

United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6200

March 11, 2019

The Honorable Kevin K. McAleenan
Commissioner
U.S. Customs and Border Protection
1300 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20229

Dear Commissioner McAleenan:

We write to you today regarding recent reports alleging that Customs and Border Protection (CBP) and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) inappropriately flagged for additional scrutiny seven American journalists, who were covering the migrant caravan last year.¹ First Amendment freedoms guarantee American citizens the right to a free press and peaceable assembly. Unless CBP had reason to believe the individuals in question were inciting violence or physical conflict, it is deeply concerning that CBP appears to have targeted American journalists at our borders.

According to recent news reports, a whistleblower provided a local NBC affiliate with documentation evidence titled “San Diego Sector Foreign Operations Branch: Migrant Caravan FY-2019, Suspected Organizers, Coordinators, Instigators and Media” dated January 9, 2019.² The documents provided by this whistleblower, which are not classified, are labeled “For Official Use Only.” According to these reports, the documents indicate that CBP was being directed to target journalists for extra scrutiny at the border.

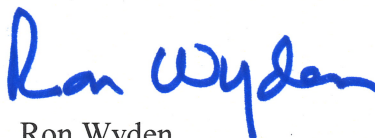
We understand and appreciate that CBP officers put their lives on the line to secure our homeland, and to protect the flow of people and commerce across our borders. However, CBP must perform its duties in a manner that is consistent with basic Constitutional safeguards.

Therefore, in our capacity as Chair and Ranking Member of the U.S. Senate Finance Committee, with oversight jurisdiction over the CBP, we are requesting that CBP provide our staff with an unclassified briefing on this document and its policies and procedures related to such targeting, with classified additions as necessary, as soon as possible, and no later than March 14, 2019.

Sincerely,



Charles E. Grassley
Chairman
U.S. Senate Committee on Finance



Ron Wyden
Ranking Member
U.S. Senate Committee on Finance

¹ Source: Leaked Documents Show the US Tracking Journalists and Immigration Advocates Through a Secret Database, 3/6/2019

<https://www.nbcsandiego.com/news/local/Source-Leaked-Documents-Show-the-US-Government-Tracking-Journalists-and-Advocates-Through-a-Secret-Database-506783231.html>.

² Photos: Leaked Documents to NBC 7 Investigates, 3/6/2019 <https://www.nbcsandiego.com/multimedia/PHOTOS-Leaked-Documents-to-NBC-7-Investigates-506782041.html>.