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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON
HOMELAND SECURITY AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6250

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June 26, 2017

The Honorable Gene L. Dodaro
Comptroller General
U.S. Government Accountability Office
441 G Street N.W.
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Comptroller General Dodaro:

U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP), within the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), is the lead federal agency charged with border security and facilitating the flow of legitimate travel and commerce at the nation's borders and ports of entry. On a typical day, CBP welcomes nearly one million visitors, screens more than 67,000 cargo containers, arrests more than 1,100 individuals, and seizes nearly six tons of illicit drugs.¹ In addition, CBP facilitates an average of more than \$3 trillion annually in legitimate trade while enforcing U.S. customs laws.²

In 2007, GAO reported that CBP's inspection procedures at land ports of entry suffer from lax compliance oversight, poor training, and staffing shortages, and that CBP had not established performance measures to gauge effectiveness.³ In addition, CBP was not using available data to measure the extent to which it is interdicting inadmissible aliens and others who may be in violation of U.S. law.⁴

Since this report, CBP began collecting apprehension rate performance measures for vehicle passengers at land ports of entry and air passengers at international airports.⁵ However, CBP still does not collect information on pedestrians or for most cargo operations at land ports of entry.⁶ Without collecting this performance information, CBP cannot fully report on the overall level of land border security.

¹ Department of Homeland Security U.S. Customs and Border Protection, available at: <https://www.cbp.gov/about>.

² *Id.*

³ GAO, *Border Security: Despite Progress, Weaknesses in Traveler Inspections Exist at Our Nation's Ports of Entry*, GAO-08-219 (Washington, D.C.: Nov. 5, 2007).

⁴ *Id.*

⁵ GAO, *Border Patrol Strategy: Progress and Challenges in Implementation and Assessment Efforts*, GAO-12-688T (Washington, D.C.: May 8, 2012).

⁶ *Id.*

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Although GAO has also issued several reports that examine CBP's cargo inspection procedures and performance results regarding cargo arriving at sea ports of entry, GAO has not conducted a similar examination for cargo containers that transit land ports of entry.⁷ GAO has not reported on inspection processes for passengers and pedestrians at land ports of entry since 2007. For these reasons, we request that GAO review the requirements for and any challenges involved with inspections at the land ports. Specifically, we request that GAO assess:

1. What policies and procedures does CBP have in place for inspection of passengers, pedestrians, and cargo containers at land ports of entry, and how are CBP officers trained to perform inspections according to these policies?
2. How does CBP monitor and assess officer compliance with inspection activities at land ports of entry?
3. To what extent does CBP have measures of effectiveness to assess its efforts to detect illegal activity of passengers, pedestrians, and cargo containers transiting land ports of entry, and how does CBP management use this information to make informed decisions and report on the overall level of land border security?

If you have any questions, please have your staff contact Joske Bautista, majority staff at 202-224-4751, and Tim Brennan, minority staff, at 202-224-2627.

Sincerely,



RON JOHNSON
Chairman



CLAIRE McCASKILL
Ranking Member

⁷ GAO, *Combating Nuclear Smuggling: Megaports Initiative Faces Funding and Sustainability Challenges*. GAO-13-37 (Washington, D.C.: Oct. 31, 2012); GAO, *Supply Chain Security: CBP Needs to Conduct Regular Assessments of Its Cargo Targeting System*. GAO-13-9 (Washington, D.C.: Oct. 25, 2012); and GAO, *Maritime Security: Progress and Challenges 10 Years after the Maritime Transportation Security Act*. GAO-12-1009T (Washington, D.C.: Sept. 11, 2012).