



**Duncan Hunter**  
**U.S. House of Representatives**  
**50th District, California**

April 25, 2016

Commissioner R. Gil Kerlikowske  
U.S. Customs and Border Protection  
1300 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20229

Dear Commissioner Kerlikowske:

The incorporation of land-based Unmanned Aerial Systems (UAS) in Customs and Border Protection (CBP) operations has enhanced the capability and effectiveness of interdiction efforts. Despite CBP's success with these assets, in particular the MQ-9, I am concerned that the U.S. Coast Guard, which shares UAS under the control of CBP, is being denied valuable mission support through an ad hoc asset request process with inconsistent approvals.

To be clear: I recognize that CBP has limited unmanned resources and will consider any request from the Coast Guard. The lack of support provided to the Coast Guard is not intentional, but rather indicative of CBP's broad and critical mission to protect America's borders—specifically, the border with Mexico. Challenges associated with asset launch, operation and recovery also present obstacles to collaboration with the Coast Guard, thus impeding time-sensitive operations and mission flexibility that is typical of all Coast Guard interdiction activity.

As further consideration is given to delineating a land-based UAS program specifically for the Coast Guard, which I support, it is important to ascertain the number of requests that have been made by the Coast Guard for UAS support, on a monthly and annual basis. Also, I would like to know the number of approvals and denials for those assets for each instance a request was made—as well as the reasons why assets could not be directed for temporary Coast Guard use. If no such data collection requirement exists or if CBP chooses not to catalog these requests, I would also like to know how CBP intends to begin tracking these requests in the interest of ensuring the Coast Guard maritime mission is not being disadvantaged.

Despite asset restrictions, the Coast Guard has garnered significant knowledge from its joint relationship with CBP, providing quality experiences and skills in the areas of UAS operations, management and maintenance. The MQ-9 and other systems continue to offer

effective capability for narcotic and migrant interdiction in source and transit zones, and it is important for both CBP and the Coast Guard to fully benefit from the immense capability that UAS can provide.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Duncan Hunter". The signature is fluid and stylized, with a large initial "D" and "H".

Duncan Hunter  
Member of Congress