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Gov. Doug Ducey announces 1-year extension for Arizona National Guard border mission

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The Arizona National Guard border mission will be in place for one more year, Gov. Doug Ducey announced Wednesday.

He cited an "escalating man-made crisis" and a 21-year record of illegal border crossings as the cause.

The deployment of national guard troops took place in April, when Ducey declared a state of emergency at the state's southern border.

Today, about 150 Guard members are supporting law enforcement in border communities, according to the governor's office's news release.

The State Emergency Council allocated \$2.5 million in April to fund the border mission. In June, the budget approved by the Arizona Legislature granted \$25 million more, plus \$30 million to support law enforcement.

The announcement by Ducey outlined the duration of the border mission but did not specify any changes in funding or operations.

The Arizona National Guard is currently assigned to areas of medical assistance in detention centers, care and monitoring of surveillance cameras, data analysis and administrative and logistical support.

Record high numbers in recidivism

U.S. Customs and Border Protection reports 1.3 million migrant encounters for this fiscal year so far, almost a half-million more than in 2019.

The data for July shows the highest monthly total in 21 years in July.

However, 27% of all encounters last month were from repeat border-crossers, giving the impression there are more migrants at the border than there really are.

"Without these repeat crossers, the first few months of fiscal year 2021 would look nearly identical to fiscal year 2019 before the pandemic," an data analysis report from Cato Institute, an organization specialized in public policy research, said.

In May, repeat border-crossers accounted for 38% of all migrant encounters.

Rates of recidivism are high because of the immediacy of expulsions, Cato analysts suggest.

Under a provision known as Title 42 implemented by the Trump administration last year amid the COVID-19 pandemic, most migrants arrested by the Border Patrol are quickly expelled. The policy was maintained by the Biden administration, despite criticism by public health experts and human rights advocates.

Many more migrants have made repeated attempts to cross into the U.S. this year, in comparison with the past four years.

Previous National Guard deployments

The Arizona National Guard has worked for about three decades at the border.

Troops have assisted the Department of Homeland Security with border security efforts; patrol the border by air, monitor and install camera equipment, conduct data analysis and border-related intelligence efforts and provide road maintenance and administrative support.

In previous administrations, the deployment of National Guard troops for border missions has involved detentions. Operation Jump Start, under former President George W. Bush, resulted in "assistance" for 176,000 apprehensions; Operation Phalanx, under former President Barack Obama, resulted in 18,000 apprehensions.

In April 2018, former President Donald Trump called for the deployment of troops to face a "national emergency" at the southern border — the operation was informally nicknamed Guardian Support.

"We're going to do some things militarily," Trump said then.

Ten governors canceled the deployment of their National Guard in protest of family separation policies. Ducey called the Arizona National Guard to support the presidential directive.

Ducey refuted claims that the presence of troops would result in border militarization, saying that they do not conduct law enforcement.

In a 2018 congressional hearing to examine the deployment of troops in Texas and Arizona, former Arizona National Guard Maj. Gen. Michael McGuire made the same assurance.

"The Arizona National Guard does not act in any law enforcement capacity along the border, nor have our citizen soldiers and airmen been placed in a position that would come into contact with migrants," McGuire, now running for the U.S. Senate, said.

"Although not constrained (by Title 32), law enforcement is not our mission."

Ducey's order to deploy the Guard this year came after he declared a state of emergency in four Arizona border counties, citing the "surge" in illegal crossings as the root cause.

"Law enforcement is overwhelmed. The situation is out of control. This situation is the direct result of reckless policies," Ducey said in his statement on Wednesday. "The brave men and women of the Arizona National Guard are standing in the gaps."