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McCaul, Cuellar Get Look at New Technology to Secure Border Developed by Austin Tech Company

AUSTIN, TX – Congressmen Michael McCaul (R-Austin) and Henry Cuellar (D-Laredo) had a first-hand look at new technology that would allow federal agents patrolling the borders to disable the engines of boats and land vehicles from a distance without harm to occupants. The technology, developed by Applied Physical Electronics of Spicewood, TX, has the potential to strengthen border and port security by mitigating the risks involved in initial contact between law enforcement and suspected smugglers.

"The ability to stop vehicles of smugglers from a distance without making direct contact would give our Border Patrol agents a distinct advantage," said Congressman McCaul. "It would allow them to stop vehicles they may otherwise not be able to catch and in some cases avoid dangerous pursuits. These are the types of tools we need."

"This is cutting-edge technology to meet the spectrum of 21st century threats facing our borders and ports of entry," said Congressman Cuellar. "Technology like this puts one more tool in the toolbox for our federal law enforcement at the borders. It's empowering equipment to combat illegal activity."

Applied Physical Electronics (APE) recently introduced the new security device known as the EMP Suitcase Compact 2100 Series. The equipment generates high amplitude electric fields that are strong enough to disable or defeat electronics without causing permanent physical damage or endangerment to individuals. EMP technology operates from inside a suitcase making it easily portable for use in a variety of security operations. Similar prototypes developed by APE have been used by the Department of Defense (DOD) for the past 12 years.

Congressmen McCaul and Cuellar, who serve together on the House Committee on Homeland Security, are leading a bipartisan effort in Congress to identify the most effective and cost-efficient technology to augment security at the nation's borders and ports of entry. Both believe in the value of incorporating new technology into the nation's comprehensive strategy for homeland security.

This Spring, the Texas lawmakers toured part of the Texas-Mexico border to see the use of DOD surveillance technology that has been used successfully in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Shortly after the demonstration, Congressman McCaul passed an amendment through the House Committee on Homeland Security urging the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to consider the use of DOD technology along the northern and southern borders.

Recently, both have also advocated the use of an unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) along the Texas-Mexico border. The remotely-piloted aircraft has the capability to monitor remote regions of the Rio Grande for up to 20 hours per flight to assist Customs and Border Protection in combating illegal activity. Similar aircraft currently provide the military critical surveillance intelligence abroad. Both lawmakers have been engaged with CBP in bringing the UAV to Texas and expect flights beginning this fall.

“DOD technology is proven, readily available and will further save taxpayer dollars by eliminating new research and development costs,” said McCaul. “This is a commonsense strategy for homeland security. Proven technology produced by companies such as Applied Physical Electronics could provide the same benefits.”

“This is a forward-thinking approach to modernize our border against evolving threats,” said Cuellar. “Criminals, terrorists and combatants aim to do what we don’t anticipate. Technology can secure known security gaps.”

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