

JOINT DECLARATION OF FORMER UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS

We, the undersigned, declare as follows:

1. We are former officials in the U.S. government who have worked on national security and homeland security issues from the White House as well as agencies across the Executive Branch. We have served in senior leadership roles in administrations of both major political parties, and collectively we have devoted a great many decades to protecting the security interests of the United States. We have held the highest security clearances, and we have participated in the highest levels of policy deliberations on a broad range of issues. These include: immigration, border security, counterterrorism, military operations, and our nation's relationship with other countries, including those south of our border.

a. **Madeleine K. Albright** served as Secretary of State from 1997 to 2001. A refugee and naturalized American citizen, she served as U.S. Permanent Representative to the United Nations from 1993 to 1997. She has also been a member of the Central Intelligence Agency External Advisory Board since 2009 and of the Defense Policy Board since 2011, in which capacities she has received assessments of threats facing the United States.

b. **Jeremy B. Bash** served as Chief of Staff of the U.S. Department of Defense from 2011 to 2013, and as Chief of Staff of the Central Intelligence Agency from 2009 to 2011.

c. **John B. Bellinger III** served as the Legal Adviser to the U.S. Department of State from 2005 to 2009. He previously served as Senior Associate Counsel to the President and Legal Adviser to the National Security Council from 2001 to 2005.

d. **Daniel Benjamin** served as Ambassador-at-Large for Counterterrorism at the U.S. Department of State from 2009 to 2012.

e. **Antony Blinken** served as Deputy Secretary of State from 2015 to 2017. He previously served as Deputy National Security Advisor to the President from 2013 to 2015.

f. **John O. Brennan** served as Director of the Central Intelligence Agency from 2013 to 2017. He previously served as Deputy National Security Advisor for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism and Assistant to the President from 2009 to 2013.

g. **R. Nicholas Burns** served as Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs from 2005 to 2008. He previously served as U.S. Ambassador to NATO and as U.S. Ambassador to Greece.

- h. **William J. Burns** served as Deputy Secretary of State from 2011 to 2014. He previously served as Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs from 2008 to 2011, as U.S. Ambassador to Russia from 2005 to 2008, as Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs from 2001 to 2005, and as U.S. Ambassador to Jordan from 1998 to 2001.
- i. **Johnnie Carson** served as Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs from 2009 to 2013. He previously served as the U.S. Ambassador to Kenya from 1999 to 2003, to Zimbabwe from 1995 to 1997, and to Uganda from 1991 to 1994.
- j. **James Clapper** served as U.S. Director of National Intelligence from 2010 to 2017.
- k. **David S. Cohen** served as Under Secretary of the Treasury for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence from 2011 to 2015 and as Deputy Director of the Central Intelligence Agency from 2015 to 2017.
- l. **Eliot A. Cohen** served as Counselor of the U.S. Department of State from 2007 to 2009.
- m. **Bathsheba N. Crocker** served as Assistant Secretary of State for International Organization Affairs from 2014 to 2017.
- n. **Ryan Crocker** served as U.S. Ambassador to Afghanistan from 2011 to 2012, as U.S. Ambassador to Iraq from 2007 to 2009, as U.S. Ambassador to Pakistan from 2004 to 2007, as U.S. Ambassador to Syria from 1998 to 2001, as U.S. Ambassador to Kuwait from 1994 to 1997, and U.S. Ambassador to Lebanon from 1990 to 1993.
- o. **Thomas Donilon** served as National Security Advisor to the President from 2010 to 2013.
- p. **Jen Easterly** served as Special Assistant to the President and Senior Director for Counterterrorism from 2013 to 2016.
- q. **Nancy Ely-Raphel** served as Senior Adviser to the Secretary of State and Director of the Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons from 2001 to 2003. She previously served as the U.S. Ambassador to Slovenia from 1998 to 2001.
- r. **Daniel P. Erikson** served as Special Advisor for Western Hemisphere Affairs to the Vice President from 2015 to 2017, and as Senior Advisor for Western Hemisphere Affairs at the U.S. Department of State from 2010 to 2015.
- s. **John D. Feeley** served as U.S. Ambassador to Panama from 2015 to 2018. He served as Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Western Hemisphere Affairs at the U.S. Department of State from 2012 to 2015.
- t. **Daniel F. Feldman** served as Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan at the U.S. Department of State from 2014 to 2015.

- u. **Jonathan Finer** served as Chief of Staff to the Secretary of State from 2015 to 2017, and Director of the Policy Planning Staff at the U.S. Department of State from 2016 to 2017.
- v. **Jendayi Frazer** served as Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs from 2005 to 2009. She served as U.S. Ambassador to South Africa from 2004 to 2005.
- w. **Suzy George** served as Executive Secretary and Chief of Staff of the National Security Council from 2014 to 2017.
- x. **Phil Gordon** served as Special Assistant to the President and White House Coordinator for the Middle East, North Africa and the Gulf from 2013 to 2015, and Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs from 2009 to 2013.
- y. **Chuck Hagel** served as Secretary of Defense from 2013 to 2015, and previously served as Co-Chair of the President's Intelligence Advisory Board. From 1997 to 2009, he served as U.S. Senator for Nebraska, and as a senior member of the Senate Foreign Relations and Intelligence Committees.
- z. **Avril D. Haines** served as Deputy National Security Advisor to the President from 2015 to 2017. From 2013 to 2015, she served as Deputy Director of the Central Intelligence Agency.
- aa. **Luke Hartig** served as Senior Director for Counterterrorism at the National Security Council from 2014 to 2016.
- bb. **Kathleen H. Hicks** served as Principal Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Policy from 2012 to 2017. She also served as Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Strategy, Plans, and Forces.
- cc. **Heather A. Higginbottom** served as Deputy Secretary of State for Management and Resources from 2013 to 2017.
- dd. **Roberta Jacobson** served as U.S. Ambassador to Mexico from 2016 to 2018. She previously served as Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs from 2011 to 2016.
- ee. **Gil Kerlikowske** served as Commissioner of Customs and Border Protection from 2014 to 2017. He previously served as Director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy from 2009 to 2014.
- ff. **John F. Kerry** served as Secretary of State from 2013 to 2017.
- gg. **Prem Kumar** served as Senior Director for the Middle East and North Africa at the National Security Council from 2013 to 2015.

- hh. **John E. McLaughlin** served as Deputy Director of the Central Intelligence Agency from 2000 to 2004 and as Acting Director in 2004. His duties included briefing President-elect Bill Clinton and President George W. Bush.
- ii. **Lisa O. Monaco** served as Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism and Deputy National Security Advisor from 2013 to 2017. Previously, she served as Assistant Attorney General for National Security from 2011 to 2013.
- jj. **Janet Napolitano** served as Secretary of Homeland Security from 2009 to 2013. She served as the Governor of Arizona from 2003 to 2009.
- kk. **James D. Nealon** served as Assistant Secretary for International Engagement at the U.S. Department of Homeland Security from 2017 to 2018. He served as U.S. Ambassador to Honduras from 2014 to 2017.
- ll. **James C. O'Brien** served as Special Presidential Envoy for Hostage Affairs from 2015 to 2017. He served in the U.S. Department of State from 1989 to 2001, including as Principal Deputy Director of Policy Planning and as Special Presidential Envoy for the Balkans.
- mm. **Matthew G. Olsen** served as Director of the National Counterterrorism Center from 2011 to 2014.
- nn. **Leon E. Panetta** served as Secretary of Defense from 2011 to 2013. From 2009 to 2011, he served as Director of the Central Intelligence Agency.
- oo. **Anne W. Patterson** served as Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs from 2013 to 2017. Previously, she served as the U.S. Ambassador to Egypt from 2011 to 2013, to Pakistan from 2007 to 2010, to Colombia from 2000 to 2003, and to El Salvador from 1997 to 2000.
- pp. **Thomas R. Pickering** served as Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs from 1997 to 2000. He served as U.S. Permanent Representative to the United Nations from 1989 to 1992.
- qq. **Amy Pope** served as Deputy Homeland Security Advisor and Deputy Assistant to the President from 2015 to 2017.
- rr. **Samantha J. Power** served as U.S. Permanent Representative to the United Nations from 2013 to 2017. From 2009 to 2013, she served as Senior Director for Multilateral and Human Rights at the National Security Council.
- ss. **Jeffrey Prescott** served as Deputy National Security Advisor to the Vice President from 2013 to 2015, and as Special Assistant to the President and Senior Director for Iran, Iraq, Syria and the Gulf States from 2015 to 2017.

- tt. **Nicholas Rasmussen** served as Director of the National Counterterrorism Center from 2014 to 2017.
- uu. **Alan Charles Raul** served as Vice Chairman of the Privacy and Civil Liberties Oversight Board from 2006 to 2008. He previously served as General Counsel of the U.S. Department of Agriculture from 1989 to 1993, General Counsel of the Office of Management and Budget in the Executive Office of the President from 1988 to 1989, and Associate Counsel to the President from 1986 to 1989.
- vv. **Dan Restrepo** served as Special Assistant to the President and Senior Director for Western Hemisphere Affairs at the National Security Council from 2009 to 2012.
- ww. **Susan E. Rice** served as U.S. Permanent Representative to the United Nations from 2009 to 2013 and as National Security Advisor to the President from 2013 to 2017.
- xx. **Anne C. Richard** served as Assistant Secretary of State for Population, Refugees, and Migration from 2012 to 2017.
- yy. **Eric P. Schwartz** served as Assistant Secretary of State for Population, Refugees, and Migration from 2009 to 2011. From 1993 to 2001, he was responsible for refugee and humanitarian issues at the National Security Council, ultimately serving as Special Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs and Senior Director for Multilateral and Humanitarian Affairs.
- zz. **Andrew J. Shapiro** served as Assistant Secretary of State for Political-Military Affairs from 2009 to 2013.
- aaa. **Wendy R. Sherman** served as Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs from 2011 to 2015.
- bbb. **Vikram J. Singh** served as Deputy Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan from 2010 to 2011 and as Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Southeast Asia from 2012 to 2014.
- ccc. **Dana Shell Smith** served as U.S. Ambassador to Qatar from 2014 to 2017. Previously, she served as Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of Public Affairs.
- ddd. **Jeffrey H. Smith** served as General Counsel of the Central Intelligence Agency from 1995 to 1996. He previously served as General Counsel of the Senate Armed Services Committee.
- eee. **Jake Sullivan** served as National Security Advisor to the Vice President from 2013 to 2014. He previously served as Director of Policy Planning at the U.S. Department of State from 2011 to 2013.
- fff. **Strobe Talbott** served as Deputy Secretary of State from 1994 to 2001.

ggg. **Linda Thomas-Greenfield** served as Assistant Secretary for the Bureau of African Affairs from 2013 to 2017. She previously served as U.S. Ambassador to Liberia and Deputy Assistant Secretary for the Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration from 2004 to 2006.

hhh. **Arturo A. Valenzuela** served as Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs from 2009 to 2011. He previously served as Special Assistant to the President and Senior Director for Inter-American Affairs at the National Security Council from 1999 to 2000, and as Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Mexican Affairs from 1994 to 1996.

2. On February 15, 2019, the President declared a “national emergency” for the purpose of diverting appropriated funds from previously designated uses to build a wall along the southern border. We are aware of no emergency that remotely justifies such a step. The President’s actions are at odds with the overwhelming evidence in the public record, including the administration’s own data and estimates. We have lived and worked through national emergencies, and we support the President’s power to mobilize the Executive Branch to respond quickly in genuine national emergencies. But under no plausible assessment of the evidence is there a national emergency today that entitles the President to tap into funds appropriated for other purposes to build a wall at the southern border. To our knowledge, the President’s assertion of a national emergency here is unprecedented, in that he seeks to address a situation: (1) that has been enduring, rather than one that has arisen suddenly; (2) that in fact has improved over time rather than deteriorated; (3) by reprogramming billions of dollars in funds in the face of clear congressional intent to the contrary; and (4) with assertions that are rebutted not just by the public record, but by his agencies’ own official data, documents, and statements.

3. *Illegal border crossings are near forty-year lows.* At the outset, there is no evidence of a sudden or emergency increase in the number of people seeking to cross the southern border. According to the administration’s own data, the numbers of apprehensions and undetected illegal border crossings at the southern border are near forty-year lows.¹ Although there was a modest increase in apprehensions in 2018, that figure is in keeping with the number of apprehensions only two years earlier, and the overall trend indicates a dramatic decline over the last fifteen years in particular.² The administration also estimates that “undetected unlawful entries” at the southern border “fell from approximately 851,000 to nearly 62,000” between fiscal years 2006 to 2016, the most recent years for which data are available.³ The United States currently hosts what is estimated to be the smallest

¹ *Southwest Border Sectors: Total Illegal Alien Apprehensions by Fiscal Year*, U.S. CUSTOMS & BORDER PROTECTION, <https://www.cbp.gov/sites/default/files/assets/documents/2017-Dec/BP%20Southwest%20Border%20Sector%20Apps%20FY1960%20-%20FY2017.pdf> (last accessed Feb. 17, 2019); *Southwest Border Migration FY2019*, U.S. CUSTOMS & BORDER PROTECTION, <https://www.cbp.gov/newsroom/stats/sw-border-migration> (last accessed Feb. 17, 2019).

² *Southwest Border Migration FY2019*, *supra* note 1; *Southwest Border Migration FY2017*, U.S. CUSTOMS & BORDER PROTECTION, <https://www.cbp.gov/newsroom/stats/sw-border-migration-fy2017> (last accessed Feb. 17, 2019).

³ U.S. DEP’T OF HOMELAND SECURITY, DEP’T OF HOMELAND SECURITY BORDER SECURITY METRICS REPORT 13 (May 1, 2018), https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/BSMR_OIS_2016.pdf.

number of undocumented immigrants since 2004.⁴ And in fact, in recent years, the majority of currently undocumented immigrants entered the United States legally, but overstayed their visas,⁵ a problem that will not be addressed by the declaration of an emergency along the southern border.

4. *There is no documented terrorist or national security emergency at the southern border.* There is no reason to believe that there is a terrorist or national security emergency at the southern border that could justify the President’s proclamation.

a. This administration’s own most recent Country Report on Terrorism, released only five months ago, found that “there was no credible evidence indicating that international terrorist groups have established bases in Mexico, worked with Mexican drug cartels, or sent operatives via Mexico into the United States.”⁶ Since 1975, there has been only one reported incident in which immigrants who had crossed the southern border illegally attempted to commit a terrorist act. That incident occurred more than twelve years ago, and involved three brothers from Macedonia who had been brought into the United States as children more than twenty years earlier.⁷

b. Although the White House has claimed, as an argument favoring a wall at the southern border, that almost 4,000 known or suspected terrorists were intercepted at the southern border in a single year,⁸ this assertion has since been widely and consistently repudiated, including by this administration’s own Department of Homeland Security.⁹ The overwhelming majority of individuals on terrorism watchlists who were intercepted by U.S. Customs and Border Patrol were attempting to travel to the United States by air;¹⁰ of the individuals on the terrorist watchlist who were encountered while entering the United States during fiscal year 2017, only 13 percent traveled by land.¹¹ And for those who have attempted to enter by land, only a small fraction do so at the southern border. Between October 2017 and March 2018, forty-one foreign immigrants on the terrorist watchlist were

⁴ Jeffrey S. Passel & D’Vera Cohn, *U.S. Unauthorized Immigrant Total Dips to Lowest Level in a Decade*, PEW RES. CTR. (Nov. 27, 2018).

⁵ Richard Gonzales, *For 7th Consecutive Year, Visa Overstays Exceeded Illegal Border Crossings*, NPR (Jan. 16, 2019, 7:02 PM) (noting “that from 2016-2017, people who overstayed their visas accounted for 62 percent of the newly undocumented, while 38 percent had crossed a border illegally”).

⁶ U.S. DEP’T OF STATE, *COUNTRY REPORTS ON TERRORISM 2017*, at 205 (Sept. 2018).

⁷ See Alex Nowrasteh, *Trump’s Wall Will Not Stop Terrorism*, CATO INST. (Dec. 18, 2018).

⁸ See *Congressional Border Security Briefing: A Border Security and Humanitarian Crisis*, WHITE HOUSE (Jan. 4, 2019); Holly Rosenkrantz, *Sanders Repeats Claim on Terrorists at the Border Refuted by Administration’s Own Data*, CBS NEWS (Jan. 7, 2019, 3:28 PM). Vice President Mike Pence made similar statements during his appearance on ABC the next week. See Betsy Klein, *Pence Misleadingly Cites Some Statistics to Push Trump Border Wall*, CNN (Jan. 8, 2019, 5:46 PM).

⁹ See U.S. DEP’T OF HOMELAND SECURITY, *MYTH/FACT: KNOWN AND SUSPECTED TERRORISTS/SPECIAL INTEREST ALIENS* (Jan. 7, 2019); see also, e.g., Brett Samuels, *Conway: Sarah Sanders Made ‘Unfortunate Misstatement’ About Terror Suspects at Border*, HILL (Jan. 8, 2019, 10:30 AM).

¹⁰ See U.S. DEP’T OF HOMELAND SECURITY, *supra* note 9.

¹¹ See Press Release, Dep’t of Homeland Security, DOJ, DHS Report: Three Out of Four Individuals Convicted of International Terrorism and Terrorism-Related Offenses were Foreign-Born (Jan. 16, 2018).

intercepted at the northern border.¹² Only six such immigrants were intercepted at the southern border.¹³

5. *There is no emergency related to violent crime at the southern border.* Nor can the administration justify its actions on the grounds that the incidence of violent crime on the southern border constitutes a national emergency. Factual evidence consistently shows that unauthorized immigrants have no special proclivity to engage in criminal or violent behavior. According to a Cato Institute analysis of criminological data, undocumented immigrants are 44 percent *less likely* to be incarcerated nationwide than are native-born citizens.¹⁴ And in Texas, undocumented immigrants were found to have a first-time conviction rate 32 percent below that of native-born Americans;¹⁵ the conviction rates of unauthorized immigrants for violent crimes such as homicide and sex offenses were also below those of native-born Americans.¹⁶ Meanwhile, overall rates of violent crime in the United States have declined significantly over the past 25 years, falling 49 percent from 1993 to 2017.¹⁷ And violent crime rates in the country's 30 largest cities have decreased on average by 2.7 percent in 2018 alone, further undermining any suggestion that recent crime trends currently warrant the declaration of a national emergency.¹⁸

6. *There is no human or drug trafficking emergency that can be addressed by a wall at the southern border.* The administration has claimed that the presence of human and drug trafficking at the border justifies its emergency declaration. But there is no evidence of any such sudden crisis at the southern border that necessitates a reprogramming of appropriations to build a border wall.

a. The overwhelming majority of opioids that enter the United States across a land border are carried through legal ports of entry in personal or commercial vehicles, not smuggled through unauthorized border crossings.¹⁹ A border wall would not stop these drugs from entering the United States. Nor would a wall stop drugs from entering via other routes, including smuggling tunnels, which circumvent such physical barriers as fences and

¹² See Julia Ainsley, *Only Six Immigrants in Terrorism Database Stopped by CBP at Southern Border from October to March*, NBC NEWS (Jan. 7, 2019, 4:10 PM).

¹³ See *id.*

¹⁴ Michelangelo Landgrave & Alex Nowrasteh, *Criminal Immigrants: Their Numbers, Demographics, and Countries of Origin*, CATO INST. (Mar. 15, 2017).

¹⁵ Alex Nowrasteh & Andrew Forrester, *Illegal Immigrant Conviction Rates Are Low, Even When Factoring in Recidivism*, CATO INST. (Jan. 7, 2019).

¹⁶ Alex Nowrasteh, *Criminal Immigrants in Texas: Illegal Immigrant Conviction and Arrest Rates for Homicide, Sex Crimes, Larceny, and Other Crimes*, CATO INST. (Feb. 26, 2018).

¹⁷ John Gramlich, *5 Facts About Crime in the U.S.*, PEW RES. CTR. (Jan. 3, 2019).

¹⁸ Ames Grawert & Cameron Kimble, *Crime in 2018: Updated Analysis*, BRENNAN CTR. FOR JUST. (Dec. 18, 2018).

¹⁹ *2018 National Drug Threat Assessment*, U.S. DEP'T OF JUST. DRUG ENFORCEMENT ADMIN. (2018). Ninety percent of heroin seizures at U.S. borders and more than 85 percent of cocaine and methamphetamine seizures occur at ports of entry, where drugs can be smuggled in personal vehicles or hidden among legal commercial goods in tractor trailers. Joe Ward & Anjali Singhvi, *Trump Claims There Is a Crisis at the Border. What's the Reality?*, N.Y. TIMES (Jan. 11, 2019).

walls,²⁰ and international mail (which is how high-purity fentanyl, for example, is usually shipped from China directly to the United States).²¹

b. Likewise, illegal crossings at the southern border are not the principal source of human trafficking victims. About two-thirds of human trafficking victims served by nonprofit organizations that receive funding from the relevant Department of Justice office are U.S. citizens, and even among non-citizens, most trafficking victims usually arrive in the country on valid visas.²² None of these instances of trafficking could be addressed by a border wall. And the three states with the highest per capita trafficking reporting rates are not even located along the southern border.²³

7. *This proclamation will only exacerbate the humanitarian concerns that do exist at the southern border.* There are real humanitarian concerns at the border, but they largely result from the current administration's own deliberate policies towards migrants. For example, the administration has used a "metering" policy to turn away families fleeing extreme violence and persecution in their home countries, forcing them to wait indefinitely at the border to present their asylum cases, and has adopted a number of other punitive steps to restrict those seeking asylum at the southern border. These actions have forced asylum-seekers to live on the streets or in makeshift shelters and tent cities with abysmal living conditions, and limited access to basic sanitation has caused outbreaks of disease and death. This state of affairs is a consequence of choices this administration has made, and erecting a wall will do nothing to ease the suffering of these people.

8. *Redirecting funds for the claimed "national emergency" will undermine U.S. national security and foreign policy interests.* 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.

a. Repurposing funds from the defense construction budget will drain money from critical defense infrastructure projects, possibly including improvement of military hospitals, construction of roads, and renovation of on-base housing.²⁴ And the proclamation will likely continue to divert those armed forces already deployed at the southern border from their usual training activities or missions, affecting troop readiness.²⁵

²⁰ See Gustavo Solis, *Drug Smuggling, and the Endless Battle To Stop It*, USA TODAY (last visited Feb. 18, 2019).

²¹ 2018 National Drug Threat Assessment, *supra* note 19, at 33.

²² Jenna Krajeski, *The Hypocrisy of Trump's Anti-Trafficking Argument for a Border Wall*, NEW YORKER (Feb. 5, 2019).

²³ Holly Yan, *The Deadly Toll of Human Smuggling and Trafficking in the U.S.*, CNN (July 28, 2017, 3:45 PM).

²⁴ Claudia Grisales, *Trump Declares Emergency on Southern Border, Opens Battle Over Use of Military Funds To Build Wall*, STARS & STRIPES (Feb. 15, 2019).

²⁵ Leo Shane III, *Democrats Want To Know Why Active-Duty Troops Are Still on the Southern US Border*, MIL. TIMES (Jan. 29, 2019); Thomas Gibbons-Neff & Helene Cooper, *Impact of Border Deployments Is Felt by Troops at Home and Away*, N.Y. TIMES (Dec. 24, 2018); Ashley Roque, *Readiness Questions Abound, the Pentagon Prepares To Send Thousands of Additional Troops to Border*, JANE'S DEFENCE WKLY. (Jan. 29, 2019).

b. In addition, the administration’s unilateral, provocative actions are heightening tensions with our neighbors to the south, at a moment when we need their help to address a range of Western Hemisphere concerns. These actions are placing friendly governments to the south under impossible pressures and driving partners away. They have especially strained our diplomatic relationship with Mexico, a relationship that is vital to regional efforts ranging from critical intelligence and law enforcement partnerships to cooperative efforts to address the growing tensions with Venezuela. Additionally, the proclamation could well lead to the degradation of the natural environment in a manner that could only contribute to long-term socioeconomic and security challenges.

c. Finally, by declaring a national emergency for domestic political reasons with no compelling reason or justification from his senior intelligence and law enforcement officials, the President has further eroded his credibility with foreign leaders, both friend and foe. 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.

9. *The situation at the border does not require the use of the armed forces, and a wall is unnecessary to support the use of the armed forces.* We understand that the administration is also claiming that the situation at the southern border “requires use of the armed forces,” and that a wall is “necessary to support such use” of the armed forces. These claims are implausible.

a. Historically, our country has deployed National Guard troops at the border solely to assist the Border Patrol when there was an extremely high number of apprehensions, together with a particularly low number of Border Patrol agents. But currently, even with retention and recruitment challenges, the Border Patrol is at historically high staffing and funding levels, and apprehensions—measured in both absolute and per-agent terms—are near historic lows.²⁶

b. Furthermore, the composition of southern border crossings has shifted such that families and unaccompanied minors now account for the majority of immigrants seeking entry at the southern border; these individuals do not present a threat that would need to be countered with military force.

c. Just last month, when asked what the military is doing at the border that couldn’t be done by the Department of Homeland Security if it had the funding for it, a top-level defense official responded, “[n]one of the capabilities that we are providing [at the southern border] are combat capabilities. It’s not a war zone along the border.”²⁷ Finally, it is implausible that hundreds of miles of wall across the southern border are somehow necessary to support the use of armed forces. We are aware of no military- or security-related rationale that could remotely justify such an endeavor.

²⁶ Alex Nowrasteh, *Sending Troops to the Border Is Unnecessary and Dangerous*, CATO INST. (Apr. 4, 2018).

²⁷ Heather Timmons, *The US Border Situation Isn’t a National Emergency, Pentagon Officials Tell Congress*, QUARTZ (Jan. 29, 2019).

10. *There is no basis for circumventing the appropriations process with a declaration of a national emergency at the southern border.* We do not deny that our nation faces real immigration and national security challenges. But as the foregoing demonstrates, these challenges demand a thoughtful, evidence-based strategy, not a manufactured crisis that rests on falsehoods and fearmongering. In a briefing before the Senate Intelligence Committee on January 29, 2019, less than one month before the Presidential Proclamation, the Directors of the CIA, DNI, FBI, and NSA testified about numerous serious current threats to U.S. national security, but none of the officials identified a security crisis at the U.S.-Mexico border. In a briefing before the House Armed Services Committee the next day, Pentagon officials acknowledged that the 2018 National Defense Strategy does not identify the southern border as a security threat.²⁸ Leading legislators with access to classified information²⁹ and the President's own statements³⁰ have strongly suggested, if not confirmed, that there is no evidence supporting the administration's claims of an emergency. And it is reported that the President made the decision to circumvent the appropriations process and reprogram money without the Acting Secretary of Defense having even started to consider where the funds might come from,³¹ suggesting an absence of consultation and internal deliberations that in our experience are necessary and expected before taking a decision of this magnitude.

11. For all of the foregoing reasons, in our professional opinion, there is no factual basis for the declaration of a national emergency for the purpose of circumventing the appropriations process and reprogramming billions of dollars in funding to construct a wall at the southern border, as directed by the Presidential Proclamation of February 15, 2019.

Respectfully submitted,

*Signed/**

1. Madeleine K. Albright
2. Jeremy B. Bash
3. John B. Bellinger III
4. Daniel Benjamin
5. Antony Blinken

²⁸ *See id.*

²⁹ *See, e.g.*, Press Release, Sen. Lamar Alexander, Statement on National Emergency Announcement (Feb. 15, 2019); Press Release, Sen. Susan Collins, Statement on Reports President Trump Will Declare National Emergency To Fund More Border Walls (Feb. 14, 2019); Press Release, Sen. Mitt Romney, Statement on Spending, Border Security Deal (Feb. 14, 2019).

³⁰ *Remarks by President Trump on the National Security and Humanitarian Crisis on our Southern Border*, White House (Feb. 15, 2019) (“I didn’t need to do this. But I’d rather do it much faster.”).

³¹ Noah Gray, *Acting U.S. Defense Secretary Will Review Programs To Cut for Wall Funding*, CNN (Feb. 17, 2019).

* Signatures on file with Harold Hongju Koh, Rule of Law Clinic, Yale Law School, P.O. Box 208215, New Haven, CT 06520, harold.koh@ylsclinics.org, 203-432-4932.

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