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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

Juan Vargas

52nd District, California

COMMITTEE ON FINANCIAL SERVICES

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ILLICIT FINANCE, AND INTERNATIONAL
FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS

May 2, 2025

The Honorable Hal Rogers
Chair
Appropriations Subcommittee on Commerce,
Justice, Science and Related Agencies
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Grace Meng
Ranking Member
Appropriations Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice,
Science and Related Agencies
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Rogers and Ranking Member Meng,

I am requesting funding for the City of San Diego Drone Spotter Detection System project in fiscal year 2026, in the amount of \$275,000. The entity to receive the funding is the City of San Diego, located at 202 C Street, Floor 11, San Diego, CA, 92101.

Over the last decade, drone flights have increased. Sophisticated criminal elements and terrorist networks are using drones for reconnaissance, counterintelligence, delivery of illegal contraband, and even as a use of force for explosive based terrorist attacks. In addition to this, use of drones by the public in a careless manner has led to major public safety concerns. In recent months during wildfire incidents, civilian drone hobbyists have flown drones in the vicinity of active brush fires. The illegal flights of these drones during these events have caused Fire Response aircraft to divert their mission to drop fire retardant. The resulting outcome has led to risk of lives and major property damage due to fire responders not being able to use critical aerial support. The SDPD and the City of San Diego do not currently have the capability to effectively respond to these incidents.

The purchase of a drone spotter detection system for the San Diego Police Department is a good use of federal funds because a drone spotter detection system will allow law enforcement and other City services—including the fire department—to monitor illegal, unsafe, or terrorist activity in selected areas when needed for enhanced protection. The information provided by the system will allow the authorities to locate the equipment as well as the operator and contact them within minutes so they can be directed to cease their drone flights. In the wildfire incidents, the ability to contact drone operators and stop dangerous activities so the Fire air support crew can drop retardant material, has the potential to save millions of dollars of property damage and numerous lives.

The project has a Federal nexus because the funding provided is for purposes authorized by 34 U.S.C. § 10152.

This project has broad support from a large network of partners and stakeholders, including San Diego Mayor Todd Gloria and County Supervisor Terra Lawson-Remer.

I certify that I have no financial interest in this project, and neither does anyone in my immediate family.

Thank you for your consideration of funding for these programs. Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact my Deputy Chief of Staff, Erin Chapman at erin.chapman@mail.house.gov.

Sincerely,



Juan Vargas
Member of Congress