

JUL 03 2007

*Assistant Secretary for Legislative Affairs*

**U.S. Department of Homeland Security**  
Washington, DC 20528

The Honorable Steven Pearce  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

JUL 11 2007



**Homeland  
Security**

Dear Representative Pearce:

On behalf of Secretary Chertoff, thank you for your letter regarding the need for additional Border Patrol Agents along the southern border due to the increased criminal activity around Columbus, New Mexico. U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP), a component of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has reviewed your concerns.

A critical part of the DHS mission is to protect America and uphold public safety. In response to the recent violence in the region, DHS launched Operation Southwest Vigilance. CBP and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), also a DHS component, allocated additional resources and personnel to the region, and are working closely with the New Mexico State Police. CBP officers at the ports of entry have maintained a heightened alert posture since the violence in the region escalated in April. The El Paso Sector of the Border Patrol deployed additional special operations personnel to reinforce the local area. ICE also temporarily detailed additional personnel to lead law enforcement efforts relating to outbound enforcement operations.

DHS has concentrated, and will continue to concentrate its efforts on high priority areas, including Columbus, New Mexico. Additionally, DHS is currently building a fence around the Columbus Port of Entry to increase security. In the last year, DHS has increased the number of agents assigned to the El Paso Sector (which includes responsibility for New Mexico) from 1,581 agents to 2,031 agents—an increase of 450 agents or almost 30 percent. The Deming Border Patrol Station within the El Paso Sector, which has responsibility for the Columbus area, also has increased by 30 percent, from 222 agents to 284. Through the remainder of this year, DHS projects that El Paso Sector will continue to grow by over 350 more agents. That growth is projected to continue into Fiscal Year 2008. Due to the high level of Congressional support, DHS has increased resources necessary to minimize the growing threat of border crime and violence.

I appreciate your interest in the Department of Homeland Security, and I look forward to working with you on future homeland security issues. If I may be of further assistance, please contact the Office of Legislative Affairs at (202) 447-5890.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Don Kent".

Donald H. Kent, Jr.  
Assistant Secretary  
Office of Legislative Affairs