



More than 50 ex-national security officials tell Trump his national emergency is not justified

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Fifty-eight former U.S. national security officials told the Trump administration in a letter Monday that they are aware of "no emergency that remotely justifies" diverting funds to build a border wall.

The officials, who served in both Democratic and Republican administrations, include former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, who served in the Clinton administration, and former Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel, a Republican who served in the Senate and the Obama administration.

Others include Leon Panetta, former secretary of defense and director of the CIA; Gil Kerlikowske, former head of Customs and Border Protection; John Kerry, former secretary of state; and Nick Rasmussen, former director of the National Counterterrorism Center.

The letter, according to its authors, is a declaration intended to be used in lawsuits challenging President Donald Trump's Feb. 15 decision to redirect \$8 billion in federal funds in order to begin construction of a barrier along the southern border. Trump had promised during his campaign to build the border wall but Congress has offered less than \$2 billion in federal funds after months of negotiations.

The officials fact check Trump's basis for declaring the national emergency, pointing out that illegal border crossings are near 40-year lows, there is no documented terror threat, human and drug trafficking will not be affected by a border wall, and there is no violent crime threat posed by immigrants.

A study by the Cato Institute found that undocumented immigrants in Texas were 44 percent less likely to be incarcerated than native-born citizens, the letter said.

Not only is the national emergency not justified, it could also be damaging to the interests of the United States, the authors say.

"In the face of a nonexistent threat, redirecting funds for the construction of a wall along the southern border will undermine national security by needlessly pulling resources from Department of Defense programs that are responsible for keeping our troops and our country safe and running effectively," they said.

The national emergency and other unilateral actions to block immigrants coming from the south could also strain diplomatic ties in the Western Hemisphere at a time when the U.S. should be addressing concerns in the region, such as the political turmoil in Venezuela, the authors say.

In addition to redirecting funds for the border wall, the Trump administration has also begun to return asylum-seekers to Mexico where they must wait months or years for a decision on whether they can seek refuge in the United States. Another move, which has been blocked by federal courts, sought to block asylum rights for immigrants who cross the border between legal ports of entry.

The authors said their concerns extend to the global stage as well.

"Should a genuine foreign crisis erupt, this lack of credibility will materially weaken this administration's ability to marshal allies to support the United States, and will embolden adversaries to oppose us," they said.