

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

January 26, 2022

The Honorable Alejandro Mayorkas
Secretary
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
245 Murray Lane, SW
Washington, D.C. 20528

Dear Secretary Mayorkas:

Like so many others, I was horrified and heartbroken to learn that a family of four froze to death in a blizzard at the Minnesota-Canada border last week.¹ Federal prosecutors in Minnesota have since charged a man involved in the incident with violating federal laws prohibiting human smuggling.² Federal authorities have said that they suspect that this case is linked to a larger smuggling operation in the area along the Canadian border.³

I have long advocated for the expansion of federal anti-trafficking and anti-smuggling efforts. As a former prosecutor, I know how important it is for the federal government to closely coordinate with state and tribal law enforcement, as well as with international governments, to combat this threat and to provide resources to officials working on the front lines of the fight against smuggling and trafficking.

I appreciate the Administration's actions to stop human smuggling and trafficking, including its creation of Operation Sentinel, a counter-network targeting operation focused on stopping the smuggling of vulnerable people across the border.⁴ At the same time, this tragic incident illustrates that there is more work to be done.

Therefore, I respectfully request responses to the questions below:

1. What steps has the Department taken and what steps does it plan to take to identify those

¹ John Reinan, *Florida man charged with human smuggling after 4 family members freeze to death at Minnesota-Canada border*, Star Trib., Jan. 20, 2022, <https://www.startribune.com/florida-man-charged-with-human-smuggling-after-4-deaths-including-baby-at-minnesota-canada-border/600137847/?refresh=true>

² The United States Attorney's Office – District of Minnesota, *Florida Man Arrested at U.S./Canada Border, Charged with Human Smuggling*, Jan. 20, 2022, <https://www.justice.gov/usao-mn/pr/florida-man-arrested-uscanada-border-charged-human-smuggling-0>

³ Reinan, *supra* note 1.

⁴ See Press Release, U.S. Dep't of Homeland Sec., DHS Announces Operation to Target Criminal Smuggling Organizations (Apr. 27, 2021), <https://www.dhs.gov/news/2021/04/27/dhs-announces-operation-target-criminal-smuggling-organizations>

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who are engaging in human smuggling along the border with Canada?

2. What efforts has DHS made to coordinate with the Canadian government to identify and intercede human smuggling operations along the border between the two countries?
3. What challenges has the Department faced in its attempt to stop human smuggling across the northern border and are there any legislative steps Congress can take to address those challenges?
4. How has DHS coordinated and how does the Department plan to coordinate with Tribal Nations near the northern border to stop human smuggling operations along the Canadian border?
5. Does DHS need additional resources to counter human smuggling operations along the border with Canada?

Thank you for your attention to this critical issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Amy Klobuchar". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a solid horizontal line.

Amy Klobuchar
U.S. Senator