**TO: John Bolton, National Security Advisor**

**FROM: XXXX**

**DATE: September 24, 2018**

**RE: North America Homeland Security Strategic Options**

**Issue:** Response to recent San Antonio terrorist attack and prevention of future attacks

**Relevant National Interests:** *Vital:* Protect U.S. from further terror attacks. *Extremely Important:* Suppress terrorism, transnational crime, and drug trafficking; promote stability in the Western Hemisphere. *Important:* ensure free trade movement across border. **Analysis:** Mexico’s lengthy, porous border with the U.S.; corrupt government and police forces; and weak judicial system complicate efforts to curtail its sophisticated drug network. Increased U.S. drug use (U.S. consumption sends $60B to cartels annually) and weapons trafficking into Mexico (most arms seized by authorities can be traced to U.S) strengthens cartel effectiveness. President Nieto attempted to pivot from security focus to an emphasis on the socio-economic underpinnings of instability yet increased violence resulting from the decapitation and fracturing of larger cartels into smaller aggressively competitive groups has forced Nieto to return to a security-focused strategy. Relations between Mexico and the U.S. have become tenser in recent months and “family separation” cases at the border complicate bilateral relations. New president-elect dynamic for U.S.-Mexico relations may weaken Nieto’s position. Both states maintain cultural ties, cooperation and interoperability between defense, intelligence, and law enforcement through joint exercises, cross-border military coordination engagements, and FMS. Mexico is U.S.’s number three trade partner. **Strategic Options: (1) *Justified Force:*** Notify Mexican gov’t and utilize drone/SOF team in unilateral targeted assault in Tamaulipas to destroy/capture/kill ISIL and cartel targets affiliated with attack. Minimize civilian casualties, disrupt support network, target known cartel associates. Maintain border military presence throughout operations. Increase surveillance of known illegal border crossings to interdict coyote traffic. **Pros:** Neutralize direct threat. Decisive show of force assures U.S. public. **Cons:** Further strain on U.S.-Mexico relations. Risks escalation with cartels. ***(2) Border Firewall:*** Coordinate surged manpower patrolling border (constant drone surveillance) through U.S.-Mexico intelligence collaboration and joint agency operations. Launch immediate crackdown by federal/state law enforcement on known illegal border crossings and near-border safe houses to limit smuggling of people and weapons. Construct barrier to impede illegal cartel routes. **Pros:** Long-term. Limited U.S. military engagement. **Cons:** Costly (wall and surged resources). Crackdown on safe-houses could increase sentiment against immigrants. ***(3) Engage and Partner:*** Surge intelligence to identify perpetrators/follow-on threats. Seize initiative to empower incoming administration in whole of gov’t approach w/ security means of SF & police advisors, C4ISR, & FMS. Incentivize Mexico for phased approach securing population to enable socio-economic reforms in short-term to improve long-term stability. (P1) Reduce violence, secure populations. (P2) Shift to civil control focused on policing, standardized reforms & counter-corruption. (P3) Resourced socio-economic reforms. Amend NORAD to include Mexico and land boundaries; integrate Mexico liaisons. Expand training and local law enforcement through Mérida. **Pros:** Cooperation established without encroaching on sovereignty. Shared cost/responsibility/risk. **Cons:** Optics to some, effectiveness of Mexican security/police forces (corruption), high cost in resources. **Recommendation/Implementation: *Option 3*.** Sustainable change and strengthened partnership between the U.S. and Mexico. Shared responsibility without undermining sovereignty through Mérida emphasizing capacity-building enables Mexico to better manage internal security with less risk to U.S. lives in short and long-term. Task to DOD and DOS through NSC directives.

**Talking Points for Bolton’s meeting with the *New York Tribune*:**

1) Do not try to block the release of the documents – the report will then include “against the administration’s wishes” and retroactive transparency will seem insincere.

2) Note that the Trump Administration welcomes transparency in its attempt to showcase the tremendous resources that the President (and previous Administrations – acknowledging that this is a joint Democratic/Republican endeavor) put into Mexico’s security. America’s interests here are evident: have a stable neighbor to the south with a rule of law and protection of human rights for Mexico’s citizens.\*

*\*Note: if it is apparent that the reporter will continue with divulging the entirety of the documents, the White House should get ahead of the news with a cogent and clear description of America’s efforts in Mexico – emphasizing the willingness of the government to accept assistance in the form of intelligence collection while “maintaining the lead”.*

3) Request that specifics of how our intelligence efforts are conducted are protected – as are any naming of sources or names of American personnel involved in the support of the Mexican government’s legitimacy and security. In exchange, a designated member of the Administration will sit down with the reporter to talk problems and solutions in defending nations security with powerful cartels operating so close to home.

4) The recent and horrific attack at the North Star Mall highlights that terrorists intentionally target families and children. They cannot be reasoned with, and the government has an obligation to do everything it can to protect its citizens. Note that the press has similar goals; mention that publishing the report could help the nation (and Congress) gain bipartisan support regarding defense of the homeland.