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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

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SUBCOMMITTEE ON TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION

June 29, 2010

The Hon. Ike Skelton
Chairman
House Committee on Armed Services
2120 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Skelton:

I am concerned about a press report this afternoon indicating you will oppose including a provision to send thousands more National Guard troops to the U.S.-Mexico border within a final National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2011.

If true, I urge you go reconsider.

As you know, a provision to send 6,000 National Guard troops was included in the Senate version of the legislation, S. 3454, but a similar provision was not included in the House version, H.R. 5136.

As you recall, I offered a bipartisan amendment with Rep. Dana Rohrabacher (R-Cal.) to the House version to put a provision into the House bill to send a minimum of at least 3,000 additional National Guard troops to the border. The amendment was based upon the Deploy National Guard Troops to the Border Act, H.R. 5357, a bipartisan bill Rep. Rohrabacher and I introduced in May to require the immediate deployment of at least 3,000 additional National Guard troops to the border. Unfortunately, our amendment was blocked from floor consideration.

I firmly believe that we must send as many National Guard troops as necessary to secure the border, and that we must keep them there until the federal government establishes a permanent fix.

Operation Jump Start, which concluded its mission in 2008, proved remarkably effective. According to the U.S. Customs and Border Patrol, the Yuma Sector experienced a 68 percent decrease in apprehensions between October 1, 2006, and July 31, 2007, compared with the previous year. Border-wide, the National Guard helped seize more than 1,080 vehicles used to transport drugs and/or illegal immigrants, more than 300,600 pounds of marijuana, and 5,060 pounds of cocaine.

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Because I believe the troops were withdrawn too quickly, I offered an amendment to the National Defense Authorization Act in 2008 to extend their deployment. Unfortunately, that amendment, like the one I offered this year, was also blocked from floor consideration.

The lack of effective border security is not just a problem at the border. The effects are being felt in the interior--in places like Phoenix, where smugglers and Mexican drug cartels have set up vast networks of drop houses, which operate as way stations for their illegal activities. The crime and violence associated with these drop houses is horrendous. Phoenix has become a kidnapping capital.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Harry E. Mitchell

Harry E. Mitchell
Member of Congress