

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM

2157 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING

WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6143

MAJORITY (202) 225-5074
MINORITY (202) 225-5051

<http://oversight.house.gov>

February 18, 2016

The Honorable Sarah R. Saldaña
Director
U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement
500 12th Street, SW
Washington, D.C. 20536

Dear Director Saldaña:

A recent press report stated that a federal government contractor, GEO Care, issues smartphones to aliens after they are released from detention centers.¹ According to the report, the program provides the phones for free, and the phones are equipped with voice and internet service.²

A critic of the program suggested that providing free phones to detainees may counteract a public awareness campaign in Central America that is designed to discourage migration because it creates an incentive to enter the United States illegally.³ Furthermore, smartphones are an expensive technology. A recent Pew Research Center report found that only 64 percent of American adults, and 50 percent of Americans making \$30,000 or less, own a smartphone.⁴

Please provide a briefing as soon as possible, but no later than March 1, 2016, on the policy whereby Immigration and Customs Enforcement and/or its contractors distribute phones to aliens when they are released from custody. This briefing should address the total cost of the program; the history of the program; the number of phones distributed; any policies for referring those aliens to other organizations to obtain phones (whether government programs or charitable organizations); and ICE's policy for monitoring distributed phones.

The Committee on Oversight and Government Reform is the principal investigative committee in the U.S. House of Representatives. Pursuant to House Rule X, the Committee has authority to investigate "any matter" at "any time."

¹ Molly Hennessy-Fiske, *America is lending smartphones to immigrants caught at the border*, L.A. TIMES, Feb. 11, 2016.

² *Id.*

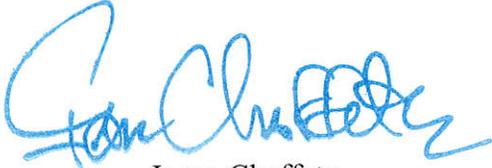
³ *Id.*

⁴ Pew Research Center, *U.S. Smartphone Use in 2015, A Portrait of Smartphone Ownership* (Oct. 2014), available at <http://www.pewinternet.org/fact-sheets/mobile-technology-fact-sheet/> (last visited Feb. 16, 2016).

The Honorable Sarah R. Saldaña
February 18, 2016
Page 2

Please contact Mike Howell of Chairman Chaffetz's staff at (202) 225-5074 to schedule a briefing and with any questions about this request. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Jason Chaffetz
Chairman



Ron Desantis
Chairman
Subcommittee on National Security

Enclosure

cc: The Honorable Elijah Cummings, Ranking Member
Committee on Oversight and Government Reform

The Honorable Stephen Lynch, Ranking Member
Subcommittee on National Security

The Honorable Harold Rogers, Chairman
Committee on Appropriations

The Honorable Nita M. Lowey, Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations

The Honorable John Carter, Chairman
Subcommittee on Homeland Security, Committee on Appropriations

The Honorable Lucille Roybal-Allard, Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Homeland Security, Committee on Appropriations