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STEVAN PEARCE
Second District, New Mexico

April 30, 2015

The Honorable Gil Kerlikowske
Commissioner
United States Customs and Border Protection
1300 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20229

Dear Commissioner Kerlikowske:

I write today to express concern over current procurement processes and practices within the United States Border Patrol (BP), specifically as it relates to the agency's current contact to provide uniforms to its Agents and any future action the agency takes to procure body-worn cameras. My office has spoken with individual members of the BP from New Mexico, Texas and Arizona, as well as the National Border Patrol Council (NBPC), and it appears as though BP may be reverting to old habits when procuring critical equipment for agents. While it is my hope this is not the case, I have a number of outstanding questions about actions taken by your agency.

First, my office has received numerous complaints from Border Patrol Agents concerning their uniforms. In September of 2014, BP re-awarded supplier, VF Imagewear (VF), with an Indefinite Delivery Indefinite Quantity (IDIQ) contract thus making VF the primary supplier for all agency uniforms. Despite the contract being valued at \$400 million, and BP being the primary recipient, it seems that neither individual agents' nor the NBPC's input was taken into consideration.

Specifically, I highlight a recent survey conducted by the NBPC of nearly 1,500 Agents to gauge their level of satisfaction with VF and the products and services provided to BP Agents. Key findings from the survey include:

- 89% of the respondents were not happy that VF was re-awarded the contract;
- 70% of the respondents have issues with the quality of VF's products;
- 97% of the respondents did not believe that the prices charged by VF were fair given the level of quality of the products; and
- 87% of the respondents had issues with availability of items.

Exacerbating the poor rating with agents, VF has had continual backorders on even the most basic items for BP Agents, including duty shirts, belts, and socks, resulting in agents not obtaining the gear they need in a timely fashion. In addition, the items offered through VF, are often priced higher than on other sites. Border Patrol Agents have among the toughest jobs in our communities; Border Patrol should provide Agents the ability to purchase equipment they

need at a cost-effective and affordable manner. The current contract often causes agents to spend money out of pocket for needed gear. The level of service and dissatisfaction noted in the survey is troubling. As a result, I would like to know what specific actions are being taken by BP to address the subpar service and performance of VF, including:

- The justification used by the Border Patrol to make VF the primary supplier of uniforms to the agency;
- An explanation of the extent to which Border Patrol surveyed Agents on their satisfaction with VF prior to VF receiving a renewed contract;
- An explanation of how the Border Patrol plans to address and respond to the dissatisfaction highlighted by Agents nationwide with VF and the services the company provides to Agents; and
- An explanation of how actions the agency will take to provide Agents with alternative options to buy uniform-related paraphernalia should VF not have similar items in stock and available for purchase;

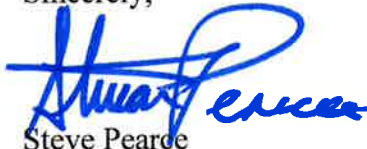
Additionally, the Border Patrol began Phase II of its body worn camera testing initiative in February 2015. While I do not object to the use of body cameras by BP, I do have concerns regarding the current feasibility study being completed, and the future procurement of these systems. As BP moves forward with its feasibility study, I am concerned that the evaluation of only one body worn camera system will provide limited data to inform the feasibility study and possibly its preferential procurement, regardless of its qualifications compared to other systems on the market. Unfortunately, this testing and evaluation seems to be following the same model as the acquisition of the Beretta 95D.

As a result, I request details on how Border Patrol plans to move forward with the procurement of a body worn camera system, if at all, including:

- The agency's plan to test a wide variety of body worn cameras;
- Metrics the agency will use to evaluate the body worn camera systems; and
- How the agency will track feedback and recommendations from the Agents involved in the testing of the body worn cameras;

Thank you in advance for your attention to these matters.

Sincerely,



Steve Pearce
Member of Congress