

1994

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

June 07, 2012

The Honorable Lisa P. Jackson
Administrator
Environmental Protection Agency
Ariel Rios Building
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20460

Dear Administrator Jackson:

There is no doubt that the agricultural industry is the lifeblood of Iowa's economy. Today, one of every six Iowans is either directly or indirectly employed in production agriculture or an ag-related industry. On top of that, nearly 30 percent of Iowa's total economy is tied to agriculture, adding more than \$72 billion to the state's economy every year. Clearly, agriculture is an important staple for Iowa and the Iowans who are employed by the industry.

Given the vast importance of Iowa's agricultural industry, I have serious concerns about the recent reports that indicate your agency is conducting aerial surveillance over many farms in my home state and throughout EPA's Region 7 area. If these reports are accurate, EPA has conducted seven drone flights over Iowa as a method for inspecting animal feeding operations. As I'm sure you are aware by now, this practice has resulted in serious and legitimate privacy concerns on behalf of Americans, and Iowans in particular. After all, I am certain that you would agree with me that no federal agency has the right to treat the American farmer like the Taliban.

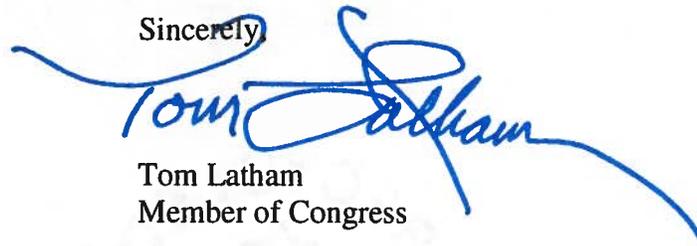
This practice raises several questions that my constituents have been asking. I would appreciate a prompt response to the following questions:

- What type of aircraft is EPA using to conduct its aerial surveillance in Region 7, and is surveillance being conducted in other regions of the country?
- Are the aircraft owned by EPA, and if so, how many and of what type does your agency own?
- How many flights has EPA conducted in Region 7, or elsewhere in the country, and over what span of time?
- How long has the EPA been conducting such surveillance?
- By what statutory authority does your agency conduct its aerial surveillance program?

- Out of which specific line item does the EPA fund its aircraft for the use of aerial surveillance, and in its totality, how is the program funded?
- In total, how much has your agency spent on its aerial surveillance? Over what span of time?
- If contracting services are used to conduct aerial surveillance, by what criteria does EPA choose such service, and what companies or entities are used to carry out the surveillance?
- How are farms or entities selected for surveillance?
- Is there follow-up with the farms or entities after an aerial surveillance flight?
- Has information gathered through aerial surveillance contributed to any fines or legal action taken against agricultural producers?
- Are images taken during surveillance? If so, for what purposes are these images used and for how long are they kept by EPA?
- Are these images shared with any other governmental or private entity?
- What type of data is collected during surveillance and what is done with the data after it is collected? For how long is the data kept by EPA?
- How is a landowner's private information protected by the collection or transmission of such data?
- Are more aerial surveillance flights planned in Region 7, or any other part of the country?
- Are other federal agencies aware of these surveillance flights?
- Are state or local authorities notified prior to surveillance flights?
- Are farmers notified at any time that their farms are under surveillance by aerial flights?

As I can assure you, Iowa farmers pride themselves on their stewardship of the most prized resources in agriculture—the land and water, and they take every effort to ensure their operations are in compliance with state and federal regulations. As such, I hope you can understand my constituents' concerns after this program was brought to their attention. I hope you can answer my questions with clarity and help me better understand this program by answering the above questions. A response would be appreciated by June 29, 2012.

Sincerely,



Tom Latham
Member of Congress