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Congress of the United States
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October 16, 2024

The Honorable Alejandro Mayorkas
Secretary
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
Washington, D.C. 20528

Dear Secretary Mayorkas:

I write to express serious concerns about a recent report that nearly 30% of U.S. Customs and Border Protection's (CBP) cameras along our borders are no longer functioning and to strongly urge the Department of Homeland Security to address this unacceptable security vulnerability. If left unresolved, this issue could undermine CBP's ability to safeguard our borders, impede efforts to interdict fentanyl and other illicit substances, and endanger the safety and security of communities along our borders.

NBC News recently reported that CBP circulated an internal memo indicating that nearly one-third of its surveillance cameras are not functioning. These cameras, part of CBP's Remote Video Surveillance Systems (RMVSS), are critical for real-time border monitoring. According to the memo, approximately 150 out of 500 cameras are inoperable, and alarmingly, CBP does not know when they stopped working.

This is simply an unacceptable security lapse in a key component in the U.S. strategy to monitor and to secure our borders. Effective border monitoring is a crucial element of our national security strategy. Throughout my time in Congress, I have been committed to securing our borders, combating the trafficking of dangerous substances like fentanyl, and reforming our immigration system. To that end, I introduced the Northern Border Coordination Act, co-founded a bipartisan border security task force, and helped pass a government funding package that provided a \$3.2 billion increase for CBP. This package supported the hiring of a record 22,000 agents, including 150 counter-fentanyl officers, and invested in critical border monitoring and detection equipment.

While I have consistently advocated for strengthening and investing in border security, I have also called for increased oversight when necessary. This report clearly demonstrates the need for further Congressional oversight. It is unacceptable that such a significant portion of CBP's surveillance infrastructure is offline, and worse, that the agency is unaware of how long this

situation has persisted. These gaps in surveillance create blind spots that could be exploited by terrorists, drug and human traffickers, and other threats to national security.

I have repeatedly reached across the aisle to find bipartisan solutions and to support common-sense legislation that invests in border security and fixes our broken immigration system. Despite the urgency of the situation at the border, Republican leadership has refused to allow a vote on the Senate's bipartisan border security bill to address the issues along the southern border, which would provide much needed resources to our border patrol personnel and support their work to restore order and address security.

This situation is unacceptable, it must be addressed immediately, and more information is needed. Accordingly, I request a briefing within the next two weeks to discuss CBP's internal memo, its procedures for monitoring and addressing security gaps, how these lapses are assessed for national security risks, and the agency's plans and timeline for restoring full camera functionality.

Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Chris Pappas". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Chris Pappas
Member of Congress