

# THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

May 25, 2010

Dear Mr. Chairman:

Thank you for the opportunity to express the Administration's views on how best to make our Southwest Border more secure.

Since President Obama took office, we have dedicated unprecedented resources to fulfill the Federal Government's responsibility to secure the Southwest Border. In doing so, we have enhanced Federal border protection, law enforcement, and counternarcotics efforts involving the Departments of Homeland Security, Justice, and Defense and strengthened our security partnership with Mexico aimed at dismantling the transnational illicit networks that undermine citizen safety on both sides of our shared border.

There are, for example, a record number of Customs and Border Protection (CBP) personnel on the Southwest Border today. More than 3,000 Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) officers now serve in the border region to identify, disrupt, and dismantle criminal organizations. The Department of Justice has surged agents from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives; the Drug Enforcement Administration; and the Federal Bureau of Investigation, as well as prosecutors who help build the complex cases that target the transnational criminal organizations that threaten the safety of communities on both sides of the border.

More than 300 National Guard personnel are currently participating in counternarcotics missions along the Southwest Border. Additionally, we have made available more than \$100 million in grants to state, local, and tribal law enforcement entities to support their integrated efforts to combat criminal activities in the Southwest Border states. With Congress' support, we have also secured more than \$1 billion in funds to support Mexico's determined efforts to dismantle and defeat transnational criminal organizations.

The Administration has pursued a comprehensive, multi-layered, targeted approach to law enforcement and security. Continuing such an approach, rather than seeking to deploy an arbitrary number of National Guard personnel, is essential to meeting the evolving border-related challenges, complementing our strong security partnership with Mexico.

The President is committed to a strategic approach, consisting of a requirements-based, temporary utilization of up to 1,200 additional National Guard troops to bridge to longer-term enhancements in border protection and law enforcement personnel from the Departments of Homeland Security and Justice to target illicit networks' trafficking in people, drugs, illegal weapons, money, and the violence associated with these illegal activities.

There is no modern precedent for Congress to direct the President to deploy troops in the manner sought by the Amendment. It represents an unwarranted interference with the Commander-in-Chief's responsibilities to direct the employment of our Armed Forces and thus infringes on the President's role in the management of the Total Force. As Members of your Committee are well aware, National Guard forces are fully integrated into the functioning of our Armed Forces and decisions regarding their use impact other activities, including the critical roles they play in Iraq and Afghanistan.

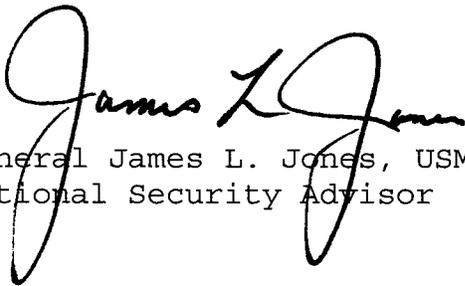
Directing the employment of our Armed Forces is the task of the Commander-in-Chief. This is particularly true given the importance of balancing the demands on the members of the National Guard, as well as our other brave men and women in uniform, and their families as they continue to bear the burden of our Nation for fighting two wars. The National Guard should be utilized to meet specific, requirements-based needs where they can bring to bear unique capabilities.

It is important to note that even as we recognize the need to do more, our efforts along the Southwest Border to date have begun to yield results. We have increased pressure on illegal trafficking organizations through significant seizures of illegal drugs headed into the United States and through record seizures of illegal weapons and bulk cash transiting from the United States to Mexico. For example, illegal weapons seized at the border by CBP and ICE rose more than 20 percent in 2009, as

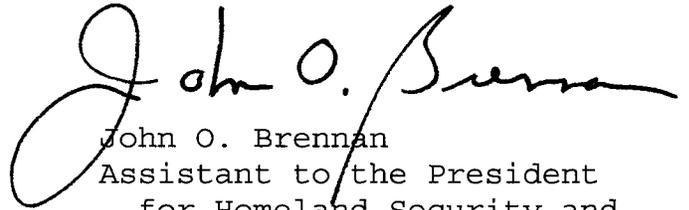
did seized bulk cash, up 33 percent. Illegal immigration into the United States is down with apprehensions between points of entry having dropped 23 percent. Average violent crime rates are down in border states and in many major metropolitan areas in the Southwest, although serious concerns remain.

The Amendment's narrow, overreaching approach misses the mark on how best to secure the Southwest Border. Utilizing resources in a more strategic and integrated fashion will continue to make the border more secure and border communities safer.

Sincerely,



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