

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

June 15, 2016

The Honorable Jeh Johnson
Secretary
Department of Homeland Security
500 12th Street SW
Washington, DC 20528

Dear Secretary Johnson:

We respectfully write to express our strong concerns regarding the actions and procedures of Operation Border Guardian and their effects on immigrant – especially Latino – communities in the Southeastern United States.

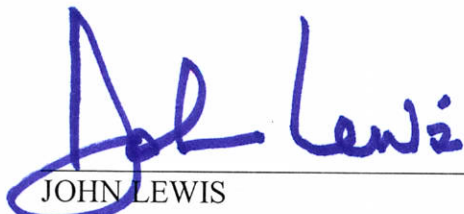
In recent months, we met with a number of the affected families and community members on this serious issue. Their accounts of forced entry without a warrant or notice, violations or denials of due process, and inadequate counsel provided to the detained are quite troubling. These methods of enforcement intensify fear and distrust in Latino communities, households, and schools across the Southeast. This makes it difficult for law enforcement at all levels to build trusting relationships with the communities they must serve.

As noted in a previous letter to the President in January, we believe that these raids are an excessive response to the influx of refugees escaping violence in Central America. In particular, there is growing concern that the ICE Atlanta Field Office, which covers the states of Georgia, North Carolina, and South Carolina, has charted an unusually aggressive approach to enforcement. Early statistics released by ICE showed that the Atlanta Field Office accounted for more than one-third of all persons detained nationwide as part of this Operation. These rates exceed any Field Office nationwide and represent almost three times as many detentions as the neighboring Miami Field Office.


We strongly share the administration's support of and frustration with the lack of comprehensive immigration reform, and we understand how the Republican Congress' failure to act on this grave matter makes your work incredibly challenging. It is important that, to the best extent possible, our policies reflect compassion for our neighbors fleeing violence and disorder. Given the potential and likelihood that these communities will be further ostracized from protective justice in both their homes of aspiration and in their homes of origin, we respectfully request that the Department pursue the most humane solution to address this crisis. We also hope that the Department will take every possible step to ensure that those detained as part of Operation Border Guardian and their families are treated with the utmost respect and dignity.

As always, Mr. Secretary, we thank you for your service and for your consideration of our concerns on this grave matter.


Sincerely,



JOHN LEWIS
Member of Congress



ALMA S. ADAMS
Member of Congress



HENRY C. "HANK" JOHNSON, JR.
Member of Congress



G.K. BUTTERFIELD
Member of Congress