

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

February 27, 2018

The Honorable Michael E. Horowitz
Inspector General
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20530

The Honorable Steve A. Linick
Inspector General
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Inspectors General Horowitz and Linick,

We respectfully request that you open an investigation into operations carried out by Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA)-trained and funded Sensitive Investigative Units (SIUs) in Mexico in 2010 and 2011 which led to the deaths of between 60 and 300 Mexicans, the vast majority of whom were civilians. These operations raise serious questions about the practices of DEA-trained and funded SIUs and point to the need for greater accountability for these vetted units. The May 2017 “Special Joint Review of Post-Incident Responses by the Department of State and Drug Enforcement Administration to Three Deadly Force Incidents in Honduras” that your offices prepared described several concerns regarding the operations of State Department-funded DEA units in the region. We believe that an investigation into the 2010 and 2011 incidents in Mexico and the overall practices of DEA vetted units would serve as an important complement to your previous work.

ProPublica has reported on two specific incidents from which our concerns arise. First, in March 2011, gunmen from Los Zetas invaded the Mexican town of Allende, forty minutes from the U.S. – Mexico border, murdering between 60 and 300 civilians. This attack was sparked by a Mexican Federal Police SIU investigation aimed at taking down leaders from Los Zetas. A member of the SIU reportedly leaked information on these efforts, and the Zetas leaders ordered the attack on Allende as revenge on the individuals who had given information to the SIU in the first place. Despite the fact that the unit had a poor record of keeping intelligence out of the hands of criminals, DEA agents in Mexico City allegedly passed information to the SIU which led to this tragic chain of events. Separately, in April 2010, individuals from Los Zetas stormed a Holiday Inn in Monterrey and took hostage five individuals who have not been seen since. At the time, the DEA and the SIU were carrying out an operation from the hotel but switched to a different hotel the night before the attack. Four hotel guests and a hotel manager were reportedly mistaken as SIU members and kidnapped. According to *ProPublica*, SIU members “used personal credit cards to secure their rental cars and hotel rooms,” making it easy for the individuals from Los Zetas to track them down.

In light of these incidents and the prior incidents you have reported on, we believe that a thorough investigation into the practices of DEA’s vetted units is essential. Specifically, we believe an investigation by your offices should answer the following questions:

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

Inspectors General Horowitz and Linick
February 27, 2018
Page Two

- (1) What was the role of the DEA in the Allende and Monterrey incidents? Was there any reporting by the DEA to headquarters and/or senior officials at the Departments of Justice and State following each of these incidents? What practices, if any, were changed by the DEA in Mexico or globally as a result of the SIU's activities?
- (2) What was the chain of custody of the information that was passed to the SIU in each of these incidents? Who approved passing this information to the SIU?
- (3) The Allende tragedy was precipitated by the leak of sensitive information provided to the DEA by a local source. This information was then shared by DEA with an SIU whose commander was rumored to have connections to Mexican drug trafficking organizations. We understand that the Mexican government refuses to allow U.S. vetting of commanders of these SIUs. Should the U.S. government share information with SIUs if we are unable to vet their leadership?
- (4) Did the DEA or any other U.S. government agency provide compensation or at least an explanation to any of the families of the victims of these incidents? What steps could the Departments of Justice and State take to ensure greater accountability for the DEA when innocent civilians are harmed as a result of its operations?
- (5) In your report on Honduras, you found that individuals from DEA and the State Department undermined Chief of Mission authority. Was Chief of Mission authority undermined in either of these incidents? Was the U.S. Ambassador to Mexico fully informed of these incidents?
- (6) What measures are being taken to ensure that future lethal incidents involving U.S. government agents are investigated in a thorough and timely manner and to ensure that agents are held accountable for their actions abroad?
- (7) Does the DEA maintain a record of SIU operations that result in casualties? Who at the DEA conducts these reviews and maintains these records? Are those records shared with the Department of State or any congressional committees?
- (8) Is a thorough review of our SIUs being conducted by the Departments of Justice and State to ensure that future incidents like this do not occur? Is the DEA reviewing the manner in which sources of information are handled in counternarcotics operations?

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

Inspectors General Horowitz and Linick
February 27, 2018
Page Three

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

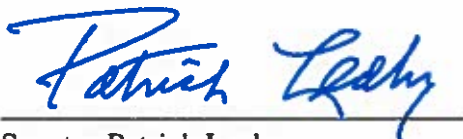
Sincerely,



Representative Eliot L. Engel
Ranking Member
House Committee on Foreign Affairs



Representative Jerrold Nadler
Ranking Member
House Committee on the Judiciary



Senator Patrick Leahy
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Appropriations



Senator Dianne Feinstein
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on the Judiciary