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December 17, 2018

The Honorable Kirstjen M. Nielsen
Secretary of Homeland Security
Washington, D.C. 20528

Dear Secretary Nielsen:

I write to express concern about a U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) statistic being repeated by Republican lawmakers that ten terrorists are apprehended at the United States' southern border each day. According to the New York Times, you made a statement on June 12 of this year that, "On average, my department now blocks 10 known or suspected terrorists a day from traveling to or attempting to enter the United States."¹ On December 11, President Trump also said, "We caught 10 terrorists over the last very short period of time. Ten.... We need the wall."² The claim was repeated again by House Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy on December 13, who said, "That on [the southern] border, they catch on average ten known terrorists a day."

This is an alarming statistic. If true, 3,600 terrorists are crossing or attempting to cross our southern border every year. This would represent a significant percentage of terrorists worldwide.

The President, Vice President, Department of Homeland Security officials, and members of Congress have cited this statistic as evidence of the urgent need of funding for a border wall. However, according to a July 2017 State Department report on terrorism, there is "no credible information that any member of a terrorist group has traveled through Mexico to gain access to the United States."

Therefore, I request that the Department of Homeland Security clarify in writing:

1. How do you define 'known or suspected terrorist'?
2. How many terrorists has DHS identified trying to cross our southern border each day?
For how many years has this flow of terrorists occurred?

¹ <https://www.dhs.gov/news/2018/06/12/secretary-nielsen-receives-operational-briefing-israeli-security-technology-delivers>

² <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-trump-border/no-evidence-for-trump-claim-on-terrorists-government-sources-idUSKBN10B05Y>

3. How many terrorists are identified and stopped by border agents?
4. From where do these terrorists originate? What are their affiliations? What are their goals?
5. Where are the terrorists being held? Are they in U.S. prisons or held by the U.S. military?
6. Have any of these terrorists apprehended at the Southern border been prosecuted in federal court? If so, please provide their case number and citations.
7. Of the terrorists that do not enter the U.S., are they monitored by the U.S. when they return to Mexico? How many have tried to reenter the U.S.?
8. Is your agency working with other countries to curb the flow of terrorists reaching the southern border?

Sincerely,



Judy Chu, PhD.
Member of Congress