

**JENNIFFER GONZÁLEZ-COLÓN**  
PUERTO RICO, AT LARGE

WASHINGTON OFFICE:  
1609 LONGWORTH HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING  
(202) 225-6215 FAX: (202) 225-2154

SAN JUAN OFFICE:  
157 AVENIDA DE LA CONSTITUCIÓN  
ANTIGUO EDIFICIO DE MEDICINA TROPICAL  
SEGUNDO PISO  
SAN JUAN, PUERTO RICO 00901  
(787) 723-6333 FAX: (787) 729-7738



**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
**Washington, DC 20515-5400**

COMMITTEES:  
**TRANSPORTATION & INFRASTRUCTURE**  
SUBCOMMITTEES  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, PUBLIC BUILDINGS AND  
EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT  
WATER RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENT  
**NATURAL RESOURCES**  
SUBCOMMITTEES  
WATER, OCEANS AND WILDLIFE  
OVERSIGHT AND INVESTIGATIONS

July 18, 2020

The Honorable William P. Barr  
Attorney General  
U.S. Department of Justice  
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20530

Mr. Donald W. Washington  
Director  
U.S. Marshals Service  
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20530

Mr. Michael Carvajal  
Director  
Federal Bureau of Prisons  
320 First Street, N.W.  
Washington, DC 20534

Dear Attorney General Barr, Director Washington, and Director Carvajal:

It has come to my attention that the U.S. Marshal Service this past week transferred to Puerto Rico via air lift 54 federal inmates. These are all currently being housed at the Metropolitan Detention Center (MDC) in Guaynabo. Seven of these inmates immediately tested positive to Covid 19. The remaining 47 are awaiting test results. They have all been quarantined in an isolation ward of the detention center.

This situation is extremely troubling. Since March, the Chief Judge of the United States District Court, U.S. Attorney, U.S. Marshal and the Warden of MDC agreed to an aggressive and effective pandemic plan. Because of this, no inmate within MDC's general population has tested positive to Covid 19.

It is to my understanding that the current air lift was not consulted with nor notified to the Chief Judge nor the U.S. Attorney. As a matter of fact, there were no court orders to bring federal inmates to Puerto Rico since all sentencing proceedings are being currently conducted by way of videoconference, as authorized by Congress in the CARES Act. More so, the United States District Court has been closed by order of the Chief Judge since late March and will not reopen for in person criminal hearings at least until September 7th.

When the U.S. Marshal was notified of the air lift, he immediately voiced his objection because of the health and safety concerns at MDC, as addressed collectively with the Chief Judge, U.S. Attorney and Warden months before. Nevertheless, the decision was made at a high level within the U.S. Marshal Service in the mainland to bring this large group of inmates to Puerto Rico.

I join the grave concerns of the aforementioned Presidentially appointed and Senate confirmed officials in Puerto Rico. These are the highest ranking federal judicial and executive branch representatives in Puerto Rico, yet they were not consulted in the planning and ultimate decision of this matter. In other words, they were completely ignored in the consultation, planning and ultimate decision making in this matter.

I am also extremely concerned that MDC Guaynabo will be used as clearing house to transfer inmates from the U.S. mainland without any due consideration to the existing and immense efforts to effectively safeguard the inmate population therein, and thus, contain the spread of Covid 19. In addition, as a result of this single air lift local U.S. Marshal and Bureau of Prisons personnel have also been ordered to stay home under quarantine measures. This, in turn, increasingly burdens both agencies which now temporarily have less available personnel. Likewise, it also unnecessarily impacts the already highly demanding work of the Chief Judge, district and magistrate judges, as well as the U.S. Attorney and federal prosecutors.

In light of the preceding I ask that, in accordance with all applicable laws, rules and regulations, you cease transferring all federal inmates to the District of Puerto Rico until it is medically safe to do so. The Chief Judge, U.S. Attorney and U.S. Marshal all concur that it is viable and will not affect the operations of MDC Guaynabo.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jenniffer González-Colón". The signature is stylized and cursive.

Jenniffer González-Colón  
Member of Congress

Cc. Hon. Gustavo A. Gelpí  
Chief Judge, U.S. District Court for the District of Puerto Rico

W. Stephen Muldrow  
United States Attorney for the District of Puerto Rico

Wilmer Ocasio  
U.S. Marshal for the District of Puerto Rico