

# United States Senate

February 4, 2016

General Frank J. Grass  
Chief, National Guard Bureau  
1636 Defense Pentagon Suite 1E169  
Washington, DC 20301-001

General Grass:

I write to express my strong support for the National Guard Counterdrug Program, and to request that, in allocating funding for this critical program, the National Guard Bureau place more emphasis on resourcing programs in border states like Montana, with multiple counties designated as High Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas (HIDTAs).

Nationwide, local law enforcement agencies are confronting a number of difficult challenges. In particular, I call to your attention the surge of criminal activities in Montana since the oil boom began in the Bakken region in 2007. At a recent Congressional hearing I chaired in Sidney, Montana, representatives from local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies testified that from 2008 to 2012, the number of arrests in all crime categories in Bakken counties increased by 80 percent. While the boom has transformed economic opportunities for many in the region, rapid population growth—and with it illegal activity—has stretched local resources very thin, particularly for law enforcement.

This tectonic shift of economic and population growth has also changed the nature of crime in the region, which are unlike any local law enforcement have seen before. The character of crime in the region now includes organized and transnational drug trafficking and smuggling. Such crime was previously unheard of in Montana's small towns and communities, and local officials simply lack the manpower and resources to combat such activity. That reality, coupled with the threats associated with Montana's 545-mile border with Canada, put the state squarely on the front-lines of the counterdrug fight.

Given these threats, and the surge of drug-related crime in the state, I strongly urge you to invest additional National Guard Counterdrug Program resources in Montana and similar states. These additional resources would be put to very effective use by assisting efforts to combat international and domestic cases of drug trafficking, particularly in the Bakken region where National Guard Counterdrug assets could reduce the lapsed time due to intelligence gaps and communication constraints.

Combating the scale of narcotic activity in the region can only succeed through sturdy partnerships between state, local, tribal, and federal officials, and the National Guard has an opportunity to play a leading role. I look forward to staying engaged with you on this and other areas of mutual interest moving forward, and thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jon Tester". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Jon Tester