

United States Senate

April 12, 2016

Honorable Jeh Johnson
Secretary
Department of Homeland Security
Washington, DC 20528

Dear Secretary Johnson,

The security of our southern border remains a priority for the citizens of Arizona. While security has improved along some parts of the border, Arizona remains a major crossing point for heroin and other narcotics trafficking from Mexico.

During a recent visit to the Ft. Huachuca Army base in Sierra Vista, Arizona, I observed the Army conducting training missions with its Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) fleet. It was explained that although these UAVs are flying along the Arizona-Mexico border, none of the training missions are being coordinated with the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to surveil the border for drug trafficking activities.

As you know, the Department of Defense (DOD) is authorized to support federal civilian law enforcement agencies' counternarcotic activities, including but not limited to, aerial reconnaissance along the international border. For DOD to provide this support, a request must be made by the official who has responsibility for the counter-drug activities of the federal government department. It is my understanding that you have made no such request to DOD. If true, I strongly urge that you make this request for support to the DOD immediately and begin coordinating with Ft. Huachuca to take advantage of these available air assets as quickly as possible.

Please provide answers to the following questions explaining why DHS is not coordinating with the DOD to utilize Army UAV training operations to combat narcotic trafficking into the United States:

- 1) Have you or any other official at DHS made a request to DOD to coordinate Army UAV training missions at Ft. Huachuca to assist DHS in surveilling the border for counter narcotics activity? If not, please explain why such a request has not been made?
- 2) Do Army UAV operators flying training missions out of Ft. Huachuca have a means to report illegal narcotics trafficking activities to DHS that could result in a law enforcement action by a Customs and Border Protection officer or agent? If so, please provide the drug seizure information in which they have assisted DHS.

- 3) Would DHS coordination with Army UAV training missions at Ft. Huachuca increase or decrease DHS' situational awareness of drug trafficking across the U.S. - Mexico border?
- 4) What steps need to be taken, if any, for DHS to incorporate the surveillance capabilities of Army UAV training missions in DHS counter-drug activities to prevent narcotics from entering the United States?

I appreciate your attention to this matter and look forward to a timely response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John McCain", with a period at the end. The signature is written in a cursive style.

John McCain
United States Senator

cc: The Honorable Ashton Carter, Secretary of Defense