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Securing the Southern Border

Officials say deployment of 1,200 National Guard troops is "simply not enough"

by Ashley Murphy

President Barack Obama authorized 1,200 National Guard troops to be implemented along the lengthy United States/Mexico border. This latest maneuver to help secure America's borders has been compared to one "spitting in the wind."

The statement was made by Cochise County Sheriff Larry Dever who is glad to see some action being taken, but believes it just isn't enough for the nearly 2,000 miles of border the U.S. has to maintain with Mexico from California to Texas.

The move comes a month

and a half after Arizona Governor Jan Brewer signed a bill putting a new immigration law into effect. The bill is being called by some opponents the nation's toughest state immigration enforcement law. Many groups and activists protested before Governor Brewer could even pen her

signature.

Obama has shown great disapproval for Arizona's law and it was only after a recent meeting that the decision was put in motion. The president met with Senate Republicans to discuss immigration legislation when several senators began proposing possible amendments regarding border security to a \$60 billion war spending bill that could possibly be put on the Senate floor. Arizona Senator John McCain (R) was one senator who voiced his amendment ideas. McCain suggested that unspent stimulus money be used to station 6,000 National Guard troops at the U.S.-Mexico border. McCain said he appreciates the action, but stated that it's "simply not enough."

Democratic Representative Gabrielle Giffords from Arizona believes the "small number" of troops being sent are a big help. Giffords praised the administration for finally taking action, but only requested for more troops after an Arizona rancher was killed by a suspected illegal immigrant earlier in the year.

In 2006, former President George W. Bush sent 6,000 troops to the border, but it was only a temporary action; they were removed in 2008. Many fear Obama will make the same mistakes as Bush and restrict the National Guard. In 2006, the troops were limited to support roles, instead of enforcement roles that

could have allowed them to make arrests and confront smugglers, but the proposed deployment has also been limited based on a statement by White House Official James Jones. Giffords added that Obama has also requested \$500 million for "enhanced border protection and law enforcement."

The additional \$500 million that Obama has requested would go to improving border security and increasing the number of border personnel to allow for a larger number of agents, investigators and prosecutors to target drug, human and weapons traffickers. Essentially, the National Guard troops being sent now will do the desk work current agents are doing, which ties up their work for being out at the fences. Also, more training will be done for border patrol officers during this time.

Democratic Arizona Attorney General Terry Goddard stated that the deployment of troops was a "good start," but believes the troops should have more authority and power to help border patrol officers and agents in identifying and capturing those who breach the border.

Arizona's new immigration law author, Republican State Senator Russell Pearce, also agrees the deployed troops should have more authority and law enforcement power to confront those at the border who are violent or who may

be armed. Pearce's concerns stem from a 2007 incident where National Guard troops, who had orders not to return fire, had to call in federal agents when gunmen began approaching their post near the border in Arizona.

Locally, Chuck Fleischmann from Chattanooga, candidate for Congress in the 3rd District responded to Obama's action saying, "The action being taken by the President is not enough, and he is insulting our intelligence by thinking he can use this as a bargaining chip when he later introduces what he will call 'comprehensive immigration reform, but is in reality - amnesty.'" Fleischmann continued, "We need thousands more National Guard troops and Border Patrol agents to make any measurable difference. We also must complete the proposed southern border fence, and use our technological advantages to their fullest extent. This is not a time for empty gestures to be used later on down the road for political gain. We need real border security and real immigration enforcement. Illegal immigration is devastating our economy, our schools and our health care system. It is also a very real threat to our national security, and the problem must be solved. Now."

Fleischmann isn't standing alone in his statements, as many proponents have much of the same feelings.

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