

Trump's border 'crisis' of credibility, to make TV address on issue

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With talks stalemated over the shutdown, US president Donald Trump is scheduled to pitch his case to the nation in a prime-time address Tuesday night in which he is expected to argue for a barrier along the US-Mexico border saying there was a "Humanitarian and National Security crisis on our Southern Border".

The president's characterization of the situation as a crisis was already drawn criticism for the false and exaggerated claims forwarded by him and his aides in support, such as an influx of terrorists through the southern border, when, in fact, most suspects were held at airports or coming from Canada.

Wary of being used to further those falsehoods, networks and cable news channels took their time agreeing to air the address. They will, they have decided. But some of them — CNN, CBS and NBC — plan to allow Democrats equal airtime to rebut the president, which, in itself, is not without precedence. Republicans were given rebuttal slots in 2011 to answer to a speech by then President Barack Obama on national debt.

Democratic leaders Nancy Pelosi and Chuck Schumer will deliver the rebuttal, jointly.

There has been no headway in negotiations to break the funding deadlock that has shut down a fourth of the federal government for 18 days now. The president is standing his ground on the money he wants, \$5 billion, but has dropped the concrete wall for a "steel barrier" But Democrats are not buying yet.

"I am pleased to inform you that I will Address the Nation on the Humanitarian and National Security crisis on our Southern Border," Trump wrote on Twitter Monday, about his move to take his case to the people. And press secretary Sarah Sander announced he will be travelling to the southern border on Thursday to meet those on the "frontlines of the national security and humanitarian crisis".

The crisis, according to the Trump administration, is not about just illegal immigrants entering the United States through the southern border with Mexico, but also, they have claimed, the influx of terrorists, human smugglers, other criminals and drugs, which they have backed up with questionable arguments.

Press secretary Sander, for instance, was called out on Fox News on Sunday for saying, "nearly 4,000 known or suspected terrorists come into our country illegally, and we know that our most vulnerable point of entry is the southern border" She was trying to conflate two separate facts to make her argument.

And she got caught, on air. Chris Wallace, the interviewer, said, “But they’re not coming across the southern border, Sarah, they’re coming and they’re being stopped at airports.”

“We have terrorists coming through the southern border because they find that’s probably the easiest place to come through,” Trump claimed at a news conference last week, adding, “They drive right in and they make a left.”

“If they’re driving in through border crossings, no wall would stop them,” the Associated Press noted wryly. And added that while most terror suspects are held coming in by air, but Canada, and not Mexico, has been a bigger worry for the state department for land crossing.

The news agency cited a report by Cato Institute, a libertarian think-tank, to say the last known terrorists to enter the US from Mexico, were three ethnic Albanians from Macedonia who came as children with their parents in 1984 and were arrested in their 20s in 2007 for a foiled terror plot in New Jersey.