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On behalf of the over 500 members of the Washington State Narcotics Investigators Association (WSNIA), I would like to take this opportunity to thank you and the entire RC-26 program for the assistance and support you have provided law enforcement throughout the northwest. The RC-26 is an integral tool used by law enforcement in its efforts to dismantle high level Drug Trafficking Organizations (DTO's) preying on Washington communities.

The RC-26 program allows investigative officers to effectively conduct surveillance on DTO members undetected. As a result, the RC-26 program has easily identified DTO "Stash Houses" that would have taken ground surveillance units weeks, if not months, to identify. Utilizing the RC-26 during surveillance has afforded task force officers the ability to make observations of DTO operations that would otherwise not be possible to make by ground surveillance.

With the opioid epidemic raging across Washington and large quantities of Methamphetamine continuing to threaten our state, it is not the time to take away this invaluable resource.

In addition, without question, the RC-26 program enhances law enforcement officers' safety during missions, especially during buy busts and the execution of high-risk search warrant. The RC-26 is used for pre-raid surveillance and on a number of occasions has allowed the officer riding in the aircraft to observe activities resulting in critical changes in plans to keep officers safe. The RC-26 has allowed officers to view secret stash locations that would not have been found without this resource.

In one case, the RC-26 was used to surveil a residence prior to service of a high-risk search warrant. The FLIR determine a vehicle parked at a residence was hot and had recently been driven. Three suspects were observed exiting the residence carrying large duffle bags. Two suspects took off in the vehicle which was tracked by the RC-26. A subsequent traffic stop and search of the vehicle revealed one of the duffle bags contained 6 semi-automatic weapons, one of which was stolen.

What cannot go unmentioned is how the RC-26 personnel interact and perform with a great deal of professionalism and strong work ethic. These guardsmen are truly a credit to the program and the National Guard.

Please let me know if our members can provide further details or testimony as to the value of the RC-26 program.

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