General Information

Source: NBC Nightly News  
Creator: John Seigenthaler/Jeannie Ohm  
Event Date: 05/13/2006  
Air/Publish Date: 05/13/2006

Resource Type: Video News Report  
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Description

President George W. Bush plans to use the National Guard along the Mexican border in order to tighten immigration and national security. Governors from several border states think the plan puts too big of a burden on their states.

Keywords

Border, Immigration, Mexico, Illegal Immigration, President, George W. Bush, States, Governors, Patrol, Common Defense, National Guard, Army, Soldier, Brigade, Customs, Checkpoint, Border Security, Arizona, New Mexico, California, Governor, Janet Napolitano, Arnold Schwarzenegger, Bill Richardson, Pentagon, Invasion, Domestic Violence, Terrorism, Constitution, Article 4, Section 4

Citation

States Wary of Plan to Use National Guard to Patrol the Border

https://highered.nbclearn.com/portal/site/HigherEd/browse/?cuecard=2983

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Clip Length 00:02:23
Transcript

States Wary of Plan to Use National Guard to Patrol the Border

JOHN SEIGENTHALER, anchor:

Good evening, everyone. We begin tonight with two major challenges for the White House. Immigration and national security. The President is preparing to explain his proposal for immigration reform in a speech to the nation Monday night. His plan to use the National Guard along the Mexican border has sparked a debate already in several border states.

JEANNIE OHM reporting:

The job of enforcing the nation's borders falls to just over 11,000 border patrol agents within the Department of Homeland Security. More than double from 10 years ago, but critics say far short of what's needed.

Governor JANET NAPOLITANO: States like Arizona are paying an undue price for the failure of both nation's capitols.

OHM: For months, Arizona Governor Janet Napolitano has been calling on the administration to do more to enforce border security. On Monday she'll get an answer from President Bush, who's expected to announce the possibility of deploying five to 10,000 National Guard troops along the Mexican border to work with the Border Patrol. The National Guard is already there, but in limited numbers and capacity.

In California about 150 personnel provide assistance, ranging from building fences to manning observation posts. In Arizona on any given day, up to 100 members of the Guard provides logistics, including translation services. In New Mexico about 70 Guardsmen are assigned to search cars and fly night missions. And 230 Texas Guard members provide communication and transportation. But Napolitano says just adding more Guard troops isn't the answer.

Gov. NAPOLITANO: We don't want to be in the situation we're militarizing the border, but we just plain
need more manpower down there.

OHM: Pentagon officials insist any additional troops would continue to play a supporting role, freeing up border agents to focus on law enforcement and stopping illegal immigrants. And there is a question of the National Guard itself, already serving multiple deployments in Iraq.

California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger says this may be pushing it.

Governor ARNOLD SCHWARZENEGGER: Going the direction of the National Guard, I think is maybe not the right way to go, because I think that the Bush administration and the Federal government should put up the money to create the kind of protection that the Federal government is responsible to provide.

OHM: And Bill Richardson of New Mexico added in a statement, "As Governor, I don't know how much more we can or should ask of our Guardsmen and women." The governors and the rest of the country will find out Monday night just how much more the President will ask of the National Guard in the ongoing battle of the border. Jeannie Ohm, NBC News, the White House.