

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

July 31, 2009

The Honorable Janet Napolitano
Secretary
Department of Homeland Security
Washington, D.C. 20528

Dear Secretary Napolitano:

Your Department is chiefly responsible for securing U.S. borders and overseeing the enforcement of U.S. laws against illegal entrance and illicit smuggling. To successfully achieve these objectives, it is critical that United States Customs and Border Protection (CBP) has all of the tools, resources, and authorities necessary to gain operational control of the border.

We are deeply concerned about how the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), primarily the United States Border Patrol (USBP), conducts operations on the more than 800 miles of federally protected land. Comprised of wildlife refuges, national parks and national forests, these lands represent some of the most culturally and environmentally sensitive areas in the country. Due to their sparse population, lack of development, and location on the border, these lands often serve as gateways for illegal aliens, smugglers, and possibly terrorists to enter the United States.

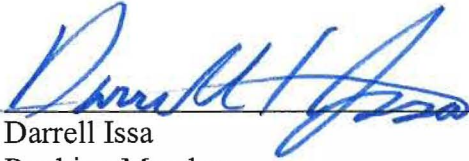
Given the magnitude of our underlying concerns, we are writing to request information relating to agreements between DHS and Department of the Interior agencies and the U.S. Forest Service. In particular, we respectfully request information concerning USBP access to lands under the jurisdiction of these agencies, including USBP's ability to patrol these areas and install important surveillance and communication equipment.

To address the existing matters, it is vital for us to better understand the critical situation along our nation's borders and the coordination between agencies. For each of the requests below, please provide a written response, including any relevant documentation. We ask that you provide this information no later than August 21, 2009:

1. All Memoranda of Understanding between DHS (and its sub agency of Customs and Border Protection) and the Department of the Interior and the Forest Service from 2006 to present.
2. A list of the mitigation funds transferred from DHS to the Department of the Interior and the Forest Service from 2006 to present.

3. Any documents, reports or communications related to deaths, apprehensions, criminal activity, rescues, or security issues that have occurred on federal lands that are designated as "Wilderness" from 2006 to present.
4. Any documents, reports or communications related to difficulties, concerns, or obstacles to achieving operational control DHS has encountered on Department of the Interior or Forest Service lands from 2006 to present.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.



Darrell Issa
Ranking Member,
Committee on Oversight and
Government Reform



Peter King
Ranking Member,
Committee on Homeland Security



Doc Hastings
Ranking Member,
Committee on Natural Resources



Rob Bishop
Ranking Member,
Subcommittee on National Parks,
Forests and Public Lands



Mark Souder
Ranking Member,
Subcommittee on Border,
Maritime and Global Counterterrorism