

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC

October 21, 2026

Director Kash Patel
Federal Bureau of Investigation
935 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20535

Dear Director Patel,

On October 18, 2026, investigative journalist Steve Baker released previously unseen Capitol closed-circuit television (CCTV) footage from the evening of January 5, 2021, that appears to show Brian Cole Jr., the man arrested by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) for allegedly placing pipe bombs that evening, walking on the northwest side of the Capitol.¹ At the same time, Capitol CCTV footage and Democratic National Committee (DNC) security video show an individual wearing a gray hoodie and carrying a backpack allegedly placing pipe bombs in front of the DNC office and behind the Capitol Hill Club.

The new footage, taken from the northwest side of the Capitol, captures an African American male whose gait, footwear, clothing, respiratory mask, and behavioral characteristics appear to match those of Brian Cole Jr., consistent with evidence found at his residence, as well as with his own statements to the FBI regarding his activities near the Capitol Complex that evening.

If the man depicted in Steve Baker's new video is in fact Brian Cole Jr., he cannot be the same person who appears to be placing pipe bombs in the other footage from January 5. In that case, the Department of Justice (DOJ) must release Brian Cole Jr., and the FBI must continue searching for the person or persons responsible for the pipe bombs discovered on January 6. There is no requirement that the FBI wait for the outcome of Brian Cole Jr.'s trial before investigating the new video released by Steve Baker. In fact, the consequences of a positive identification of Brian Cole Jr. in Steve Baker's new video are so serious to national security, public safety, and the security of our Capitol that the FBI must not wait to evaluate this new evidence.

I respectfully request your review and assessment of Mr. Baker's reporting, and if the evidence establishes that Brian Cole Jr. could not have committed the alleged offenses, I request the DOJ immediately release him from federal custody. Should the DOJ decline to release Mr. Cole, I

¹ Steve Baker (@SteveBakerUSA), X (Oct. 18, 2026), <https://x.com/stevebakerusa/status/2111794954187985102>

request a written explanation detailing the evidentiary basis for his continued detention, including a detailed assessment of the exculpatory evidence presented in Mr. Baker's report.

I further request that you immediately initiate investigations into the possibility of involvement by, or undisclosed knowledge in the possession of, a limited number of individuals currently or formerly employed by US government agencies and the US Capitol Police, including but not limited to:

- Ashan Benedict, who served as the on-scene incident commander for the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) on January 6, and who later worked at the US Capitol Police (USCP). He was present in a USCP supervisory role during an interview I conducted with counter-surveillance officer Don Hankins. He was also the subject of a whistleblower disclosure I received from a former employee of a federal agency.
- Ronald Ridgley and Don Hankins, the plainclothes USCP counter-surveillance agents who discovered the second pipe bomb. Once dispatched, these men went quickly to the DNC pipe bomb, but not before Ronald Ridgley appeared on video to look under a bush where the pipe bomber had dwelled the night before but had not placed a bomb. Based on CCTV video and my interview with Hankins and Benedict, these men did not seem to have any sense of urgency to look for possible additional pipe bombs. During a June 7, 2023, transcribed interview before the House Judiciary Committee, I asked former Assistant Director in Charge of the FBI Washington Field Office, Steven D'Antuono, if the person who found the pipe bomb would be a suspect, he replied, "that's just investigation 101," but he was unsure if the person who found the pipe bomb was interviewed.² Then, during a July 12, 2023, House Judiciary hearing, I showed then-FBI Director Christopher Wray a video that appeared to show Ronald Ridgley informing police of the location of the second pipe bomb. When asked about the circumstances of the discovery of the second pipe bomb, Director Wray could not confirm that the FBI had interviewed the individual who found the second pipe bomb.³ Many other questions remain regarding law enforcement's discovery and response to the pipe bomb at the DNC.
- The FBI personnel who informed Steven D'Antuono that cellular data collected by one of the telecommunications providers in the Washington, D.C. area on January 5, 2021, had been corrupted. During the June 7, 2023, transcribed interview of D'Antuono, he testified to me under oath: "There was one provider... the data for I believe January 5th and possibly January 6th was corrupt and we couldn't get it."⁴ However, when congressional

² Transcribed Interview of Steven M. D'Antuono, at 38–39 (June 7, 2023) (House Comm. on the Judiciary), <https://docs.house.gov/meetings/JU/JU00/20230621/116122/HHRG-118-JU00-20230621-SD018.pdf>

³ U.S. House of Representatives, Committee on the Judiciary (July, 12, 2023) (remarks and questioning by Rep. Thomas Massie to FBI Director Christopher Wray), video recording, YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TDTV7dSCT0Q&t=1s>

⁴ *Transcribed Interview of Steven M. D'Antuono*, supra note 2, at 111.

investigators subsequently contacted the major cellular providers, none reportedly acknowledged that their data had been corrupted.⁵

- All individuals associated with the 51 phone numbers who were eliminated from the pipe bomb investigation due to law enforcement or other official connections on January 5.⁶
- The individual associated with the alleged FirstNet phone that pinged at both pipe bomb locations.⁷
- The persons responsible for destroying the Secret Service phones used on January 6 in spite of no less than five preservation orders from several congressional committees and the Inspector General for the Department of Homeland Security (DHS).⁸

An innocent man must not be left to languish. It would be negligent to keep him imprisoned, and criminal in the face of conclusive exculpatory evidence if the purpose of doing so included avoiding embarrassment to the FBI. Should Mr. Cole be innocent of the crimes alleged against him, it is equally a matter of public safety and national security that the true pipe bomber be identified and apprehended. Thank you very much for your attention to this serious matter.

Respectfully,



Thomas Massie
Member of Congress

cc: The Honorable Todd Blanche, Attorney General
U.S. Department of Justice

The Honorable Jeanine Pirro, U.S. Attorney
U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Columbia

The Honorable Mike Johnson, Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable Jim Jordan, Chairman
U.S. House Committee on the Judiciary

⁵ *Staff of H. Comm. on House Admin., Subcomm. on Oversight & H. Comm. on the Judiciary, Subcomm. on the Administrative State, Regulatory Reform, and Antitrust, 118th Cong., Four Years Later: Examining the State of the Investigation into the RNC and DNC Pipe Bombs*, at 70-72 (*Interim Staff Report Jan. 2, 2025*).

⁶ *Four Years Later*, supra note 5, at 68.

⁷ Steve Baker (@SteveBakerUSA), X (Sep. 1, 2026), <https://x.com/stevebakerusa/status/2094876634608456168>

⁸ U.S. House of Representatives, Committee on Rules (Feb. 5, 2024) (remarks and questioning by Rep. Thomas Massie of Rep. Bennie G. Thompson), video recording, YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NQjKmTR2A5M>