Trump's National Guard deployment is based on falsehoods

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Last month, the Trump administration authorized the deployment of up to 4,000 National Guard troops to southern border states. Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona have already sent troops to the border to begin providing support services for U.S. Customs and Border Protection agencies, which may include engineering, surveillance, communications and other forms of logistical support.

But while there may be merit in having the National Guard provide systems of support for Customs and Border Protection, the premises under which the troops were deployed were based on falsehoods about unauthorized persons and the immigrant community.

The last two times the Guard was deployed, apprehensions were at much higher rates. Between 1990 and 2006, the estimated number of unauthorized people in the United States rose to its highest point. In response, President George W. Bush authorized Operation Jump Start: a plan to release 6,000 National Guard troops to provide assistance to Customs and Border Protection agencies in California, New Mexico, Arizona, and Texas. The operation ended in July 2008 with 176,721 apprehensions and an estimated cost of about $1.35 billion.

Two years later, President Barack Obama signed an executive order authorizing Operation Phalanx, which released 1,200 National Guard soldiers to the southwest border states. More than 7,000 unauthorized persons were apprehended during Operation Phalanx's 2010-2011 activation for the same estimated cost of Operation Jump Start: about $1.35 billion.

But since the end of Operation Phalanx, the estimated number of unauthorized persons in the country has dropped to its lowest point in more than 14 years. There is no data that validates this move or the rhetoric that Trump spouts about immigrants coming into the United States in swarms. In fact, the Hispanic population does not make up the largest racial or ethnic category of immigrants entering the U.S. Yet the president wants people to believe that brown immigrants are deteriorating the quality of the American fabric by stealing jobs and increasing crime rates.

The president is wrong: The immigrant community in the United States is boosting the American economy as Hispanic immigrants create jobs, not steal them. The number of Hispanic-owned businesses has steadily grownfrom 2.3 million to 3.3 million from 2007 to 2012. Meanwhile, Latina owned business increased by 87 percent between 2007 and 2012, even as they experience barriers to accessing capital. Millennial Latina/o's who arrived as children excel as business owners, currently owning 86 percent of scaled (million dollar-plus) firms.

Neither do immigrants, authorized or not, threaten public safety, as the president has claimed. Four recent academic studies show that unauthorized immigration does not increase violent crime. One of the four studies, conducted by the Cato Institute, looked specifically at Texas; its findings show that in 2015, criminal convictions and arrests for murder, sexual assault and larceny were lower for unauthorized persons than for native-born Americans.

Nevertheless, the president decided to deploy the National Guard and authorized the troops under Title 32, which means they are federally funded, under the command of the states' governors and allowed to participate in law enforcement activities. But when California Governor Jerry Brown recently reached an agreement with the Trump administration to allow the National Guard deployment, he made clear that they would not be engaged in immigration enforcement activities. California, at least, pushed back on Trump's decision and affirmed to residents of the state that the president's rhetoric is not the rule of law.

Supporters of democracy must demand that the decisions of those who represent us are effective, efficient and driven by facts, not lies. The president's move to deploy troops to the southwest border certainly isn't based on facts, and will cost American taxpayer dollars that could otherwise be invested in securing our border through means that don't militarize communities living on the border.