

CBP deletes press release about arrest of two Yemeni border crossers

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April 6, 2021

Republicans on the House Committee on Homeland Security have slammed Customs and Border Protection (CBP) after the agency deleted a press release that detailed the arrest of two Yemeni illegal immigrants who were identified on a terrorism watch list.

On Monday, CBP announced how two Yemeni nationals who were placed on the FBI's terror watchlist were arrested in California after crossing illegally from Mexico into the United States.

But the announcement was deleted from the CBP website and Twitter account on Tuesday, on the grounds of 'national security'.

The CBP told DailyMail.com on Tuesday night: 'The news release in question was not properly reviewed and contained certain disclosure and policy information related to national security that required CBP to remove it from our website.'

The removal sparked fury among Republicans, who demanded to know why the arrival of potential terrorists at the border was being covered up.

House Republican Leader Kevin McCarthy demanded a classified briefing from the FBI and CIA for congressional leadership and Vice President Harris about the individuals arrested at the Mexican border.

The two unnamed men - one 33, the other 26 - were detained over the last three months in the Calexico area of California. Both were on the FBI's Terrorism Watch List and a No-Fly List.

But less than 24 hours after the press release was posted online, the information had been removed from the CBP's media website with visitors to the page greeted with an 'Access denied' error message.

Republicans on the committee tweeted at CBP on Tuesday night, 'Why did you take down your previously public tweet & press release announcing that two people on the terror watch list were apprehended exploiting President Biden's open border policies? Transparency in name alone is not transparency.'

In a letter to FBI Director Christopher Wray and CIA Director William Burns, seen by [Fox News](#), McCarthy, requested a 'classified briefing regarding certain individuals apprehended by the U.S. Border Patrol' for himself, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, as well as Vice President Harris.

'I hope she, along with Congressional leaders, could benefit from this briefing,' McCarthy wrote.

'Through conversations with the Border Patrol and media reports, I have learned of the apprehension of foreign nationals on the Terrorism Watch List who were attempting to illegally cross our southern border. This highlights the ongoing national security risk posed by the border crisis,' McCarthy stated.

The deletion of the press release set off a chain of angry reactions from Republicans on twitter.

GOP Representative for Michigan's Lisa McClain tweeted: 'The crisis at the border is a direct threat to our national security. @POTUS, reinstate the policies that worked and stop threatening the lives of Americans.'

'CBP deleted their press release announcing the successful arrest of two Yemeni men at the SW border who were on the terror watch list.'

'What else is the Biden Administration trying to hide? #BidenBorderCrisis'

Colorado Congressman Doug Lamborn wrote: 'It is despicable that the Biden @DHSgov is attempting to cover up the fact that known terrorists are coming in through our Southern Border. Joe Biden's open border policy is dangerous and a national security risk.'

Republican Congressman from North Carolina Dan Bishop added: 'Controlling the narrative is far more important to the Biden Admin than being transparent.'

Press officer for a Republican candidate for Virginia Governor Matt Wolking was in disbelief in the removal of information.

'The Biden Administration is blocking its own Border Patrol's website to hide this press release from the public. Click the link, you now get an error message. Unbelievable.'

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'This is concerning on two fronts - (1) why delete/remove the great work of the US Border Patrol? and (2) affirmation that known or suspected terrorists (KSTs) see the lack of security along the SWB as an opportunity.'

Other Twitter users demanded an explanation for the sudden deletion.

'Yemeni Terrorists caught at the border. But the press release taken down. What are you hiding?' asked Kyan Douglas.

'The press release was deleted because it destroyed a long-standing Democrat-media narrative that there was "no evidence" that Trump's border security measures were stopping terrorists from entering the country. If the evidence doesn't fit the narrative, destroy the evidence,' wrote Joseph Toomey with his own theory.

'They don't want you to know. I used to hunt a ranch in Texas that had its southern boundary as the Rio. They caught two Afghans (suspected terrorists) and buried it like it never happened. Everyone was told not to talk about it,' wrote another user on Twitter.

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On Tuesday, the White House said that such apprehensions were 'uncommon' and a sign officials were doing their jobs.

'They do underscore the importance of the critical work that is done on a daily basis to vet those at the border. DHS works, not just at the border as you know, but also with international partners to share intelligence and other information including to prevent individuals on certain watchlist from entering the United States,' Press Secretary Jen Psaki said.

'They adjudicate individuals encountered at and between ports of entry against several classified and unclassified databases. So while this is rare, this is a reflection of them doing their jobs.'

The original statement explained how the two captures were made by U.S. Customs and Border Protection agents assigned to the El Centro Station in Southern California.

CBP stated on Monday how the two men were on a U.S. government watchlist for terrorism suspects.

'Part of the Border Patrol's mission states we will protect the country from terrorists,' said Chief Patrol Agent Gregory K. Bovino.

'These apprehensions at our border illustrates the importance of our mission and how we can never stop being vigilant in our everyday mission to protect this great country.'

Republicans have long warned that terrorists could be among those illegally entering the country and evading detection.

Although The U.S. government does not release data on terrorist detentions along the border with Mexico, in 2018 the figure was given as six by Axios news, and around a dozen by [CNN](#).

In January 2018, a joint report by the Homeland Security and Justice departments stated that Homeland Security had 2,554 'encounters' worldwide with people on a watch list who were trying to travel to the U.S.

Of them, 2,170 were trying to come by air, with 335 by land and the rest by sea.

In 2019, Donald Trump declared during a Rose Garden speech: 'We have terrorists coming through the southern border because they find that's probably the easiest place to come through. They drive right in and they make a left.'

Migrants have arrived at the U.S.-Mexico border in higher numbers over the past few months, including over 170,000 people in March alone, the largest single-month total in well over a decade.

A large number are unaccompanied minors, which has forced the administration to open its 10th temporary housing facility to accommodate these young arrivals.

The vast majority of adults are immediately sent back to Mexico.

The border patrol say they are currently detaining around 5,000 people a day.

Todd Bensman, an analyst with the Center for Immigration Studies, which favors less immigration and stronger defenses against terrorist infiltration, estimated in 2019 that around 20 terrorist suspects are detained at the U.S.-Mexico border every year.

The first suspect, aged 33, was apprehended January 29 approximately at 1:10am local time after he tried to cross the border illegally about three miles west from the Calexico Port of Entry.

Agents discovered a cellular phone sim card hidden inside the insole of his shoe.

A second individual, 26, was picked up by agents on March 30 at approximately 11:30pm.

A CBP spokesperson contacted by DailyMail.com declined to provide the names of the men.

The government does not disclose how many people are on the no-fly list, although in June 2016 Senator Dianne Feinstein of California said that there were around 81,000 people on the list, of whom fewer than 1,000 were U.S. citizens.

Yemen, the poorest country in the Middle East, wracked by decades of civil war, is described by UN as suffering from the world's worst humanitarian crisis. Four million people have been forced from their homes.

A group of Republican lawmakers that visited the border in El Paso, Texas, in March said border agents told them during the trip that some people caught crossing the border were on a U.S. terrorism watchlist.

House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy traveled to the southern border March 15 and told reporters that after meeting with Border Patrol agents, he had learned that individuals with links to terror organizations were rushing the border.

'It's not just people from Mexico or Honduras or El Salvador,' he said.

'They're now finding people from Yemen, Iran, Turkey. People on the terrorist watch list they are catching, and they're rushing in all at once.'

Republicans have criticized Biden for easing some restrictions put in place by the former president as the number of border crossings has risen in recent months.

The watchlist is maintained by the FBI Terrorism Screening Center.

The list contains 'the identities of those who are known or reasonably suspected of being involved in terrorist activities,' according to the FBI.

Overall, few migrants caught crossing the southern border match people on the FBI's terror watchlist, a U.S. official told Reuters.

The libertarian CATO Institute said that from 1975 through 2017, seven people who entered the U.S. illegally from 'special interest' countries — states tied at least loosely to terrorism — were convicted of planning attacks on U.S. soil.

None crossed from Mexico. They came from Canada or jumped ship in U.S. ports, and all before special interest countries were classified as such.

The plots were foiled and no one was hurt.

The only known terrorists who crossed illegally from Mexico in those decades were three ethnic Albanians from Macedonia who came as children with their parents in 1984 and, in their 20s, were arrested in the foiled plot to attack the Fort Dix, New Jersey, Army base in 2007, the CATO study found. They were not from a special-interest country.