

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

November 19, 2018

The Honorable James Mattis
Secretary of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301-1000

Dear Secretary Mattis:

We are writing to request that the active duty servicemembers deployed to the U.S. southern border be redeployed to their home base in time for Thanksgiving. This operation appears to us to have been entirely politically motivated on the part of the President, which is an inappropriate use of the military and a troubling abuse of power as Commander in Chief. The Department of Defense (DoD) has thus far been unable to demonstrate that refugees currently traveling through Mexico pose a national security threat to the United States—certainly not one that would demand the deployment of active duty servicemen and women. We urge you to end these unnecessary deployments and return these servicemembers to their home stations so they can be with their families for the Thanksgiving holiday.

Original U.S. Northern Command assessments estimated that approximately 20 percent of the group of the roughly 7,000 refugees and migrants would reach the U.S. border (about 1,400 individuals). As has been clear from DoD's Rules of Engagement and the description of briefings given to deployed servicemembers, the active duty military will not be interacting with the refugees in order to prevent direct or inadvertent violations of the Posse Comitatus Act. If these active duty servicemembers have completed their primary tasks of laying concertina wire, welding, and providing logistical support to Customs and Border Protection, there is no need for them to remain separated from their families.

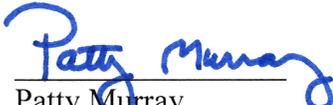
The appropriate response to handling the refugees should include deploying additional personnel to process asylum claims, medical providers, and humanitarian aid. The President has claimed that this group of refugees, most of whom are women and children fleeing horrific violence in their country to seek safety, is a security threat that should be met with force instead of basic assistance and empathy.

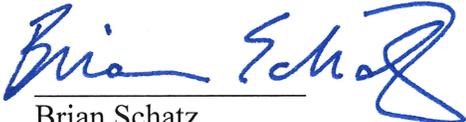
Our military personnel have real, essential duties to perform that are vital to our national security. Taking advantage of their loyalty and commitment to service for political gain belittles their sacrifices. From its commencement, this operation has elicited rightful concern over the use of active duty personnel for the purpose and support of domestic law enforcement. We believe you understand our concerns and take these issues seriously. Therefore, we urge you to allow these servicemembers to return to their homes in time to spend Thanksgiving with their families.

We understand this is a difficult position for DoD and the services, and we appreciate all you have done to protect our nation and its standing in the world. We also join with you in

commending the selfless service of our men and women in uniform who continue to carry out their missions with the utmost ability and professionalism.

Sincerely,


Patty Murray
United States Senator


Brian Schatz
United States Senator