

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM

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<https://oversight.house.gov>

August 18, 2025

The Honorable Pam Bondi
Attorney General
Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20530

The Honorable Kristi Noem
Secretary
Department of Homeland Security
2707 Martin Luther King Jr. Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20528

The Honorable Marco Rubio
Secretary
Department of State
2201 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Attorney General Bondi, Secretary Rubio, and Secretary Noem,

I write with serious concern about recent actions taken by the U.S. government that may have compromised American law enforcement operations to hinder the transnational criminal organization Mara Salvatrucha, otherwise known as MS-13. Reports suggest that President Trump and Nayib Bukele, President of El Salvador, entered into a covert agreement that resulted in the U.S. government dropping charges against and deporting key MS-13 leaders who were apprehended by the United States. In return for President Trump's promise to drop charges against these dangerous individuals, President Bukele allegedly agreed to accept and confine Venezuelans deported from the United States under the Alien Enemies Act to Salvadoran prisons, particularly the Centro de Confinamiento del Terrorismo (CECOT).¹ If true, this surreptitious deal struck by the Trump Administration has profound implications for the integrity of the United States justice system and national security. The Committee demands to understand whether U.S. officials facilitated the repatriation of MS-13 leaders to prevent them from cooperating with American prosecutors.

In 2019, the Department of Justice (DOJ) launched a years-long, interagency effort known as Task Force Vulcan to dismantle the leadership of MS-13, one of the world's most violent and entrenched transnational criminal organizations. In 2020, the DOJ indicted 14 top MS-13 leaders on terrorism, drug trafficking, and conspiracy charges in the Eastern District of

¹ *The Terrorism Suspect Trump Sent Back to Bukele*, The New Yorker (Apr. 18, 2025) (online at www.newyorker.com/news/the-lede/the-terrorism-suspect-trump-sent-back-to-bukele).

New York, including César Humberto López Larios (“Greñas”), Elmer Canales Rivera (“Crook de Hollywood”), and Fredy Iván Jandres Parada (“Lucky”).²

According to reports, these three MS-13 leaders possessed knowledge of a clandestine and shocking deal between President Bukele’s administration and MS-13. As outlined in DOJ indictments and investigative materials, the deal provided members of MS-13 with favorable prison conditions, judicial protections, and territorial autonomy in exchange for electoral support for Bukele’s political party ahead of Bukele’s 2021 electoral victories. In effect, the Salvadoran government traded criminal impunity for political gain.³

Despite knowledge of this deal, on March 11, 2025, the DOJ moved to dismiss all charges against López Larios, citing “geopolitical and national security concerns” and deferring prosecution to El Salvador.⁴ Just four days later, the Trump Administration repatriated López Larios to El Salvador as part of a broader deportation arrangement with President Bukele that permitted the transfer of deportees to El Salvador.⁵

The actions of the Trump Administration appear specifically designed to undercut the work of Task Force Vulcan by returning key witnesses with knowledge of Bukele’s deal with MS-13 to El Salvador. The return of López Larios to El Salvador without first requiring cooperation with United States authorities deprived the DOJ of critical intelligence about the relationship between the Bukele administration and MS-13. Moreover, López Larios’ release into the Salvadoran prison system—controlled in part by powerful MS-13 leaders—risks further empowering the organization and shielding Bukele from accountability.

Such a decision not only undercuts ongoing federal investigations but also threatens U.S. national security. MS-13 maintains a direct operational presence in dozens of American cities and uses smuggling corridors, trafficking networks, and opaque financial systems to conduct criminal activity across borders.

In order to conduct Congressional oversight on the decision to dismiss charges against high-ranking MS-13 officials and return them to El Salvador, I request your response to the following questions by September 2, 2025:

² Department of Justice, *Press Release: The Department of Justice Announces Takedown of Key MS-13 Criminal Leadership* (July 15, 2020) (online at www.justice.gov/archives/opa/pr/department-justice-announces-takedown-key-ms-13-criminal-leadership).

³ *‘Historical Loss’: Alleged Gang Deader Evades US Justice with Deportation to El Salvador*, CNN News, (Mar. 24, 2025) (online at www.cnn.com/2025/03/24/politics/ms-13-leader-deported-el-salvador-boasberg-order).

⁴ Indictment of Cesar Lopez Larios (Mar. 11, 2025), *United States v. Lopez-Larios*, E.D.N.Y. (online at www.courtlistener.com/docket/68841386/1/united-states-v-lopez-larios/).

⁵ *Behind Trump’s Deal to Deport Venezuelans to El Salvador’s Most Feared Prison*, New York Times (Apr. 30, 2025) (online at www.nytimes.com/2025/04/30/us/politics/trump-deportations-venezuela-el-salvador.html).

1. Why were the federal criminal charges against César López Larios dismissed without prejudice? Please explain whether any foreign policy considerations contributed to that decision.
2. Does César López Larios possess information or knowledge relevant to an alleged 2021 agreement between the Bukele Administration and MS-13? Please produce all materials and information related to López Larios' information and knowledge about the alleged agreement.
3. Was the Department of State or Department of Homeland Security consulted before the Department of Justice's decision to dismiss the charges against César López Larios?
4. What was the role of Task Force Vulcan in uncovering the alleged 2021 agreement between MS-13 and the Bukele Administration?
5. What were the parameters of the Trump Administration's deportation deal with El Salvador? Please provide the agreement and any other related documents, as well as all communications between the Department of State, Department of Homeland Security, and/or the Department of Justice regarding the Trump Administration's deportation deal with El Salvador.
6. Did the Trump Administration's deportation deal with El Salvador explicitly include MS-13 defendants under U.S. indictment?
7. Has any MS-13 defendant deported under this program been made available to testify or provide information to U.S. authorities before deportation?
8. What safeguards exist to ensure that individuals in custody with information about foreign government collusion with transnational criminal organizations are not prematurely deported before all relevant information and knowledge has been collected from the individual?

The Committee on Oversight and Government Reform is the principal oversight committee of the House of Representatives and has broad authority to investigate "any matter" at "any time" under House Rule X. If you have any questions regarding this letter, please contact Democratic Committee staff at (202) 225-5051. Thank you for your prompt attention to this urgent matter.

Sincerely,



Robert Garcia
Ranking Member

cc: The Honorable James Comer, Chairman