

**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND REFORM

2157 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING

WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6143

MAJORITY (202) 225-5051  
MINORITY (202) 225-5074  
<https://oversight.house.gov>

October 12, 2022

The Honorable Merrick B. Garland  
Attorney General  
U.S. Department of Justice  
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20530

Dear Attorney General Garland:

We are investigating the collective failure by the Department of Justice (DOJ) and U.S. Probation and Pretrial Services to adequately monitor Leonard Francis, also known as “Fat Leonard,” the Singapore-based defense contractor and the mastermind behind the largest corruption scandal in U.S. Navy history.<sup>1</sup> Our Committee has previously conducted oversight over Francis’s schemes to defraud taxpayers of \$35 million.<sup>2</sup> Francis recently escaped house arrest where he led a life of luxury and fled the country with plans to enter Russia<sup>3</sup> just three weeks before his scheduled sentencing for buying classified information and favors for his shipping company from Navy officers.<sup>4</sup> U.S. authorities had to rely on Venezuelan law enforcement to capture the admitted conman, and will now have to work with the hostile regime to ensure he is delivered back into U.S. custody.<sup>5</sup> We request a briefing, documents, and information to determine how this notorious criminal duped the justice system and was left to his own devices to escape abroad, as well as what efforts are underway to ensure his return with minimal concessions to the Venezuelan regime.

Francis was granted medical furlough to treat his kidney cancer in 2018; his confinement was thereafter spent in leisure and luxury.<sup>6</sup> The conman—who defrauded the U.S. government for \$35 million—stayed at three private homes during his confinement, most recently in a five-bedroom, seven-bath mansion costing \$7000 a month and located just 40 miles from the U.S.-

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<sup>1</sup> Schladebeck, Jessica, ‘Fat Leonard’ arrested in Venezuela weeks after escaping house arrest, NEW YORK DAILY NEWS (Sep. 22, 2022)

<sup>2</sup> Whitlock, Craig, House panel opens probe into Navy bribery and fraud scandal, WASH. POST (Jan. 30, 2014).

<sup>3</sup> O’Connell, Jonathon, ‘Fat Leonard’ had life of leisure, relaxed security before escape, capture, WASH. POST (Sept. 24, 2022).

<sup>4</sup> Mallonee, Mary Kay, Mastermind of Navy bribery scheme escapes house arrest just weeks ahead of sentencing, CNN (September 6, 2022); Ratcliffe, Rebecca, ‘Fat Leonard’, contactor in US navy’s worst corruption scandal, flees house arrest, The Guardian (Sept. 6, 2022).

<sup>5</sup> Planas, Antonio & Da Silva, Chantal, U.S. fugitive known as ‘Fat Leonard’ apprehended in Venezuela after weeks on the run, NBC (Sept. 21, 2022).

<sup>6</sup> *Supra*, n.3.

Mexico border.<sup>7</sup> His private staff prepared so much food for him that the leftovers filled three garbage bags a day.<sup>8</sup>

The flight risk presented by Francis's at-home confinement should have been apparent to all involved in his case. During a 2020 status hearing, the Judge overseeing the case even wondered after receiving a letter from Francis's physician apparently discharging him from care: "Is he paying his security team? What is his status? I even went so far as to wonder if he is still in this country."<sup>9</sup> This raises serious questions about why Francis was not monitored more closely by federal authorities.

Because Francis was a flight risk, security guards were required to watch the former-defense-contractor-turned-criminal's home round-the-clock as a condition of his furlough.<sup>10</sup> The security guards, however, were private hires on Francis's payroll making as much as \$10,000 per month.<sup>11</sup> One security guard, who worked the 12 hour day shift, admitted that he never saw security when he arrived or left his post, indicating that no night security was on watch.<sup>12</sup> According to reports, Francis would station the guards in windowless garages and ordered them to open his Amazon packages.<sup>13</sup> There were no night patrols at Francis's home or visitor logs.<sup>14</sup> And it is unclear whether security guards were even present during Francis's escape,<sup>15</sup> which was reported first to the local police department.<sup>16</sup> Extensions to Francis's medical furlough were repeatedly granted by the court without objection from DOJ prosecutors.<sup>17</sup> It is astonishing that DOJ and the U.S. Probation and Pretrial Services would allow this man the freedom to oversee his own luxurious confinement.

There were obvious and apparent suspicious activities at Francis's home immediately prior to his escape. After Francis cut off his ankle monitor and fled his Torrey-Highlands, California home, U.S. Marshals investigating the escape were told by neighbors that several U-Haul trucks were present at Francis's home on August 31, 2022 and remained for four consecutive days.<sup>18</sup> His neighbors also noticed and took photos of out-of-state vehicles in front of Francis's home on Wednesday, August 31, before he fled his mansion.<sup>19</sup> It is unclear how supervising authorities overlooked these suspicious visitors to such a high-profile criminal in the days leading up to Francis's escape.

To assist Committee Republicans in better understanding this security lapse which led to Francis's widely reported escape from U.S. custody, we request that you provide a staff-level

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<sup>7</sup> *Id.*

<sup>8</sup> *Id.*

<sup>9</sup> Tr. of Status Hearing Dec. 2, 2020, *U.S. v. Leonard Glenn Francis, et. al.*, 13-CR-3781-JLS at 4.

<sup>10</sup> Gotfredson, David, *Photos show SUVs at 'Fat Leonard's' house in Torrey Highlands*, CBS 8 (Sept. 7, 2022).

<sup>11</sup> *Supra*, n.3.

<sup>12</sup> *Id.*

<sup>13</sup> *Id.*

<sup>14</sup> *Id.*

<sup>15</sup> *Supra*, n.10.

<sup>16</sup> *U.S. authorities seek a defense contractor named Fat Leonard who fled house arrest*, NPR (Sept. 6, 2022).

<sup>17</sup> *Supra*, n.3.

<sup>18</sup> *Supra*, n.10.

<sup>19</sup> *Id.*; *supra*, n.3.

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briefing as soon as possible but no later than October 19, 2022. Additionally, please provide the following documents and information no later than October 26, 2022:

1. All documents and communications between or among any DOJ employee, contractor, or agent regarding Leonard Francis, AKA "Fat Leonard;"
2. All documents and communications regarding Leonard Francis, AKA "Fat Leonard," between or among any DOJ agency employee, contractor, or agent and any law enforcement agency operating within the State of California, including any law enforcement unit of a municipality, county, or any other subdivision of the State;
3. All documents and communications regarding Leonard Francis, AKA "Fat Leonard," between or among any DOJ agency employee, contractor, or agent and any court official or employee, contractor, or agent of U.S. Probation and Pretrial Services.

Thank you for your consideration of this important issue. To make arrangements to deliver documents or to schedule a briefing, please contact Committee on Oversight and Reform Republican Staff at (202) 225-5074. The Committee on Oversight and Reform is the principal oversight committee of the U.S. House of Representatives and has broad authority to investigate "any matter" at "any time" under House Rule X. Thank you in advance for your cooperation with this inquiry.

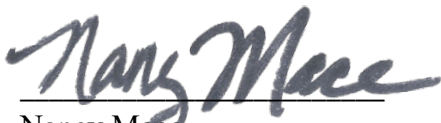
Sincerely,



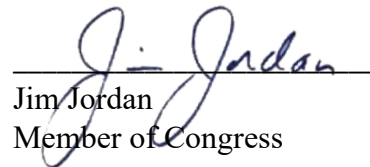
James Comer  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Oversight & Reform



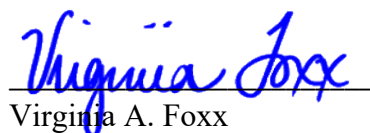
Glenn S. Grothman  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on National Security



Nancy Mace  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Civil Rights and Civil Liberties



Jim Jordan  
Member of Congress



Virginia A. Foxx  
Member of Congress

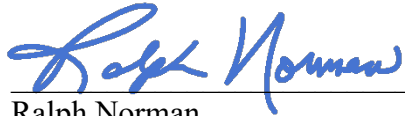


Bob Gibbs  
Member of Congress

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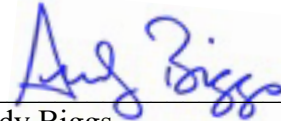
Ralph Norman  
Member of Congress



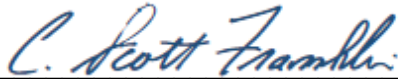
Pete Sessions  
Member of Congress



Fred Keller  
Member of Congress



Andy Biggs  
Member of Congress



C. Scott Franklin  
Member of Congress



Jake LaTurner  
Member of Congress



Mike Flood  
Member of Congress

cc: The Honorable Carolyn B. Maloney, Chairwoman  
Committee on Oversight & Reform

The Honorable Stephen F. Lynch, Chairman  
Subcommittee on National Security

The Honorable Jamie Raskin, Chairman  
Subcommittee on Civil Rights and Civil Liberties