



United States Department of State

Washington, D.C. 20520

DEC 22 2017



The Honorable
Alan Lowenthal
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Lowenthal:

Thank you for your December 6 letter regarding your concerns on several issues including the alleged use of advanced government spyware by the Mexican government against prominent human rights defenders and journalists, as well as international diplomats and a U.S. citizen in Mexico.

The promotion of the rule of law and human rights is a priority for the United States and remains a central component of our bilateral relationship with Mexico. We raise human rights issues regularly and at the highest levels with our Mexican counterparts. The Department of State shares your concerns about the possible use of spyware and has raised this issue with the Government of Mexico. Mexican officials have told us they are continuing to investigate the spyware attacks. We also addressed this issue, and the full range of human rights issues, during the annual U.S.-Mexico Bilateral Human Rights Dialogue on December 8. We will continue to monitor this issue closely and request further updates on the investigation.

We continue to raise other issues you highlight, including violent attacks against and killings of journalists and human rights defenders and the Ayotzinapa case. We are supporting the Mexican government's mechanism to protect journalists and human rights defenders through USAID funding. We have encouraged the Mexican government to increase its own budget to make the mechanism more effective to tailor protection for individuals as quickly as possible when credible threats emerge. We have also urged the Mexican special prosecutor for crimes against freedom of expression to prioritize the investigation and prosecution of killings of reporters.

With respect to the Ayotzinapa case, we are pleased the Mexican government has recently agreed to extend the mandate of the Interdisciplinary Group of Independent Experts appointed by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights for an additional year.

Regarding your question about control of spyware technology, the Department fully complies with the Arms Export Control Act and the Export Administration Act, and implementing regulations.

The United States is committed to working with the Mexican government and Mexican civil society to support Mexican efforts to protect human rights, strengthen the rule of law, and promote transparency and accountability. We will include a report on these issues in our Annual Human Rights Report.

We hope this information is helpful. Please do not hesitate to contact us if we can be of further assistance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mary K. Waters". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Mary K. Waters
Assistant Secretary
Legislative Affairs