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HOFFA: GOVERNMENT REPORT SHOWS BORDER SHOULD REMAIN CLOSED

Trucking Pilot Program Diverted Inspections From Buses, Inspector General Reports

Teamsters General President Jim Hoffa said on Thursday that an inspector general report shows once and for all that the border should remain closed to unsafe Mexican trucks.

A pilot program to allow Mexican trucks on U.S. highways began in September 2007 and ended in March 2009 when Congress, with bipartisan support, cut off funding for it.

The inspector general reported that states aren't consistently reporting Mexican drivers' traffic convictions. That "could result in Mexican Federal CDL (commercial driver's license) holders continuing to drive in the United States after incurring a disqualifying traffic offense," the report said.

"This new report raises even more alarms about opening our border to unsafe trucks from Mexico and endangering the lives of drivers in the United States," Hoffa said.

The inspector general also reported that the program diverted border officials from inspecting passenger buses. In El Paso, for example, the number of bus inspections fell by 80 percent.

At some California and Texas crossings, passenger buses are still not inspected when they cross the border on evenings, weekends or holidays because there are no inspectors working those shifts.

"This report shows without a doubt that opening the border to Mexican trucks and buses puts an unacceptable strain on our border resources," Hoffa said. "Federal officials couldn't keep up with inspections when there were only 118 trucks in the pilot program. If the border were opened to all Mexican trucks, border inspection stations would be completely overwhelmed."

The report, dated Aug. 17, said that the shift in border inspectors should "call into question whether FMCSA's (Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration) border staff could meet the bus inspection demands that may occur if the border were to open to a large number of Mexican long-haul trucks and buses."

Hoffa said that Mexican trucks should not be allowed to travel on U.S. highways until the United States implements a comprehensive inspection program and the Mexican government ensures that hours-of-service

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rules are enforced, that Mexican drivers meet the same qualifications as U.S. drivers and that drug and alcohol testing facilities are brought up to U.S. standards.

The Mexican government slapped tariffs on \$2.4 billion worth of goods after the pilot program was shut down. Hoffa said the retaliatory tariffs are unfair and disproportionate.

“Anyone who drives on U.S. roads should be required to obey U.S. safety laws,” Hoffa said. “The Mexican government is wrong if it thinks NAFTA should give it the right to send dangerous trucks onto our highways. Mexico must meet its end of the bargain. For the last 15 years, it hasn’t even tried. The U.S. Trade Representative should be challenging these unfair tariffs.”

Founded in 1903, the International Brotherhood of Teamsters represents 1.4 million hardworking men and women in the United States, Canada and Puerto Rico.