

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 8, 2021

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden, Jr.
President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, DC 20006

Dear President Biden,

While we welcome the news that you have taken action to end former President Trump's national emergency declaration at the southern border, we remain concerned over the continued presence of troops and the overall continued militarization of the Borderlands region.

For close to three years, former President Trump used the U.S. military at the southern border to further his anti-immigrant agenda, terrorizing border communities, asylum-seekers and circumventing Congress' intent. We agree with your determination "that the declaration of a national emergency at our southern border was unwarranted," which is why we believe that there is also no further justification for the continued presence of more than 3,600 troops whose mission remains unclear. We request that you immediately remove all military personnel and equipment from the border and work with Congress to undo many of the dangerous, wasteful, and dubious border security and immigration policies implemented under President Trump. This should include removing, not merely repairing all razor wire from border communities and landscapes that border communities have vehemently opposed since the beginning.

Furthermore, continued military deployment at the southern border for its current mission would be actively harmful from the moral, strategic, and institutional standpoints. Former President Trump propagated a false narrative of our border communities in which extreme security measures including the deployment of troops was deemed an appropriate response to families fleeing violence, persecution, and instability in their home countries. He entangled our military personnel into a mission that was not only misguided, but also meant to be temporary — which now threatens to become permanent. That mission risks military personnel becoming part of his anti-immigrant policy apparatus, threatening to erode the long-lasting norms that keep the function of the U.S. military separate from domestic enforcement affairs and tarnishing morale among servicemembers. This separation between military and civilian government is fundamental to the fabric of our nation as well as the proper functioning of the military branches. And as elected leaders, we are obligated to ensure that whenever our military servicemembers are deployed, the mission they are given is commensurate with the risks and sacrifices they must take and the valor they are asked to show in their duties. This mission unfortunately fails that test in numerous ways.

In addition, the continued military presence at the border threatens to derail your vow to restore America's moral and strategic standing on the international plane. What is to be gained by

keeping military troops in the Borderlands in permanent association with former President Trump’s racist border wall and anti-immigrant agenda — sending a message to Americans as well as the rest of the world that U.S. military firepower might be aimed against civilians who view the United States as a beacon of hope and intimidating local communities? We would also be remiss in failing to note that the mission has cost taxpayers more than \$939 million according to the latest figures provided by the Pentagon. As you direct “a careful review of all resources appropriated or redirected” to the continued construction of the border wall, we urge you to also take into consideration the cost of maintaining troops at the border and thereby circumventing Congressional will. The financial waste of this unnecessary deployment is not only an affront in itself, but it is outrageous in light of how every dollar spent on this unnecessary deployment could be used in a myriad of ways to address our shared priorities on behalf of the American people—especially the impacts of COVID-19.

On behalf of millions of border residents who have had their communities upended by the increased militarization of the region and who have witnessed the destruction of the environment and the desecration of sacred Native American sites, we urge that you work swiftly to remove all troops and equipment from the region and reassess all military personnel, equipment and support. We should equip our ports of entry with the resources they need to help facilitate trade and foster a strong border economy that leads to a vibrant, safe and prosperous Borderlands region. We hope you share those values.

Sincerely,



Raúl M. Grijalva
Member of Congress

/s/
Rashida Tlaib
Member of Congress

/s/
Alan Lowenthal
Member of Congress

/s/
Adriano Espaillat
Member of Congress

/s/
Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress

/s/
James P. McGovern
Member of Congress

/s/
Ilhan Omar
Member of Congress

/s/
Steve Cohen
Member of Congress

/s/
Mark Pocan
Member of Congress

/s/
Jan Schakowsky
Member of Congress

/s/
Mondaire Jones
Member of Congress

/s/
Jared Huffman
Member of Congress

/s/
Earl Blumenauer
Member of Congress

/s/
Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez
Member of Congress

/s/
Nydia M. Velázquez
Member of Congress

/s/
Barbara Lee
Member of Congress

/s/
Juan Vargas
Member of Congress

/s/
Bonnie Watson Coleman
Member of Congress

/s/
Ayanna Pressley
Member of Congress

/s/
Grace F. Napolitano
Member of Congress

/s/
Ritchie Torres
Member of Congress

/s/
Michael F.Q. San Nicolas
Member of Congress

/s/
Judy Chu
Member of Congress