Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

May 5, 2015

The Honorable Ash Carter
Secretary
U.S. Department of Defense
Washington, DC 20301

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

Dear Secretaries Carter and Johnson:

We write regarding cooperative recruiting efforts to fill open positions at land ports of entry.

As you are aware, the fiscal year 2014 consolidated appropriations legislation (P.L. 113-76) provided funding to hire a minimum of 2,000 new Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officers by the end of fiscal year 2015. Although the Department of Homeland Security has strong recruitment practices already in place, it is our understanding that the hiring process has been moving forward at a pace slower than anticipated with challenges related to the administration of polygraph tests and background checks.

In recent years, Mexico has been the third-largest trade partner of the United States and the second-largest export market. According to the Arizona-Mexico Commission, Arizona's ports of entry serve as gateways for $41.6 billion in U.S.-Mexican trade annually, of which nearly $16 billion is attributed to Arizona's bilateral trade with Mexico. Given the importance of cross border trade to Arizona's economy, adequate staffing at our ports of entry is critical.

It is our understanding that our military branches have various transition assistance programs that aid separating service members returning to civilian life and reentering the civilian workforce. For example, Arizona's Davis-Monthan Air Force Base has partnerships with various organizations and employers looking to recruit separating service members. These partnerships allow representatives of those companies to attend events centered on preparing service members for civilian life. We believe that separating service members could represent a good opportunity for finding qualified candidates for CBP's Office of Field Operations. In many cases, they are likely to have already undergone a rigorous vetting and clearance process.

Toward ensuring that the staffing needs of the ports of entry are met in a timely fashion, we urge you to explore allowing local CBP field offices the opportunity to partner with military bases in their region. We hope that you will consider employing any direct hiring authorities within your control to assist with timely transitions to fill vacancies that are highly important to trade relations and national security. This would offer the dual benefits of providing separating service members the opportunity to gain employment while aiding CBP's staffing deficiency. We would appreciate learning of instances in which this is being pursued as well as any

PRINTED ON RECYCLED PAPER

impediments in progress toward this goal. We appreciate your attention to this issue and ask that this request be handled in strict accordance with agency rules, regulations, and ethical guidelines.

Sincerely,

JEFF FLAKE
United States Senator

JOHN MCCAIN
United States Senator

1300 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20229

U.S. Customs and
Border Protection

Commissioner

MAY 2 7 2015

The Honorable Jeff Flake
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Flake:

Thank you for your May 5, 2015 letter to Secretaries Johnson and Carter. Secretary Johnson asked that I respond on his behalf.

The Department of Homeland Security appreciates your interest in cooperative recruiting efforts to fill vacant U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) Officer positions at land ports of entry.

CBP's primary mission is to prevent terrorists and terrorist weapons from entering the United States while facilitating the flow of legitimate trade and travel. CBP continues to implement aggressive recruitment and hiring strategies, which include service members and veterans in Arizona and across the Nation, to meet staffing goals. While CBP has placed special emphasis on leveraging the skills and talents of our veterans, CBP and the Department of Defense (DoD) are discussing a broader partnership. This partnership will include the military services and individual installations to ensure all separating service members are aware of CBP career opportunities and the process to apply for these opportunities as they make critical post-military service career decisions.

When recruiting applicants for positions as CBP officers, CBP uses all applicable direct-hiring authorities, including the Veterans' Recruitment Authority, to advertise and fast-track CBP Officer positions to veterans. Working with the Office of Personnel Management, CBP has increased the frequency of job opportunity announcements, resulting in more applicants entering the pre-employment process.

CBP's Strategic Initiatives Division employs a full-time Veterans Program Manager. The Veterans Program Manager is responsible for hiring initiatives and represents CBP on the Department's Veterans' Employment Council. The Division's strategies include:

- Reaching service members and veterans through recruitment/outreach activities at military installations and affiliated organizations. These include bases with the highest numbers of separating service members, military transition centers, all 41 Veterans Administration (VA) Regional Veterans Employment Assistance Offices, and a wide variety of veterans organizations, including Disabled American Veterans, Veterans of Foreign Wars, American Legion, and Vietnam Veterans of America, among others;
- Advertising in military publications and websites using geographic, demographic, and behaviorally targeted strategies;
- Attending recruitment events, hosted by the Integrated Recruitment Cadre (IRC), that target veterans nationwide;
- Participating, by IRC, in National Guard Yellow Ribbon Program events for returning National Guard soldiers nationwide;
- E-recruiting to appropriate staff at national DoD military transition centers and transition assistance advisors, the Department of Labor/Veterans Employment Training Service, and the VA;
- Partnering with Student Veterans of America to communicate information about CBP careers via more than 500 college chapters nationwide;
- Serving as an official federal employer partner with the VA Feds for Vets initiative; and
- Targeting student veterans pursuing degrees related to criminal justice and political science at community and four-year colleges and universities.

Additionally, DoD's Transition to Veterans Program Office helps connect and align private and public efforts focused on improving the career success of transitioning service members whether focused initially on employment, starting a business, attaining a formal education or accessing skill-based training. The Transition to Veterans Program Office collaborates with federal agencies to develop innovative approaches that foster unique and proactive strategies to support America's military service to career pipeline.

At CBP, 29 percent of the workforce consists of veterans. In Arizona, during Fiscal Year 2015, CBP recruiters have participated in targeted outreach activities at Fort Huachuca, Luke Air Force Base, and Davis-Monthan Air Force Bases. Recruiters have also communicated with local military, student veterans, and veteran service organizations, providing materials and information on the federal hiring process. Many of these organizations further distributed materials through their networks.

CBP has also initiated partnerships with the National Guard Bureau's transition assistance advisors; Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve; and the Department of Army Career and Alumni Program.

The Department of Homeland Security actively recruits veterans, and we value their experience, commitment, and work ethic, as well as their significant skills and abilities. We continue to strive to make our Department an employer of choice for veterans and will continue to work actively with the DoD to support the recruitment and hiring of veterans and service members.

Thank you again for your letter. Senator McCain, who co-signed your letter, will receive a separate, identical response. If you should need further assistance, please contact Mr. Yeager, Assistant Commissioner, Office of Congressional Affairs, at (202) 344-1760.

Sincerely,

R. Gil Kerlikowske
Commissioner

PERSONNEL AND
READINESS

UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
4000 DEFENSE PENTAGON
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301-4000

JUL - 1 2015

The Honorable Jeff Flake
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Flake:

Thank you for your interest in supporting employment opportunities for transitioning Service members, as stated in your letter dated May 5, 2015, through a proposed partnership between the Department of Defense and the Department of Homeland Security's Customs and Border Protection (CBP). Ensuring our transitioning Service members are aware of career opportunities as CBP officers is important, not only to help our military members find stable post-separation jobs, but also to reduce staffing challenges at our nation's ports of entry.

Although the Department cannot comment on the authorities or practices used by CBP to advertise or recruit for these vacant positions, we do understand the importance of filling them. Transitioning Service members are a viable cohort to consider for these positions given both their previous interest in serving the nation and their security clearances.

Each military installation manages its own transition assistance staff and is encouraged to connect with local employers who seek to hire transitioning Service members. In Arizona, during Fiscal Year 2015, CBP recruiters participated in targeted outreach activities at Fort Huachuca, Luke Air Force Base, and Davis-Monthan Air Force Base. We encourage CBP recruiters to continue collaborating with local military installations to advertise their vacant CBP officer positions at our nation's ports of entry.

Thank you for your continued interest in and support of the Department's efforts to provide Service members with post-separation employment opportunities. Senator McCain, who co-signed your letter, will receive a separate, identical response.

Brad Carson
Acting