



May 29, 2026

The Honorable Markwayne Mullin
Secretary
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
2707 Martin Luther King Jr. Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20528

Dear Secretary Mullin:

On behalf of the Airforwarders Association (AfA) and its member companies, I write to express serious concern regarding reports that the Department of Homeland Security is considering reducing or halting Customs and Border Protection (CBP) operations at certain U.S. airports. For the air freight forwarding industry, CBP's presence at these facilities is not an administrative convenience — it is the operational prerequisite on which international cargo movement depends. Any significant reduction in CBP cargo processing capacity at major gateway airports would create immediate disruptions throughout time-sensitive air cargo supply chains.

The AfA represents freight forwarders, air carriers, ground handlers, and related service providers that move billions of dollars in goods through U.S. air gateways every year. Our industry exists because speed matters. A pharmaceutical company waiting on temperature-sensitive biologics, a manufacturer whose assembly line depends on a just-in-time component shipment, a hospital system expecting critical medical devices — all of them rely on air freight precisely because no other mode can match its delivery window. CBP clearance is the final gate between a shipment in transit and a shipment delivered. Remove the officers who staff that gate, and the speed advantage that defines our industry disappears entirely.

The consequences are not abstract. The United States imports a substantial share of its pharmaceutical supply, including finished drugs and active pharmaceutical ingredients, through air cargo. Many of these shipments are temperature-controlled and time-sensitive by regulatory requirement. A clearance backlog at JFK, O'Hare, LAX, or Miami does not simply mean late delivery — it can mean a compromised shipment, a stockout at a hospital pharmacy, or a delay in treatment for a patient who cannot wait. The same logic applies to imported medical devices and diagnostic equipment moving through these airports to health systems across the country. These are not hypothetical risks; they are the predictable consequences of staffing gaps at the ports where this cargo enters the country.

Commercial supply chains face parallel vulnerabilities. U.S. manufacturers in aerospace, automotive, electronics, and consumer goods rely on imported components that move by air

because their production schedules cannot absorb the variability of ocean freight. When CBP staffing falls below the threshold needed to clear cargo in a timely fashion, those shipments queue. Assembly lines stop. The cost cascades upstream and downstream, and the reputational damage to U.S. ports of entry as reliable trade gateways accumulates with each episode.

Freight, unlike passengers, cannot be rebooked on a later flight or rerouted overnight through an alternative gateway. Cargo logistics networks — the airline schedules, the warehouse allocations, the truck capacity, the bonded facility agreements — are built around specific ports of entry. Diverting volume to another airport is not a short-term workaround; it requires months of coordination and capital investment that simply is not available in an emergency. The airports identified in current reports serve not only their own metropolitan regions but act as gateway hubs for freight destined throughout the country. A disruption there is a disruption everywhere.

We recognize and share the administration's commitment to border security and fiscal responsibility. Those goals are not in conflict with maintaining adequate CBP staffing at air cargo facilities. CBP cargo operations are not merely an administrative processing function — they are a critical component of the nation's trade enforcement, and facilitation, cargo screening, supply chain security, and national economic resilience infrastructure. Decisions that reduce that capacity carry consequences well beyond the airports directly affected.

We respectfully urge DHS and CBP to preserve current staffing levels at air cargo Ports of Entry and to consult with the freight forwarding and air cargo industry before implementing any changes that would affect clearance capacity. The AfA stands ready to provide data, operational analysis, and direct stakeholder input to inform those discussions.

Respectfully,



Brandon L. Fried
Executive Director
Airforwarders Association

Cc: Rodney S. Scott, Commissioner, U.S. Customs and Border Protection