



## U.S. Customs and Border Protection

March 2, 2013

Deputy Commissioner

Dear Trade and Travel Industry Colleagues:

As a result of the budget sequestration which went into effect on March 1, 2013, U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) is writing to provide you with information on how these budget cuts are likely to affect our operations, and to enable you to make plans to minimize their impact on your businesses and the public. Under the automatic sequestration cuts, CBP will be required to reduce its expenditures significantly for the remainder of FY 2013.

For CBP Field Operations, these sequestration cuts, which include furloughs, reductions in overtime and a hiring freeze, would equate to the loss of up to several thousand CBP officers at our ports of entry, in addition to significant cuts to our operating budgets and programs. We are committed to working with you to manage the impact that these automatic cuts will have on our mission and on your industries.

CBP Field Operations has issued clear guidance on maintaining priority operations during sequestration with the following key principles:

- Our security efforts will remain our highest priority. We will not allow degradation of our primary anti-terrorism mission;
- We will prioritize core processing and facilitation operations for both travelers and cargo;
- We will continue to carry out border security operations consistent with all applicable legal requirements, including mandatory examinations of perishable commodities; and
- All trusted traveler and trader programs, including Global Entry, SENTRI, and NEXUS, C-TPAT and FAST will be maintained and emphasized, limiting the impact on CBP's trusted partners.

While CBP remains committed to doing everything we can to minimize risks and mitigate the impact of these cuts, we anticipate significant potential impacts to cross-border travel and trade. These negative impacts are going to increase as we enter peak travel seasons. Given the impact to frontline staffing highlighted above, we anticipate the following types of impacts at our ports of entry:

- Increased wait times for personal vehicles and pedestrians at our land border ports, with the potential of doubling of peak waits up to several hours or more at our largest ports, leading to potential gridlock effects during the heightened travel season;
- Increased wait times at major international airports of up to 50 percent or more, with peak waits up to 3-4 hours or more at some gateway airports;
- Decreased service levels in our cargo operations, including increased and potentially escalating delays for container examinations of up to 5 days or more at major seaports, and significant daily back-ups at land border ports of entry; and
- Reduced flexibility to maintain or extend operating hours or respond to requests for new services.

These cuts take place against a backdrop of significant growth of international travel and trade in all environments. International air travel has increased by 12 percent over the past 3 years and is expected to increase an additional 5 percent this fiscal year. Land border

commercial and passenger traffic is increasing on both the Northern and Southern borders, and maritime and air cargo shipments have grown by 4 percent over the last year. Given the importance of this commercial activity to the U.S. economy, CBP is very concerned about the ramifications of sequestration and we will endeavor to operate in a manner that is least disruptive to our mission and to your businesses.

This letter is only part of an ongoing dialogue between the Department of Homeland Security, CBP, and our private sector stakeholders, and we plan to continue communicating with our trade and travel industry colleagues through our website, through direct interactions with the Commercial Operations Advisory Committee and your associations, and locally through our Directors of Field Operations and Port Directors. We welcome your ideas, concerns, and recommendations during this uncertain time. Please do not hesitate to reach out to your regular CBP points of contact during this period, and we will do the same to ensure open channels of communication.

Sincerely,



David V. Aguilar  
Deputy Commissioner

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