Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

November 24, 2015

The Honorable Jeh Johnson
Secretary
Department of Homeland Security
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
Washington, D.C. 20528

Dear Secretary Johnson:

We write to express our serious concern regarding recent information that has come to light, which highlights the threat of ISIS members entering the country through the southwest border of the United States. On November 19, 2015, a news report indicated that a Syrian woman was arrested in Costa Rica posing as a Greek citizen. Just one day prior, Reuters reported that five Syrian men were apprehended in Honduras holding fraudulent Greek passports, with the intention of entering the United States.[1] U.S. Customs and Border Protection confirmed that six Syrians, members of two families, were arrested after they presented themselves at the Laredo, Texas port of entry on November 17, 2015. These incidents reflect a concerted effort by Syrians to evade inspection and illegally enter the United States. Of course, these cases represent only those Syrians who were actually apprehended. Undoubtedly, others have evaded detection and succeeded in illegally entering the United States.

There is no doubt that ISIS will seize every opportunity to exploit the vulnerabilities inherent in this Administration's reckless open border immigration policies, including the irresponsible effort to resettle 10,000 Syrian refugees in the United States despite the real dangers presented by ISIS operatives posing as refugees. In fact, ISIS is making no secret of their plans to have their members infiltrate groups of Syrian refugees. We should take ISIS at its word.

On Friday, November 13, ISIS made good on its promise of terrorism by murdering 130 innocent civilians in Paris – including one American. And ISIS has expressed its ultimate goal of bringing the fight to the American homeland, saying specifically that it will "strike America at its center in Washington."[2]

Given ISIS's avowed aim of attacking Americans on our own soil and its unconcealed plan to masquerade its terror operatives as Syrians fleeing their country, it is clear that any border apprehensions of putative Syrians presenting fraudulent identification documents is a matter of grave concern.

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[1] "Honduras detains Syrians bound for U.S. with doctored Greek Passports." *Reuters*. Nov 18, 2015, *available at http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/11/19/us-france-shooting-honduras-idUSKCN0T72UE20151119#BvE3kFeSfHxoZoBg.97*

[2] "Islamic State threatens attack on Washington, other Countries." *Reuters*. Nov 16, 2015, *available at http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/11/16/us-france-shooting-islamicstate-idUSKCN0T51AM20151116?feedType=RSS&feedName=topNews&utm_source=twitter#DF50KZXEj3v20jTq.97*

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Over the last week, Administration officials have consistently stated, including in testimony to Congress, that, "Applicants to the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program are currently subject to the highest level of security checks of any category of traveler to the United States."[3] Such a fact makes it even more important to know whether Syrians apprehended attempting to enter the U.S. illegally have been allowed by this Administration to remain in the U.S. and have been provided immigration benefits.

Given the critical threat posed by ISIS and the national security vulnerabilities created by the Administration's failure to secure our borders, we ask you to respond to the following requests for information by December 4, 2015:

1. Please provide a list of "Special Interest Aliens" or aliens from "Specially Designated Countries," who were apprehended while entering or attempting to enter the United States at a land, air, or sea border on or after March 15, 2011, including, but not limited to, aliens who claim to be citizens of, or have at any time resided in Syria, Iraq, Yemen, Sudan, Somalia, Afghanistan, or Pakistan.

2. For each apprehension identified in the preceding question, please provide the date, name of the alien, A-number, whether fraudulent identification documents were presented or seized, whether the alien claimed a credible fear or asserted asylum, whether the alien was placed in removal proceedings, whether the alien was detained pending the determination of removability, whether the alien was ordered removed or granted relief from removal, and what, if any, immigration benefit the alien was ultimately granted.

3. Would the Department of Homeland Security issue a detainer or request for notification if a law enforcement agency notified the Department that an alien from Syria or Iraq was in state custody, there was probable cause to believe that the alien was out of lawful status or present without inspection, and was charged with a violation that did not fall within one of the three enforcement categories under the Department's Priority Enforcement Program?

We appreciate your cooperation in answering the questions and concerns we have raised in this letter. Please contact Kathy Nuebel Kovarik at (202) 224-5225 or Tracy Short at (202) 225-3926 if you have any questions regarding this matter.

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[3] *The Syrian Refugee Crisis and Its Impact on the Security of the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program:* Hearing Before the H. Comm. on Judiciary, Subcomm. on Immigration and Border Security, 114th Cong. (2015) (written statement of Anne Richard, Asst. Sec., Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration, U.S. State Dept.).

Sincerely,

Charles E. Grassley
Chairman
Senate Committee on the Judiciary

Bob Goodlatte
Chairman
House Committee on the Judiciary