

**AMENDMENT TO THE RULES COMMITTEE PRINT
OF H.R. 4310
OFFERED BY MR. PIERLUISI OF PUERTO RICO**

At the end of subtitle B of title X, add the following
new section:

1 **SEC. 1015. SENSE OF CONGRESS REGARDING THE**
2 **COUNTERDRUG TETHERED AEROSTAT**
3 **RADAR SYSTEM PROGRAM.**

4 (a) FINDINGS.—Congress finds the following:

5 (1) Since 1992, the Air Force has administered
6 the Counterdrug Tethered Aerostat Radar System
7 (TARS) program, which contributes to deterring and
8 detecting smugglers moving illicit drugs into the
9 United States.

10 (2) There are eight current tethered aerostat
11 systems, located at Yuma, Arizona, Fort Huachuca,
12 Arizona, Deming, New Mexico, Marfa, Texas, Eagle
13 Pass, Texas, Rio Grande City, Texas, Cudjoe Key,
14 Florida, and Lajas, Puerto Rico.

15 (3) Primary customers of the surveillance data
16 from the TARS program are the Department of
17 Homeland Security, the United States Northern
18 Command, the United States Southern Command,

1 and the North American Aerospace Defense Com-
2 mand.

3 (4) In the past two years, the radars in two of
4 the eight tethered aerostat systems have been de-
5 stroyed in strong weather conditions, namely the
6 radar at Lajas, Puerto Rico, which was destroyed in
7 April 2011, and the radar at Marfa, Texas, which
8 was destroyed in February 2012.

9 (5) The Air Force has indicated that it does not
10 have sufficient spare parts in its inventory to replace
11 either of these two radars or the funding necessary
12 to purchase any new radars. As a result, there are
13 no current plans to resume operations at Lajas,
14 Puerto Rico or Marfa, Texas.

15 (6) The loss of these two tethered aerostats sys-
16 tems substantially degrades counterdrug capabilities
17 in the Caribbean corridor and along the Southwest
18 border.

19 (7) The loss of the tethered aerostat system in
20 Lajas, Puerto Rico, is particularly detrimental to the
21 national counterdrug mission. In Section 1023 of the
22 National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year
23 2006 (Public Law 109–163), Congress found that—

24 (A) “Drug traffickers use the Caribbean
25 corridor to smuggle narcotics to the United

1 States via Puerto Rico and the Dominican Re-
2 public. This route is ideal for drug trafficking
3 because of its geographic expanse, numerous
4 law enforcement jurisdictions, and fragmented
5 investigative efforts.”; and

6 (B) “The tethered aerostat system in
7 Lajas, Puerto Rico, contributes to deterring
8 and detecting smugglers moving illicit drugs
9 into Puerto Rico. The aerostat’s range and
10 operational capabilities allow it to provide sur-
11 veillance coverage of the eastern Caribbean cor-
12 ridor and the strategic waterway between Puer-
13 to Rico and the Dominican Republic, known as
14 the Mona Passage.”.

15 (8) In such section 1023, Congress expressed
16 that “Congress and the Department of Defense
17 should fund the Counter-Drug Tethered Aerostat
18 program.”.

19 (9) In recent years, Puerto Rico and the U.S.
20 Virgin Islands have been increasingly impacted by
21 the drug trade and related violence. Both jurisdic-
22 tions have homicide rates that are roughly six times
23 the national average and about three times higher
24 than any State, and many of these homicides are
25 linked to the drug trade.

1 (10) The Department of Defense has raised
2 questions as to whether it should continue to admin-
3 ister the TARS program or, alternatively, whether
4 responsibility for this program should be vested in
5 the Department of Homeland Security.

6 (b) SENSE OF CONGRESS.—In light of the findings
7 under subsection (a), it is the sense of Congress that—

8 (1) irrespective of whether the Department of
9 Defense continues to be responsible for the
10 Counterdrug Tethered Aerostat Radar System
11 (TARS) program or such responsibility is assigned
12 to another agency, Congress and the responsible
13 agency should fund the TARS program; and

14 (2) Congress and the responsible agency should
15 take all appropriate steps to ensure that the eight
16 current tethered aerostat systems are fully func-
17 tional and, in particular, to ensure that the TARS
18 program is providing coverage to protect jurisdic-
19 tions of the United States in the Caribbean region,
20 as well as jurisdictions of the United States along
21 the United States-Mexico border and in the Florida
22 Straits.

