

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

November 26, 2025

The Honorable Pam Bondi
Attorney General
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Ave NW
Washington, DC 20530

The Honorable Pete Hegseth
Secretary of Defense
U.S. Department of Defense
The Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301

The Honorable Robert F. Kennedy, Jr.
Secretary of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Ave SW
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Attorney General Bondi, Secretary Hegseth, and Secretary Kennedy:

We write to you concerning the illegal military campaign against foreign nationals allegedly smuggling drugs in the United States on vessels in the Caribbean Sea and Pacific Ocean.

These strikes are already in violation of the War Powers Resolution's 60-day clock requiring termination of military action if the President is unable to obtain congressional authorization.¹ Further contravening federal law, the President has deployed the USS Gerald R. Ford carrier strike group to the Caribbean, further escalating this illegal military operation. According to news reports, there have been at least 15 strikes carried out by our military in the Caribbean and eastern Pacific, killing at least 64 foreign individuals – something that may be deemed an act of war by a foreign sovereign.² To date, the Trump Administration has failed to provide sufficient evidence that these individuals were so-called “narco-terrorists” and has failed to provide appropriate legal justification for these strikes to Congress.

Regardless of the questionable legality of these strikes, an equally relevant question is whether this is even an effective means to curtail drug use in the United States? The cost of these airstrikes is likely in the tens of millions of dollars already. Furthermore, deploying a carrier strike group is estimated to cost upwards to \$6.5 million a day and it is unclear how long the Ford carrier strike group will be deployed in support of this activity.³ Our nation already spends billions of dollars annually on the so-called war on drugs. While at the same time, we spend very little comparatively on education, treatment, and other demand-reduction strategies, despite all the research that shows those to be the most cost-effective strategies by far in reducing illicit drug use.

¹ P.L. 93-148, §5(b); 50 U.S.C. §1544(b)

² Aamad Madhani, *US Carries Out New Strike in Caribbean, Killing 3 Alleged Drug Smuggler*, Military.com (Nov. 2, 2025, 7:20 AM), <https://www.military.com/daily-news/2025/11/02/us-carries-out-new-strike-caribbean-killing-3-alleged-drug-smugglers.html>

³ Henry J. Hendrix, *At What Cost a Carrier?*, (Center for a New American Security, 2013)

There have been numerous studies over the past three decades showing that it is far more cost effective to offer treatment to those with substance use disorders in order to reduce drug usage, rather than interdiction strategies. For example, in the 1990s, the RAND Corporation published a comprehensive study on controlling cocaine use and looked at the four primary control programs utilized by the government – source control, interdiction, domestic law enforcement, and treatment.⁴ The study addressed the question: How much would the government have to spend on each approach to decrease cocaine consumption in the United States by one percent?⁵

The RAND study showed that, compared to treatment, it cost seven times more to achieve the same result with domestic law enforcement. It costs 10 times more to get those results with interdiction, and 23 times more to achieve the results using the strategy of source control. The RAND study found that to achieve the 1 percent reduction in cocaine use required \$34 million (\$75.5M in 2025 dollars) if you use treatment; \$246 million (\$46.1M in 2025 dollars) for domestic law enforcement; \$366 million (\$813M in 2025 dollars) using interdiction; and \$783 million (\$1.7B in 2025 dollars) if you use a strategy of source control to achieve the same one percent reduction in cocaine use.⁶

With these illegal, and significantly costly, lethal strikes to interdict drugs entering the United States, the Trump Administration is doubling down on one of the least cost-effective means of reducing drug addiction and at the same time it is aggressively dismantling the very federal agency focused on mental health and addiction treatment. Since the start of his second term, President Trump has taken actions to reduce staffing by 50 percent at the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). The Trump Administration has terminated \$1.7 billion in SAMHSA block grants for state health departments and cut approximately \$350 million in addiction and overdose prevention funding.⁷

At a House Committee on the Budget (CBO) hearing on Tuesday, November 18, 2025, the Director of the Congressional Budget Office was asked if there was any evidence that such heavy-handed, legally dubious interdiction efforts, such as what this administration is currently doing, had ANY effect on drug use in the United States in terms of availability and price.⁸ The CBO Director testified that he had no evidence that such a strategy had any effect at all.⁹

So, we respectfully ask the following questions:

⁴ C. Peter Rydell & Susan S. Everingham, *Controlling Cocaine: Supply Versus Demand Programs*, RAND, Prepared for the Office of National Drug Control Policy, United States Army (1994).

⁵ Id. At xii.

⁶ Id. At xiii.

⁷ O. Rose Broderick & Lev Facher, *Trump cuts have decimated the federal addiction and mental health agency*, STAT News (Oct. 30, 2025), <https://www.statnews.com/2025/10/30/samhsa-grant-cuts-staff-reductions-impact-analyzed/>

⁸ *Oversight of the Congressional Budget Office: Hearing Before the H. Comm. on the Budget*, 119th Cong. (Nov. 18, 2025) (statement of Rep. Robert C. “Bobby” Scott, Member, H. Comm. on the Budget), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y3AVSQs3KFg&list=PLFi-Fs54flcwmvgvdY31ReJqGdhpljUbyG>.

⁹ *Oversight of the Congressional Budget Office: Hearing Before the H. Comm. on the Budget*, 119th Cong. (Nov. 18, 2025) (statement of Hon. Phillip Swagel, Dir. of the Congressional Budget Office), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y3AVSQs3KFg&list=PLFi-Fs54flcwmvgvdY31ReJqGdhpljUbyG>.

1. What evidence does the administration have that this is an effective strategy to reduce drug use and drug related deaths in the United States?
2. How was it determined that the targeted vessels were carrying drugs and what was their intended destination for distribution? Please provide all evidence, documentation, and communications that support these findings, as well as documentation that establishes the type of cargo carried, intended location for delivery and distribution, source of cargo, as well as the involved cartels, suppliers, and distributors.
3. How did the administration arrive at the decision that sinking and destroying these vessels were more effective than general interdiction methods?¹⁰
4. What legal authorities is the administration relying on to conduct these strikes, and what findings were made to quell concerns within the administration regarding the legality of these strikes?
5. What has this strategy cost so far to the American taxpayer?
6. What evidence does the administration have to support public statements made by the Attorney General that “258 million”¹¹ Americans have been saved as a result of the administration’s drug control and seizure policies?
7. What evidence does the administration have to support the President’s claim that “[e]very boat that we knock out we save 25,000 American lives”¹²?
8. What effect has the administration’s reductions in force at SAMHSA as well as the terminations of block grants to state health departments, and cuts to addiction and overdose prevention funding administered through SAMHSA had on reducing drug use and addiction?

Thank you for reviewing and answering these important questions. Please provide all relevant evidence, documentation, and communications to support the administration’s answers. We expect a response by Friday, December 12, 2025.

Sincerely,



Robert C. "Bobby" Scott
Member of Congress



Lucy McBath
Member of Congress

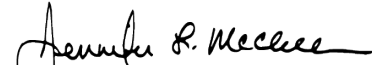
¹⁰ See Ryan Lucas, *Justice Department official told prosecutors that U.S. should ‘just sink’ drug boats*, NPR, Nov. 17, 2025, <https://www.npr.org/2025/11/17/g-s1-97836/venezuela-evidence-doj-strikes-sinking-suspected-drug-boats-assertations>

¹¹ Lev Facher, *Did Trump’s fentanyl seizures save 258 million lives? Gross exaggeration, experts say*, STAT, May 7, 2025, <https://www.statnews.com/2025/05/07/pam-bondi-fentanyl-experts-say-attorney-general-claims-false-implausible-misleading/>.

¹² *President Trump Participates in a Press Conference with the Director of the FBI*, The White House YouTube Channel (Oct. 15, 2025), <https://www.youtube.com/live/fIM57bKXIKU?t=1414s>.



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