

United States Senate

December 21, 2015

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

I write to urge you to prioritize the Financial Crimes Enforcement Network (FinCEN) and the Office of Terrorism and Financial Intelligence (TFI), which houses the Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC), in your fiscal year 2017 budget proposal. I encourage you to request sums that far exceed your Administration's requests for recent fiscal years. Recent events in Paris, Bamako, Beirut, and Abuja have highlighted the need for more resources to combat the efforts of organized terrorist activity. As the networks of well financed terrorist organizations expand across the globe, it is incumbent on the United States to provide even more leadership in combatting the use of international financial networks to transfer funds to agents of these organizations wherever they reside.

FinCEN and OFAC, under the U.S. Department of the Treasury, play a critical role in combatting terrorism. FinCEN safeguards the financial system from money laundering and other illicit activities by collecting and analyzing financial intelligence in partnership with global authorities. OFAC enforces economic sanctions against terrorists, international narcotics traffickers, targeted foreign regimes, and other threats to our national security.

Since the horrific attacks on our homeland on September 11, 2001, these offices have played a lead role in identifying, tracking, and pursuing terrorist activity around the world in partnership with our allies and with relevant international financial and law enforcement institutions. We must confront the reality that we are now entering a new phase in this long term fight, complete with countering foes that are well financed and well trained in the use of the newest technologies and communications media. This necessitates a broader role for the intelligence and response capabilities practiced by the specially trained experts that work for FinCEN and TFI.

Evidence has demonstrated that the terrorist threats we face are becoming more sophisticated in their ability to conceal their activities. However, the United States has the requisite tools in place to monitor and respond to suspicious activity that takes place via the vast international financial networks that enable global monetary transfers. We should empower the experts that focus on these networks to invest in improving their own capabilities and those of allied nations and entities that may not be able to deploy similar levels of resources to assess or respond to known threats.

These are dangerous times that require constant vigilance. We are fortunate that we have world class personnel at the U.S. Department of the Treasury constantly monitoring developments and taking immediate action when necessary to impede the efforts of terrorist organizations. It is critical that we allow them to invest in an even more robust infrastructure for the fight that lays ahead. It is critical that you request more robust resources for these professionals so that they can play their proper role in our nation's response to the evolving global war on terror. I look forward to working with you to keep our homeland safe.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Gary C. Peters", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Gary C. Peters
United States Senator