

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

March 18, 2025

The Honorable Pete Hegseth
Secretary
U.S. Department of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301-1000

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

Chris Rocheleau
Acting Administrator
Federal Aviation Administration
800 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20591

Secretary Hegseth, Secretary Noem, and Administrator Rocheleau,

We, the undersigned members of Congress, write to you to share a concern raised during a recent congressional delegation to the Southern Border regarding countering unmanned aerial systems (c-UAS) and the current authorities granted to the Department of Defense and the Department of Homeland Security.

Since President Trump came to office on January 20th, 2025, the Administration, in particular the Departments of Defense and Homeland Security, have prioritized securing the borders of the United States. Over the past weeks, our country has witnessed a dramatic drop in illegal border crossings and the Department of Homeland Security has noted a decrease in migrant encounters. Currently, the Department of Defense and United States Northern Command have committed approximately 9,000 personnel to complement the Department of Homeland Security, particularly U.S. Border Patrol in border missions. While the presence of active-duty personnel has granted enhanced capabilities, the drug cartels across the border are already seeking new plans for attack.

As demonstrated in active conflict zones across the globe, small and mid-sized UAS systems have dramatically affected the battlefield, most notably, during the Tower 22 attack in Jordan in 2024, which cost the lives of three United States servicemembers. Under 10 USC § 130i and 6 U.S.C. § 124n respectively, Congress granted authorities to the Department of Defense and the Homeland Security to conduct c-UAS within the Continental United States. However, as shown in recent cases, such as in Virginia and New Jersey, federal, state, and local law enforcement and the military have been reluctant to utilize these authorities or lack the equipment to respond. During our time at the border, we heard firsthand from commanders and supervisors on the ground regarding their concern to be able to conduct c-UAS operations should the cartels attempt a drone attack on U.S. service members or federal law enforcement.


We ask that within 30 days of receipt of this letter, the inter-agency provide answers to the following questions to allow us to assist you from our position as members of Congress:

1. Which agency is primarily responsible for responding to UAS threats at the Southern Border?
2. What steps are being taken to determine if a drone poses an immediate threat?
3. What is the current definition of a threat towards the Southern Border mission? Would this include drones that are suspected of gathering intelligence?
4. How quickly can a determination be made to take down a hostile drone if necessary?

5. What equipment is currently in place at the border to perform c-UAS?

We look forward to your response and partnership in securing the border and preserving the safety of our servicemembers and their federal law enforcement partners.


Sincerely,



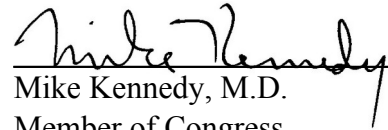
John J. McGuire III
Member of Congress



Juan Ciscomani
Member of Congress



Derek Schmidt
Member of Congress



Mike Kennedy, M.D.
Member of Congress



Jeff Crank
Member of Congress