

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

November 24, 2025

The Honorable Pete Hegseth
Secretary
U.S. Department of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 20301

The Honorable Pam Bondi
Attorney General
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Ave. NW
Washington, D.C. 20530

The Honorable Kristi Noem
Secretary
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
2707 Martin Luther King Jr. Ave. SE
Washington, D.C. 20528

The Honorable Bryan Bedford
Administrator
Federal Aviation Administration
800 Independence Ave. SW
Washington, D.C. 20591

Secretary Hegseth, Attorney General Bondi, Secretary Noem, and Administrator Bedford:

Whether it is cartels smuggling illegal contraband across the border, foreign countries spying on military tests, drug traffickers engaging in illegal activity in our communities, or bad actors wanting to cause harm at densely populated events — criminals are using drones to harm Americans, and our communities are vulnerable in the absence of a cohesive federal counter-drone strategy.

I urge your departments to create and implement a comprehensive interagency counter-drone strategy to keep American communities safe from drone threats. As I travel and meet with law enforcement and national security stakeholders across southern New Mexico, the request is clear: the United States government needs new, clear, and effective federal guidance to address the rising threat that illicit drone usage poses to public safety and national security.

Your departments must implement a comprehensive all-of-government approach that gives law enforcement agencies at all levels the authorities they need to protect communities and national security assets from these threats. It is also imperative that you prioritize developing and deploying effective counter-drone technology that will allow agencies to engage drones being utilized by bad actors.

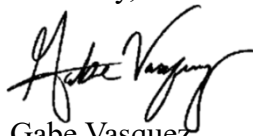
Along the border in my district, cartels and Transnational Criminal Organizations (TCOs) use drones to carry out their illegal operations. This includes scouting the movement patterns of Border Patrol agents, gathering intelligence about weaknesses in border infrastructure, and physically moving illegal contraband over the border and into the United States. Cartels have even threatened to crash drones strapped with explosives into U.S. law enforcement personnel. As a border legislator, protecting my community and the law enforcement personnel who keep us safe is my top priority. We must work to ensure that U.S. Border Patrol agents have the tools, technology, personnel, and clear guidance needed to disrupt cartel drone activity, stop drug trafficking, and ensure our border remains secure.

This threat is not just a challenge at the border, it's also a growing military and national security vulnerability. At Department of Defense (DOD) installations in my district and throughout the country, drone threats present a growing danger to personnel and missions. My district's military leaders have warned me directly about drone incursions at White Sands Missile Range and DOD's limited capacity to detect or counter them. WSMR is home to some of our nation's most advanced research, development, and testing, and when unidentified drones enter its airspace, they endanger personnel on the ground and create a significant breach in operational security – putting sensitive military intelligence at risk. Defense officials have repeatedly asked for clear guidance for when and how to engage drones entering restricted airspace, and the continued failure to provide these clear regulations and anti-drone technology at the federal level must be addressed.

Finally, I have heard directly from local law enforcement in places like Albuquerque about the struggles they face with criminal drone use in the communities they protect. Despite being 200 miles from the southern border, law enforcement officers in Albuquerque report that cartels and drug traffickers are using drones for counter surveillance efforts in their jurisdiction. Beyond combating the cartels, local law enforcement continues to deal with drone incursions from unknown origins over the city. Local police departments are unable to properly identify who are flying these drones, and they do not have the resources and guidance needed from the federal government to effectively engage them. This lack of clear guidance, resources, and authority threatens the safety of the over half million New Mexicans who call Albuquerque home, and this problem is not limited to my district. We must ensure that our local law enforcement officers have the rules and resources they need to ensure our communities remain safe while protecting law-abiding Americans' rights and property.

Southern New Mexico exhibits the complexities and urgency of this issue, but we are not alone – the threat from drones being used by bad actors is a nationwide concern. I urge you to work with each other, with Congress, and with all other necessary agencies to find a swift, effective, and bipartisan solution to this problem. Public safety and national security are not partisan issues, and I remain committed to working alongside the administration to safeguard American communities from those who wish to do us harm.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gabe Vasquez", with a stylized, cursive script.

Gabe Vasquez
Member of Congress