



Homeland
Security

April 25, 2018

The Honorable Bennie G. Thompson
Ranking Member
Committee on Homeland Security
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Ranking Member Thompson:

Thank you for your December 6, 2017 letter, and for your kind words upon my confirmation. It is my great honor and privilege to serve as the sixth Secretary of Homeland Security alongside the men and women of this Department who have committed themselves to protecting our homeland. I apologize for the late response.

I can assure you that it is my full intention as Secretary of Homeland Security to enforce our Nation's laws and implement this Administration's policies in a fair and just manner. Enclosed, I have addressed the issues you raised in your letter.

Thank you again for your time and attention, I look forward to working with you in support of the men and women of the Department of Homeland Security, and in the interest of the security of our Nation. Should you wish to discuss this matter further, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Best Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kirstjen Nielsen", written over the typed name and title.

Kirstjen M. Nielsen
Secretary

Enclosure

**The Department of Homeland Security's Response to
Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson's December 6, 2017 Letter**

1. Puerto Rico Disaster Recovery Response

Recovery operations will continue in Puerto Rico until the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has satisfied its statutory mission. In previous recovery operations of this scale and complexity, FEMA established a recovery office after the emergency response phase to enable a long-term presence and continued community outreach. These offices are an important way to facilitate the delivery of temporary housing and permanent repair and replacement assistance for public facilities.

In response to hurricane Harvey, FEMA is working to establish a long-term recovery office in Texas; the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) will eventually transfer FEMA's management of long-term recovery operations to this staff. It is anticipated that a similar model will be implemented in Puerto Rico at the appropriate time.

2. Southern Border Wall

U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) continues to deploy proven, effective technology to strengthen border security operations and to complement the tactical infrastructure between land Ports of Entry. Tactical infrastructure, including physical barriers, has long been a critical component of CBP's multi-layered, risk-based approach to securing our Southern Border. Physical border barriers have enhanced—and will continue to enhance—CBP's operational capabilities by creating persistent impediments that deter and prevent successful illegal entries.

Investments in advanced detection capabilities—such as surveillance systems, tethered and tactical aerostats, unmanned aircraft systems, and ground sensors—will complement improvements to tactical infrastructure. In addition, increased personnel coupled with technology will create a more robust and integrated border security system. The ability to use these tools together will allow CBP to enhance its ability to quickly detect, identify, and respond to illegal border crossings.

In the FY18 omnibus funding bill, Congress provided \$1.4 billion for border wall and \$0.2 billion for border security technology. The Administration continues to seek Congressional support for the FY 2018 high-priority wall locations that were not funded as well as the priorities outlined in the FY 2019 Budget request.

3. Violence in Charlottesville

The violence we witnessed in Charlottesville has no place in our society. Please know that I categorically reject the use of ideologically-motivated violence by white supremacists or any other groups or individuals who seek to advance a political agenda through intimidation or coercion. The Department is dedicated to combating all forms of terrorism and undertakes a range of activities to counter these domestic terror threats, including community awareness,

information sharing, and other terrorism-prevention activities. The Department will continue to work closely with Congress as well as federal, state, tribal, and local partners to combat all forms of terrorism.

4. Screening and Vetting Travelers from High-Risk Countries

The Department's frontline personnel are committed to protecting the U.S. from threats across the globe. The Administration's common sense visa restrictions on certain nationals from countries that do not meet basic security standards, and do not share critical information about terrorists and criminals with us, are designed to keep Americans safe. DHS will continue to fully implement the President's robust counterterrorism agenda in accordance with the law.

5. Election Security

In response to your question regarding election security during the 2016 U.S. Elections, DHS assessed that while targeting of election infrastructure occurred, we have no evidence that votes were changed. Furthermore, the types of systems Russian actors targeted or compromised were not involved in vote tallying.