

COMMITTEE ON
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HEALTH, EDUCATION, LABOR,
AND PENSIONS

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-4607

August 3, 2026

The Honorable Donald J. Trump
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 2050

Mr. President:

In late July 2025, you directed the Department of Defense to conduct kinetic operations to combat narcotrafficking operations in the Americas. You selected numerous organizations for targeting. That target list is classified so I cannot reveal it. Importantly, the classification of the list means that those you have asked the Department of Defense to target are entirely unaware that they are marked for execution.

In September 2025, the United States launched boat strikes in international waters in the Americas pursuant to your directive. A Department of Justice Office of Legal Counsel (OLC) opinion issued in September 2025 provided legal support for such operations so long as they complied with specific factual conditions. That legal opinion (and the specific factual conditions) is classified. As a result, these conditions are also unknown to those being targeted.

A Department of Defense order implementing your July directive (the EXORD) was issued in October 2025. The EXORD contains targeting criteria that the Department of Defense should use in carrying out your kinetic operations directive. The EXORD and its targeting criteria are also classified.

To date, according to public reporting, the United States has engaged in more than 65 kinetic operations killing more than 220 people pursuant to your directive. I've reviewed these classified notifications to Congress pursuant to those attacks, which vary in detail but often include descriptions of the targets and their activities during the kinetic operations.

My review of your directive, the OLC legal opinion, the EXORD, and the notifications of the boat strikes, makes clear that the United States is engaged in violent and fatal attacks against people far beyond those whom the OLC opinion claimed could be lawfully targeted. In other words, a careful review of the available evidence suggests that the United States has killed individuals who are not involved in narcotrafficking.

They are murder victims.

Adding to the deep concern over these illegal killings is the fact, recently confirmed by the Drug Enforcement Administration, that Operation Southern Spear has had no effect on the flow of illegal drugs into the United States.

I ask that you closely examine the circumstances of these strikes, to ensure that you are personally aware of the extent to which the leadership of the Department of Defense has exceeded your July 2025 directive, incurring massive expense and operating with dubious legality, and with no progress towards your stated objective. And once you have done so, I urge you to halt this illegal, costly and ineffective operation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Tim Kaine', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Tim Kaine
United States Senator