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United States Senate

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

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August 29, 2022

The Honorable Alejandro N. Mayorkas
Secretary of Homeland Security
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
2707 Martin Luther King Jr. Ave. S.E.
Washington, D.C. 20528-0525

Dear Secretary Mayorkas,

I write to you today seeking clarification on your recent authorization of the Yuma Morelos Dam Project.¹ It is my understanding that this project will seek to close four gaps along the border wall in Yuma, Arizona. I recently visited this section of the border wall in June 2022, and I was concerned to find that DHS had initially planned to close these gaps under the Trump Administration but that initiative had been halted on Day One of the Biden Administration.

As you are aware, I published a report in July 2021 detailing that the Biden Administration had wasted over \$2 billion from Department of Defense (DOD) accounts on *not* building the border wall. This amount wasted included costs for contractors to drive out to the worksites and guard the unused steel that had been acquired for the border wall but was left to rust in the desert.

On July 28, 2022, you announced that U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) would be closing four gaps in the border wall in the Yuma Sector. The Department's press release noted that these gaps were previously funded by the Department of Defense's (DoD) military construction appropriation" that was detailed in my July 2021 report. When I was in Yuma earlier this year, I saw that the border wall materials that had already been acquired under the prior Administration were still sitting unused in lots near the border wall.

While I welcome any improvements to our national security at the border, I am concerned that the prior instances where CBP has completed gaps in the border wall have not adequately addressed the national security and public safety needs at our southern border or demonstrated effective stewardship of taxpayer resources. For example, when I visited the Rio Grande Valley sector in January 2022, I was surprised to see that the Biden Administration kept the materials acquired by the Trump Administration for completing the wall in a field and had instead opted for purchase and install smaller bollards that many individuals could easily climb. I also learned from agents on the ground that the materials purchased by the Trump Administration were still in the government's custody and therefore likely were still costing taxpayers for site security costs for the storage and protection of these materials.

¹ Press Release, Dep't of Homeland Sec., DHS to Address Life, Safety, and Operational Requirements in the U.S. Border Patrol's Yuma Sector (July 28, 2022). <https://www.dhs.gov/news/2022/07/28/dhs-address-life-safety-and-operational-requirements-us-border-patrols-yuma-sector>.

In light of the Biden Administration's continued waste of taxpayer resources, I ask the following questions:

1. By what date do you anticipate completing the Yuma Morelos Dam Project, including closing the gaps between the border wall? In answering this question, please share with the Subcommittee a project timeline.
2. What is the status of the funding that had been transferred from DOD to DHS for border wall completion? What is the status of the funding that had been appropriated from prior Congresses for border wall completion? In answering these questions, please provide the Subcommittee with a detailed timeline and breakdown of all spending related to border wall contract suspension, termination, resumption, and construction costs.
3. What is the status of the materials and contracts acquired by the Trump Administration to complete the border wall? Have those materials been used in any border wall projects undertaken by the Biden Administration? If not, what are the Biden Administration's plans for using these materials?
4. What costs has the Department incurred by choosing to acquire new, 6 foot steel bollards rather than using the materials acquired by the Trump Administration? In answering this question, please provide the Subcommittee with a detailed cost breakdown for every project site where the Department has decided to acquire such new bollards.
5. By what date will the Department provide Congress with a complete report about the status of border wall projects funded by congressional appropriations?

I request your response by no later than 5:00pm on October 6, 2022. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

In God we trust,



James Lankford
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Government Operations
and Border Management