

**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
**Washington, DC 20515-5401**

July 17, 2012

The Honorable Janet Napolitano  
Secretary  
Department of Homeland Security  
Nebraska Avenue Center, NW  
Washington, DC 20528

The Honorable Tony West  
Co-Chair  
The President's Task Force on Puerto Rico's Status  
Department of Justice  
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20530

The Honorable Betsy Markey  
Co-Chair  
Puerto Rico Interagency Public Safety Working Group  
Department of Homeland Security  
Nebraska Avenue Center, NW  
Washington, DC 20528

Dear Secretary Napolitano, Associate Attorney General West, and Assistant Secretary Markey:

I want to thank each of you for traveling to Puerto Rico last week. It was an honor to join Governor Luis Fortuño as your host. Our meetings were uniformly positive and productive. Your presence on the Island underscored the federal government's commitment to working with local law enforcement to enhance and expand our efforts to combat drug trafficking and related violence in the U.S. territory.

Madame Secretary, I was heartened to hear you say that Puerto Rico's public safety crisis has your full attention and that our motto moving forward will be "Let's fix this." I agree with you that the definition of success—and the benchmark by which we will measure our progress—is a significant and sustained reduction in the number of homicides committed on the Island.

In addition, I was encouraged by the statements of Mr. West, Ms. Markey and several other federal officials that the close collaboration between federal and local law enforcement agencies in Puerto Rico can serve as a model for the rest of the nation.

Finally, I share the view expressed by a senior Department of Homeland Security official during Friday's meeting of the Puerto Rico Interagency Public Safety Working Group (PSWG), namely that the "real test" was not what federal and local stakeholders said during that session, but rather what specific actions they would take, individually and collectively, once the session concluded. I believe we all recognize the need to act with a sense of urgency in light of the severity of the situation. To the extent any doubt remains, I should note that there were 19 homicides in Puerto Rico this past weekend, including 10 on Friday.

Madame Secretary, I am grateful for your commitment to promptly develop a "law enforcement strategy" specifically tailored for Puerto Rico and the neighboring U.S. Virgin Islands. Governor Fortuño and I have consistently advocated for such a strategy because we believe it is necessary, on the one hand, to ensure that our efforts are as well-coordinated and effective as possible and, on the other hand, to identify deficiencies in the current approach that should be improved. I respectfully ask that this strategy encompass not only the Department of Homeland Security's component agencies (U.S. Customs and Border Protection, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, and the U.S. Coast Guard), but also the Department of Justice's component agencies (the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Drug Enforcement Administration, and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives), as well as the counternarcotics bureau within the Department of Defense.

As we discussed, an appropriations bill pending in Congress directs the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) to prepare and publish a Caribbean Border Counternarcotics Strategy, "on terms equivalent to the existing Southwest Border Counternarcotics Strategy and the Northern Border Counternarcotics Strategy," within 180 days of that bill's enactment and on a biennial basis thereafter. I believe the law enforcement strategy (that you have proposed to develop with all deliberate speed) and the ONDCP strategy (that will likely be finalized next year) are both critically important and will serve to complement one another.

Of course, as each of you has acknowledged, implementation of any meaningful strategy will require a reasonable allocation of personnel and resources, whether on a temporary or enduring basis. Otherwise, a strategy will merely be words on paper and will do little to achieve our shared goal of reducing Puerto Rico's homicide rate. At the PSWG meeting, senior officials from multiple DHS and DOJ component agencies in Puerto Rico said they were doing the best they could with the limited resources at their disposal, but candidly advised visiting officials from Washington that additional resources were sorely needed. I hope their calls will be heeded.

In a more appropriate forum, I will continue to offer recommendations about discrete steps that can be taken at the federal level in the short, medium and long term to enhance our efforts to combat drug-related violence in Puerto Rico. Our meetings last week, especially the PSWG session, helped to identify a number of specific action items that merit strong consideration. As I

have assured you, it is not my intention to micromanage this process. My role, as I envision it, is to ensure that appropriate steps are in fact identified and then executed without undue delay.

I will close with this thought: In the five-year period between 2007 and 2011, the number of homicides nationwide fell by over 20 percent. In that same time period, the number of murders in Puerto Rico rose by over 55 percent, from 730 to 1,136. There is not a single other American jurisdiction where the spike in violence has been this pronounced. Indeed, no other jurisdiction even comes close. Yet, the number of personnel and resources that each DHS and DOJ component agency has allocated to Puerto Rico has remained stagnant, increased just slightly, or even been reduced. In other words, the federal law enforcement footprint in Puerto Rico has not evolved in the face of profoundly changed circumstances. It is my fervent hope that the forthcoming law enforcement strategy will recognize that an enhanced and expanded federal response is required if we are to be successful.

Thank you again for visiting Puerto Rico. I look forward to continuing to work with you on this issue of unsurpassed importance.

Sincerely,



Pedro R. Pierluisi  
Member of Congress

cc: Hon. Rafael Borrás, Undersecretary for Management, Department of Homeland Security  
Hon. David Agnew, Co-Chair, The President's Task Force on Puerto Rico's Status  
Hon. Benjamin B. Tucker, Deputy Director of State, Local, and Tribal Affairs, the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP)  
Hon. Rosa Emilia Rodríguez-Vélez, U.S. Attorney, District of Puerto Rico  
Hon. Luis G. Fortuño, Governor of Puerto Rico  
Hon. Hector Pesquera, Superintendent, Puerto Rico Police Department