

Mother Jones

It Looks Like Trump Is Actually Sending Troops to the Border

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The Trump administration is making good on the president's pledge to send troops to the Mexican border. On Wednesday afternoon, Homeland Security Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen said the administration will work with governors to deploy National Guardsmen to the border.

The announcement is the culmination of Trump's most recent obsession with the border, which began on Sunday after Fox News reported on a caravan of roughly 1,000 migrants traveling through Mexico. On Tuesday, Trump pledged to deploy the military to the border following three days of misleading and inaccurate tweets about immigration that began on Easter Sunday.

It is still not clear how many soldiers will be deployed or when they might arrive at the border. Nor is it clear what they will do. There are about 19 Border Patrol agents for every member of the caravan, according to the libertarian Cato Institute. A press release from the Department of Homeland Security stated that the "deployment is designed to support ongoing efforts to mitigate the crisis on our border."

But it's hard to argue that there is currently a crisis at the border. As *Mother Jones* wrote on Tuesday:

In the 2017 fiscal year, 303,916 people were apprehended along the US-Mexico border—the lowest level in nearly four decades and far below the 1.6 million apprehensions in 2000. The number of people each Border Patrol agent arrests per year has dramatically declined as unauthorized border crossings have become less frequent.

In 2010, the Obama administration sent National Guardsmen to the US-Mexico border in response to concerns about drug-related violence, but Defense Department rules largely prevent the military from making arrests or seizing drugs along the border. Nick Miroff, a reporter at the *Washington Post*, wrote on Twitter that the guardsmen had little to do: "When I spent time with these soldiers watching the fence outside Nogales in 2011 they were hopelessly bored & desperate to leave." Any soldiers Trump dispatches to the border are likely to encounter similar boredom.