

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

November 4, 2011

The Honorable Janet Napolitano  
Secretary  
Department of Homeland Security  
Washington, D.C. 20528

Dear Secretary Napolitano:

We write with great concern regarding recent press reports that the U.S. Border Patrol has been directed to stop its routine searches of buses, trains and other vehicles entering the United States through the northern border and parts of the interior. Such a directive to the field not only would pose an increased national security threat, but would also encourage an increase in the flow of undocumented individuals, weapons and drugs entering our country.

According to press accounts, border agents state that routine searches account for much of their days with often positive results. Most notably, a 1997 check of the Bellingham, Washington bus station netted the arrest of Palestinian Gazi Ibrahim Abu Mezer, who was later shot in New York as he prepared to attack the city with a bomb. In 1999, a routine search led to the arrest of Ahmed Ressam, who had taken a ferry from British Columbia to Washington in a car packed with explosives. These incidents should serve as a stern warning that the security of our Nation cannot be compromised.

If such a directive has, in fact, been ordered, it is concerning on many levels. This Administration has long touted a strengthened border, but doing away with routine searches of people and goods would indicate a willingness to gamble with the public's safety. News of the lessened security will only entice potential terrorists, drug smugglers, and illegal immigrants to attempt to enter the country through the northern border. The American people must be reassured that our borders remain secure and routine searches will continue.

The nature in which we learned of the orders sent to the northern border field offices is quite troubling considering you appeared before both the Senate and House Judiciary Committees over the past two weeks and neglected to inform Congress of this change in policy. If agents have been directed to cease these routine searches, we would like a copy of any memo, communication or direction to the field on this matter. We also would formally request you rescind any directive that reduces the screening performed along the northern border.

Because of the urgent nature of this subject, we request a response by Monday, November 7, 2011. We appreciate your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Chuck Grassley Susan M Collins

Mike Croy Sally Chaudin

Mike Johanns Jeff Sessions

Johnny Isakson Olympia Snowe

Dan Vitter John Boozman

Kevin L. Hatch Joni DeMint

Joe R. Kirby John Cornyn