



TESTIMONY OF

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BEFORE

U.S. House of Representatives  
Committee on Homeland Security  
Subcommittee on Border Security, Facilitation and Operations

ON

“Examining the Department of Defense’s Deployment to the U.S.-Mexico Border”

June 20, 2019  
Washington, DC

Chairwoman Rice, Ranking Member Higgins, and Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today.

Our nation is experiencing an unprecedented border security and humanitarian crisis along our southwest border. We have surging levels of individuals entering without proper documentation. This fiscal year through May, Border Patrol has apprehended over 593,000 illegal aliens between ports of entry along the southwest border. CBP's Office of Field Operations encountered an additional 80,000+ inadmissible individuals at ports of entry along the southwest border. This year-to-date level exceeds the full-year apprehensions of any fiscal year in the last decade. We have also set an unfortunate new record of the largest migrant group ever apprehended—more than a thousand migrants illegally crossing the border together in El Paso, Texas, in late May.

The demographic shift towards more vulnerable populations, combined with overwhelming numbers, has caused 40 to 60 percent of Border Patrol agents to be pulled away from our border security mission to provide humanitarian support—that's 40 to 60 percent of our frontline workforce that is not available to stop drugs, gang members, and dangerous criminals from entering our country. In addition to the nearly 600,000 apprehensions to date, Border Patrol has documented more than 100,000 individuals who successfully crossed the border illegally and disappeared into border communities before agents could respond. This is the highest level of observed "got aways" since Fiscal Year (FY) 2014. This high level of "got aways" is a direct result of agents being reassigned away from the frontline to provide humanitarian support to the unprecedented numbers of individuals and families in custody. In FY 2019 to date, UAC and family units represent 66 percent of all southwest border inadmissible individuals and apprehensions.

### **CBP and the Department of Defense**

At CBP, we have a long history of working closely with our partners at the U.S. Department of Defense (DOD), united by the common purpose of keeping the United States and its people safe and secure.

DOD's U.S. Northern Command, U.S. Southern Command, and U.S. Indo-Pacific Command have long supported our border security mission. National Guard personnel have provided support—such as counternarcotic support operations—in areas including Tucson, Yuma, and West Texas for decades. Previous Administrations also directed DOD to temporarily authorize the use of National Guard personnel to support CBP. National Guard personnel have assisted CBP by providing aviation, operational, logistical, engineering and administrative support in *Operation Jump Start* from 2006 to 2008, and again in *Operation Phalanx* from 2010 to 2016.

Specifically, during *Operation Jump Start*, National Guard personnel provided interim surveillance and reconnaissance (air, ground, satellite imagery), linguists; air and ground transportation, engineering (fences and roads), and logistics (medical, temporary shelters, and food service) support to CBP while CBP recruited, trained, and deployed additional agents. This interim support increased situational awareness that facilitated more than 173,000 CBP arrests, the rescue of 100 people, and the seizure of more than 300,000 pounds of drugs. Most

importantly, *Operation Jump Start* contributed to a significant decrease in illicit trafficking activity in many areas of the border.

### **DOD Support to the Border Security Crisis**

On April 4, 2018, President Trump directed DOD to support the Department of Homeland Security in securing the southern border. Multiple requests for assistance have further expanded DOD support efforts to address the continuously evolving border security crisis. The ongoing deployment of DOD and National Guard personnel, equipment and assets provide critical support to our law enforcement agents.

In *Operation Guardian Support*, National Guard personnel are providing air support in the form of light and medium lift helicopters; infrastructure support, such as road maintenance and vegetation clearing; operational support, such as fleet maintenance and repair and law enforcement communications assistance; and surveillance support as surveillance camera operators.

To be clear, National Guard personnel supporting *Operation Guardian Support* do *not* conduct law enforcement activities and do *not* have direct contact with migrants. However, they are providing tremendous assistance to CBP. By taking on these important supporting tasks, such as infrastructure repair or surveillance assistance, these National Guard personnel enable Border Patrol agents to focus on law enforcement activities at the border.

In 2018, in response to a Central American caravan of unprecedented size, CBP requested additional DOD support during *Operation Secure Line*. DOD personnel provided planning assistance; engineering support, such as temporary barriers, barricades, and fencing; fixed wing and rotary wing aviation support to transport CBP personnel; medical teams to triage, treat, and prepare for commercial transport of patients; command and control facilities for CBP personnel; temporary housing for CBP personnel; and personal protective equipment for CBP personnel.

Additionally, DOD personnel are augmenting border security situational awareness utilizing CBP Mobile Surveillance Capability (MSC). MSC systems provide long-range mobile surveillance and consist of a suite of radar and camera sensors mounted on vehicles. Such vehicles are deployed to operate the system, which automatically detects and tracks items of interest and provides the operator with data and video of the observed subject. Agents often work alone in rugged, remote areas. The surveillance DOD provides helps us keep the agents on the ground safe and aware of illegal activity happening along the border.

DOD and CBP have also expanded our partnership of over a decade to construct new border barriers in key locations across the southwest border. Investments made using DHS-appropriated resources and Treasury Forfeiture Funds are being executed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Forty-four of the approximately 205 miles DHS has funding on hand to support are already complete—with many more miles underway. DOD is also assisting DHS by executing approximately 129 additional miles with counterdrug funding, adding barriers, roads and lights that will block known drug smuggling corridors. A portion of the DOD-funded barrier construction is currently on hold due to a court injunction from the United States District Court –

Northern District of California. These barriers provide a tangible mechanism to deter, stop, and/or delay those illegal entrants that would seek to evade the Border Patrol. At no time in our history has this been more critical than today, when a significant portion of our frontline workforce is focused on addressing the humanitarian crisis at our borders.

### **Making a Difference**

Since *Operation Guardian Support* began in 2018, CBP has carried out thousands of apprehensions, seized thousands of pounds of dangerous drugs, and performed multiple rescues. In FY 2019 to date, DOD assistance has contributed to more than 87,000 deportable alien arrests, and the seizure of more than 24,000 pounds of marijuana, 228 pounds of methamphetamine, and more than \$7,000 in currency. Additionally, DOD's MSC surveillance support missions have contributed to more than 13,000 apprehensions and the seizure of more than 3,700 pounds of marijuana and \$2,000 in currency. Their support has made a difference in CBP's ability to carry out our mission.

For example, in January of this year, a Lordsburg Border Patrol agent operating infrared surveillance equipment saw four individuals walking northbound near a smelter on Highway 1113. The individuals were wearing camouflage clothing and custom-made footwear designed to mask their tracks. Border Patrol All-Terrain Vehicle (ATV) Units and a National Guard helicopter responded to the area, and the helicopter crew—equipped with night vision equipment—was able to locate the four individuals. The helicopter crew guided the ATV Units to the hidden individuals, who were arrested. The National Guard crew then alerted and guided the agents to several large rectangular burlap sacks in the area, which tested positive for marijuana. In total, the bags of drugs weighed 135.6 pounds, with an estimated street value of \$108,640.

In another example, in June 2018 Border Patrol agents from the McAllen Station in Texas received information from Mexico's emergency call center regarding a lost Mexican national in distress. Border Patrol agents operating an aerostat camera located the lost migrant, who was suffering from dehydration. The Border Patrol agents provided coordinates to a nearby Texas Army National Guard helicopter pilot who was supporting *Operation Guardian Support*. Minutes later, the National Guard pilot located the subject and quickly guided Border Patrol agents to the location. There, a Border Patrol agent who is a certified Emergency Medical Technician treated the lost Mexican national for dehydration.

In addition, last year in the Tucson Sector, the Arizona National Guard supporting the Ajo Border Patrol Station provided vehicle mechanics to help complete an inspection of the station's fleet. During the inspection, the National Guard mechanics identified and repaired more than 80 vehicles with suspension issues that could have led to significant safety hazards for Border Patrol Agents patrolling in isolated areas. While this could have taken weeks to resolve, with the National Guard's help, Border Patrol was able to complete the inspections and repairs within two days.

## **Conclusion**

Border security is national security—there is no difference—and the crisis on our southwest border puts our national security at risk. I have repeatedly asked Congress to act, to address the outdated legal framework and broken immigration system that has caused dangerous mass migration with no end in sight. Without legislative solutions, CBP expects the need for continued DOD support to help address the diversion of resources away from the border security mission to the current humanitarian crisis.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. I look forward to your questions.