



February 1, 2016

The Honorable Jeh Charles Johnson  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Homeland Security  
108 Federal Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20502

Dear Secretary Johnson:

It has come to our attention that for calendar year 2016 the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) requested 3,850 hours of persistent aerial detection, situational awareness and monitoring capability support for Operation Phalanx from the Department of Defense (DOD). This request was fifty percent lower than that of recent years. Given the recent surge of migrants from Central America and Cuba along the southern border, we believe DHS should request more surveillance and security resources, not fewer. Moreover, Texas requested additional aerial observation resources in a September 30, 2015, letter that went unanswered by your department. The fact that DHS now appears to be taking the opposite approach is unsettling.

Any decrease in aerial observation is not only imprudent, but contradicts the very mission of border security enforcement. In order to ensure we are doing everything possible to effectively secure the border, we request immediate information on the metrics used to determine that a 50 percent reduction in aerial resources would be sufficient to support this important border security operation. Additionally, we request detailed plans on how the cuts will impact staffing, resource allocation, and operation levels in the three support sectors (Laredo, Rio Grande Valley and Tucson). If these decreases continue, what resources will DHS utilize to backfill any gaps this reduction presents?

Border security is a top priority for our state, and since 2005, Texas has committed nearly \$1.7 billion in state funds for border security. In addition, the State of Texas provides extensive manpower, resources and oversight in support of Operation Phalanx through the Texas National Guard. It is our expectation that the federal government similarly fulfill its obligation when it

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comes to securing the border. As you know, Congress, in the Fiscal Year 2016 Omnibus Appropriation bill, fully funded DOD to support Operation Phalanx at a level similar to that of years past.

We appreciate all the important work you and your department do for our nation. We want to ensure Customs and Border Patrol is adequately resourced and provided every necessary tool to efficiently and effectively secure the border.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this issue.

Sincerely,



Greg Abbott  
Governor of Texas



Henry Cuellar  
Member of Congress