Congress of the United States  
Washington, DC 20515  
November 1, 2018

The Honorable James N. Mattis  
Secretary of Defense  
1000 Defense Pentagon  
Washington, DC 20301-1000

Dear Secretary Mattis,

We are writing today to express our opposition to the decision to use additional troops on the southern border to assist U.S. Customs and Border Protection. Congress was recently notified that the Administration is sending an additional 5,200 troops to the border without a long-term plan or an analysis of the effectiveness of previous deployments from this year.

The United States can maintain a secure border and the rule of law while still upholding our country’s values to protect those fleeing persecution and violence. The use of military personnel, however, will not help us meet this challenge and only exacerbates the potential to unnecessarily escalate the situation. This effort is nothing short of a militarization of the southern border to score political points and stoke misleading fears among Americans regarding immigrants. In addition, this decision negatively impacts the readiness of our military personnel who could be training to increase their effectiveness in line with their assigned missions and expertise.

This latest announcement follows a series of actions the President has taken this year to use the military to support his failed immigration policies. Earlier this year, National Guard troops were deployed to the southern border at a cost of $103 million, with no evidence to date of the necessity or effectiveness of their deployment. Furthermore, the Department of Defense (DOD) supported requests from the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to shelter as many as 20,000 unaccompanied migrant children and 12,000 family members. Lastly, DOD internally approved $7.5 million for advanced planning for a 37-mile border barrier at the Barry M. Goldwater Range that could cost as much as $450 million. Instead of working in a bipartisan manner to make comprehensive, common-sense, and humane reforms to our immigration system, the President continues to turn to politically-motivated fear mongering and uses DOD resources and personnel as means to drive the his troubling anti-immigration agenda.

The President has exploited the caravan of people traveling to the U.S. to seek asylum for his own political gain, and he continues to politicize and militarize this humanitarian crisis as these men, women, and children are fleeing violence and persecution in an unstable part of the world. This is another example of the President using fear-mongering tactics over a humanitarian issue. This use of military personnel and resources for functions outside of core mission areas warrants additional Congressional oversight.

Given this disparate approach, we request an update to answer the following questions:

1. What is the duration of the recent deployment to the southern border for the personnel deployed and to be deployed?
2. How many personnel will come from each component of the military i.e. active duty, National Guard and Reserve?

3. What rules of engagement will troops be under with regard to individuals in the caravan or any other individuals approaching or coming across the southern border?

4. Have any troops been instructed or trained on how to interact or engage in any way with individuals in the caravan? If so, what is the nature of the expected interaction and what training have these troops received for these interactions?

5. How much will this deployment cost the American taxpayer?

With all of these pressing concerns in mind, we request a briefing and written response to answer the questions above, and we request an overview of the current strategy. We look forward to your response and thank you for your attention on this matter.

Sincerely,

Adam Smith
Member of Congress

Bennie Thompson
Member of Congress

Jerrold Nadler
Member of Congress

Elijah Cummings
Member of Congress

Robert Brady
Member of Congress

Carolyn Maloney
Member of Congress

Linda T. Sanchez
Member of Congress

Nydia M. Velázquez
Member of Congress
Hakeem Jeffries  
Member of Congress

Pramila Jayapal  
Member of Congress

Alcee L. Hastings  
Member of Congress

Luis V. Gutierrez  
Member of Congress

Darren Soto  
Member of Congress

Filemon Vela  
Member of Congress

Paul Tonko  
Member of Congress

Donald Norcross  
Member of Congress

Mark Takano  
Member of Congress

Mike Doyle  
Member of Congress

Bonnie Watson Coleman  
Member of Congress

Jim Himes  
Member of Congress

Debbie Wasserman Schultz  
Member of Congress

Earl Blumenauer  
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Cedric Richmond
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Mark DeSaulnier
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Gwen Moore
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Daniel T. Kildee
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John Yarmuth
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Charlie Crist
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Danny K. Davis
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Vicente Gonzalez
Member of Congress