



## **Trump Lauds Border Wall as 'Really Foolproof' During Arizona Visit**

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U.S. President Donald Trump praised what he described as a “powerful and comprehensive” wall along the nation’s southern border Tuesday, highlighting one of the key promises from his successful election campaign four years ago to secure the U.S. borders.

A day after ordering tighter restrictions on a variety of visa categories, Trump visited a new section of the border wall in the southwestern U.S. state of Arizona. After signing a plaque on the imposing slatted black wall at San Luis, the president, in response to a question from VOA described the new construction as “really foolproof.”

“You have everything you could have. It’s what they wanted, and that’s what we did,” he added.

The president was joined at the border by Acting Secretary of Homeland Security Chad Wolf and Acting Commissioner of U.S. Customs and Border Protection Mark Morgan who also attended a border security roundtable event with the president in Yuma.

U.S. President Donald Trump points at the wall as he talks with U.S. Border Patrol Chief Rodney Scott while touring a section of recently constructed U.S.-Mexico border wall in San Luis, Arizona, June 23, 2020.

"Our border has never been more secure," Trump said at the event, also attended by elected local officials and community leaders. “This is the most powerful and comprehensive border wall structure anywhere in the world.”

“The new wall is in many places twice as tall as where it was before, and many miles were built where nothing but vehicle barriers existed before, which few people would describe as a fence,” David Bier, immigration policy analyst at the Cato Institute’s Center for Global Liberty and Prosperity, told VOA. “Despite the improvements, the new fences are already being breached and climbed, and immigrants are still going around. In fact, in 2019, the government stated the number of people evading detection at the border actually increased.”

Trump, who is seeking re-election in November, said on Tuesday as much as 500 miles (nearly 760 km) of border wall could be completed by the end of the year.

The U.S. government says 338 kilometers of construction has been done along the border since January 2017, but it appears that only a few kilometers of it is in places where no barriers previously existed.

The Trump administration rejects that assessment. When asked about it by VOA on Air Force One on Tuesday, the acting director of Customs and Border Patrol, Mark Morgan, called it “a false political narrative. From an operational law enforcement perspective, those are new miles of wall system that are going into the ground -- all 220.”

Chad Wolf, acting Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security, left, and Mark Morgan, Acting Commissioner of the United States Customs and Border Protection, listen as President Donald Trump speaks in Yuma, Ariz., June 23, 2020.

The president at the border wall was asked about the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, which the U.S. Supreme Court prevented Trump from ending last week in a ruling. DACA protects nearly 700,000 people brought to the United States as children from deportation and allows them to work.

"We'll work it out with DACA," Trump said.

White House officials said the president plans to re-submit paperwork to end the program.

"I think good things are happening with DACA. They re-submit, it will work it out. And the Democrats have been playing with DACA for years, and they haven't done anything. I'll get it done."

Trump was asked by a reporter what he would say to DACA recipients.

“Put your chin up. Good things are going to happen,” he replied.

Asked why it was necessary at this time to impose further restrictions on visas, including H-1Bs, the president said that amid the coronavirus pandemic, which crippled the U.S. economy, “right now we want jobs going to Americans.”

If not for his administration’s action and the reinforced wall, according to Trump, the spread of COVID-19 would be far worse in the United States.

"Using our emergency public health authorities, we prevented a coronavirus catastrophe on the southern border, shutting down human smuggling and swiftly returning the crossers," Trump said. “Without these public health measures, the southern border would be a global epicenter of the viral transmission.”

According to data released on Tuesday, three states bordering Mexico – Arizona, California and Texas – are among the seven reporting the highest number of coronavirus hospitalizations since the pandemic began.

The other states are Arkansas, North Carolina, South Carolina and Tennessee.

Health officials say more than 800 coronavirus deaths were reported in the country on Tuesday – the first rise in the number of daily fatalities from the infection in more than two weeks.

### **Phoenix speech**

The spread of the disease in Arizona did not deter Trump on Tuesday afternoon from delivering a campaign speech to 3,000 youth supporters packed into a megachurch auditorium in Phoenix. Only a few attendees were seen wearing masks, although the city of Phoenix has mandated the wearing of masks in public.

U.S. President Donald Trump delivers an "Address to Young Americans" at the Dream City Church in Phoenix, Arizona, June 23, 2020.

The event at Dream City Church “was not sanctioned or permitted by the city of Phoenix, as the city does not permit political events. Furthermore, it does not abide by current CDC guidelines during COVID-19,” said Phoenix Mayor Kate Gallego prior to the event. “While I do not believe an event of this magnitude can be held safely, particularly as Arizona sees rising COVID cases, the president has decided to continue with this rally.”

Everyone attending the event, “particularly any elected official, should set an example to residents by wearing a mask. This includes the president,” said the mayor.

Trump made only a few references to the pandemic during his 90 minutes on stage.

At one point, he referred to the virus, which was first reported in Wuhan, China as the “Kung Flu.” He first uttered the offensive term in public at a rally last Saturday in Tulsa, Oklahoma, the largest indoor event in the country in months amid the pandemic.

About 6,200 of the 19,199 seats in the Bank of Oklahoma Center were filled, according to the Tulsa Fire Department. The Trump re-election campaign claims attendance was about 12,000 people based on the count of those who passed through Secret Service magnetometers.

A number of public health officials have expressed alarm about Trump’s events in Oklahoma and Arizona, saying people in enclosed spaces and not wearing masks in communities considered coronavirus hot spots could become “super-spreaders” of the disease for which there is no effective treatment or vaccine.