

Opening Statement of Rep. J. Luis Correa (D-CA)

Subcommittee on Border and Maritime Security Hearing

Deter, Detect and Interdict: Technology's Role in Securing the Border

July 25, 2017

Over the past several years, we have seen technology used to improved situational awareness, enhanced security, and improve facilitation of legitimate commercial traffic along our Nation's borders. While Secretary Kelly and many lawmakers in Congress often talk about the value of technology to better secure the border, I remain concerned that we are not utilizing technology to its fullest benefits. We know the new Trump Administration has prioritized physical barriers over technology to secure the border.

This is evident also from the President's policies and budget request. President Trump ran for office on the promise to build a physical wall as a means to stop illegal immigration and curb drug smuggling. Even while experts before this Committee have told us that a border wall alone won't accomplish either of those goals.

Earlier this month, the Appropriations Committee approved border security funding of \$1.6 billion for a border wall. While we allocate billions into a border wall that will not work, many of our agents on the ground still cannot talk to each other because they do not have reliable communication equipment to use in remote border areas.

With limited resources for technology on the border, it is vital that Customs and Border Protection get it right when it comes to procuring, testing, and deploying technology on the border. The Department of Homeland Security has for years attempted to deploy various kinds of technology to the borders, with mixed results.

Identifying, acquiring, and deploying the right mix of border security technology is no easy task. We know that the flow of border crossers and illicit traffic changes and our technology and our tactics need to evolve along with those changes.

This is also one of the main reasons why a border wall is not a solution to our border security challenges. America's borders are varied places, with different geography, terrain, and climate.

Given DHS' poor track record and the seemingly shift to physical barriers over technology, I remain concerned about our border security technology deployments. I would like to hear CBP justify why wholesale physical infrastructure plan would be more effective than deployment of strategic technological assets along the border.

I also hope to hear from our GAO witness today about their examination of CBP's metrics to measure the performance of border technologies and whether DHS's procurement and acquisition management processes are sound or still need significant improvement.

Also, in light of the massive acquisition management resources that would need to be dedicated to constructing a physical wall, I would like to know how CBP will manage existing technology contracts as it shifts focus and personnel to the wall.

Finally, I hope we can have a frank discussion with our witnesses about how CBP can best position its ongoing border security technology programs for success in this environment of scarce resources.