

United States Senate

November 28, 2023

The Honorable Alejandro Mayorkas
Secretary
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
301 7th St SW
Washington, D.C. 20528

Dear Secretary Mayorkas:

I am writing with great concern for the potential impacts the diversion of air marshals of the Federal Air Marshal Service from our nation's skies to the U.S. southern border may pose to air travel. Federal air marshals (FAMs) serve a critical role in ensuring the safety of those travelling by air and the security of America's transportation systems. With the holiday travel season in full swing and the heightened threat environment, it is critical that FAMs are safeguarding our skies, not cleaning up the Biden administration's mess at the southern border.

Recent media reports indicate that a number of FAMs have been reassigned to the southern border to assist U.S. Customs and Border Protection operations as they continue to face a historic surge in migrants attempting to illegally enter the U.S. These reports state that FAMs are largely tasked with administering aid to migrants, not performing law enforcement duties.

The crisis at the southern border is no secret. It is a crisis of the Biden administration's own making and a consequence of its failed policies. In Fiscal Year 2023, a record 169 individuals on the terror watchlist were encountered while attempting to illegally enter the U.S. through the southern border. In October 2023 alone, more than 1,300 people from Cuba, Iran, North Korea, and Syria, all designated state sponsors of terror by the State Department, were encountered at the border.

Despite record-breaking border crossings occurring every year under your watch, you continue to insist that the border is "secure" and that your agency maintains operational control of the border. This is nothing short of insanity.

Reassigning FAMs from their duties protecting the skies to handing out water at the border, especially during the busiest travel season of the year and at a time when the threat of attacks against Americans is at the highest level in years, is an ill-advised and ineffective way to mitigate the crisis at the border. Instead, the Biden administration should take concrete and aggressive steps to actually secure our border including, but not limited to, finishing the border wall, tightening asylum standards, ending its abuse of parole authority, and ending the disastrous policy of "catch and release."

Ensuring the safety and security of the traveling public should be the sole focus and responsibility of FAMs. I urge you to immediately recall all FAMs from the southern border and cease from engaging in this practice in the future.

Sincerely,



Steve Daines
United States Senator