfax, Virginia on charges of attempting to provide material support to a designated foreign terrorist organization.¹ The officer—identified by the *Washington Post* as Nicholas Young—has been monitored regularly by the Federal Bureau of Investigation and transit police since 2010.² Mr. Young has been with MTPD since 2003, and he continued to work for the Department while under surveillance.³

In light of the arrest of a MTPD officer for attempting to provide material support to ISIS, and the recent terrorist attacks on soft targets in France, Belgium, California, and Florida, the Committee has questions about the security of the Metro transit system. The affidavit filed by the FBI in support of criminal charges against Mr. Young details his connections to individuals and organizations engaged in terrorist activities.⁴ For example, the complaint states that Mr. Young traveled to Libya twice in 2011.⁵ U.S. Customs and Border Protection discovered body armor and other military-style equipment in his luggage. Mr. Young claimed to have fought with a militia group in Libya—a group the FBI suspects of having ties to Al-Qaeda.⁶

In addition to his travel to Libya, Mr. Young was acquainted with Amine El Khalifi, according to the complaint.⁷ In 2012, El Khalifi was arrested on charges related to a plot to use

¹ Rachel Weiner, *Police Officer for D.C. Subway System Accused of Trying to Help ISIS*, WASH. POST, Aug. 3, 2016. [hereinafter Weiner]

² *Id.*

³ *Id.*

⁴ See generally Criminal Complaint, *United States v. Young*, Case No. 1:16mj 355 (D. E.D. Va. Aug. 2, 2016), available at <https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/virginia-man-arrested-attempting-support-isis>.

⁵ *Id.* at 6.

⁶ *Id.* at 11.

⁷ *Id.* at 3-7.

an improvised explosive device against the U.S. Capitol Building—charges to which he eventually pleaded guilty.⁸

It is unclear from the complaint and related media coverage what safeguards, if any, were put in place by MTPD or the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority to ensure Mr. Young was not a threat to the safety of transit system riders during the time he was under surveillance. The complaint does not refer to any restrictions on his access to sensitive information or locations. All that is clear is Mr. Young remained on the MTPD police force until today, when he was arrested.⁹

More than 200 million riders use the WMATA transit system every year.¹⁰ Attacks on transit systems around the world make clear that Washington's Metro system is a target for individuals and organizations that wish to perpetrate terrorist attacks. As the Committee with both oversight and authorizing jurisdiction for WMATA, we take seriously our role as a partner in ensuring the safety and security of passengers on the Metro system.

In order to help the Committee understand WMATA's role in the investigation of Mr. Young and its efforts to protect the system against terrorist threats, please provide the following information as soon as possible, but no later than 5:00 p.m. on August 17, 2016:

1. All documents referring or relating to WMATA's procedures for conducting background checks on employees, including, but not limited to, practices for conducting background checks on new employees, as well as practices related to periodic updated investigations of existing employees;
2. All documents and communications referring or relating to how and when the FBI notified WMATA that it was investigating or surveilling Mr. Young;
3. All documents and communications referring or relating to any safeguards or restrictions on Mr. Young's access to sensitive information or locations;
4. All documents and communications to or from any WMATA official referring or relating to the investigation and/or arrest of Mr. Young.

Please deliver your responses to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform Majority Staff in Room 2157 of the Rayburn House Office Building and the Minority Staff in Room 2471 of the Rayburn House Office Building. The Committee prefers, if possible, to receive all documents in electronic format. An attachment to this letter contains additional instructions for responding to the Committee's request.

⁸ Press Release, U.S. Attorney's Office, "Virginia Man Sentenced to 30 Years in Prison for Plot to Carry Out Suicide Attack on U.S. Capitol" (Sept. 14, 2012), *available at* <https://archives.fbi.gov/archives/washingtondc/press-releases/2012/virginia-man-sentenced-to-30-years-in-prison-for-plot-to-carry-out-suicide-bomb-attack-on-u.s.-capitol>

⁹ Weiner, *supra* note 1.

¹⁰ WMATA Metrorail Ridership Discussion (Oct. 9, 2014), *available at* http://www.wmata.com/about_metro/board_of_directors/board_docs/100914_4BCombinedColor.pdf.

The Committee on Oversight and Government Reform is the principal oversight committee of the House of Representatives and may at "any time" investigate "any matter" as set forth in House Rule X.

Please contact Patrick Hartobey of the Committee staff at (202) 225-5074 with any questions regarding this request. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Jason Chaffetz
Chairman



Mark Meadows
Chairman
Subcommittee on
Government Operations



John Mica
Chairman
Subcommittee on Transportation
and Public Assets



Ron Desantis
Chairman
Subcommittee on
National Security