

Trump visits Calexico border

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(NBC7 Dallas-Fort Worth) — President Donald Trump visited the U.S.-Mexico border in Calexico, California, Friday and touted the effectiveness of a newly replaced stretch of border wall, calling it “better, faster and less expensive,” than the portion of fence it replaced.

The president flew into Naval Air Facility El Centro aboard Air Force One and was greeted to cheers from border patrol agents, military troops and their families before boarding a motorcade en route to the border town. On the road to Calexico, supporters stood cheering, waving flags and holding signs thanking Trump and supporting the wall.

At the Calexico station, the president was joined for a quick media briefing by law enforcement agency officials from border jurisdictions from San Diego to Arizona.

El Centro Sector CBP Chief Gloria Chavez said, “We’re very appreciative of this wall. These men and women out here in the area of two miles were experiencing a high number of assaults and use-of-force incidents. This was prior to this wall being built.”

Chavez said the see-through design of the new barrier gives agents a huge advantage because they can now see what’s on the other side.

“We can see the adversary, we can see the threat,” she said.

Chavez said agents would have rocks and other items thrown at them on a daily basis, but those threats have stopped since the new barrier was erected. According to Chavez, assaults on agents have dropped 65 percent in that two-mile stretch and illegal entries have decreased by 75 percent.

The president said the majority of breaches in the area happen at points along the border still lined with the old fence. When the entire area is lined with the new style fence, he predicted illegal entries in Chavez’s area would be down 99.9 percent.

Three sheriffs from counties in California’s central valley were also at the briefing, saying they feel the impact of porous border defense from 400 miles away.

“I just want to take this opportunity to thank this president for doing the right thing and standing up for law enforcement in this country. It is greatly appreciated,” **Kern County Sheriff Donny Youngblood** said.

Sheriff representatives from Arizona who joined the president also thanked him for his commitment to border security, and said they neutralize threats from the other side of the southern border every day.

“Anyone who would suggest that we do not have a crisis on our southern border is being intellectually dishonest to the point of being dishonest with malice. We have a humanitarian crisis which is very clear and compelling, we have a compelling crisis of public safety with human trafficking, drug trafficking, sex trafficking coming through the border. This is not make believe, this is something that we live with every day as border sheriffs, so we applaud the efforts of the current administration to secure our border,” **Pima County Sheriff Mark D. Napier** said.

Ahead of the tour, the president first sat down for a roundtable with U.S. Customs and Border Patrol and Department of Homeland Security officials. Border Patrol Chief Chavez said that the renovated section of wall – which is now 30-foot steel fencing – accounted for a drop in illegal entries by 75 percent in fiscal year ’19 (including both Central American and Indian nationals apprehended along that segment).

“We need the border barrier, we need to provide the requirements that meet our need, in this case for us its 30 feet high,” Chavez said. “That’s what we asked for and that’s what was provided, so thank you on behalf of the border patrol here for allowing that to happen.”

With the renovation, the section became the tallest border barrier along the southern United States, standing at 30 feet tall, according to Chavez.

The White House says it's the first section of his proposed border wall to be built....

"There is indeed an emergency on our southern border," Trump said at the briefing, adding that there has been a sharp uptick in illegal crossings. "It's a colossal surge, and it's overwhelming our immigration system. We can't take you anymore. Our country is full."

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Background

To date, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has updated about 82 miles of barriers throughout the Southwest border, said 54th Chief of Engineers and Commanding General Lt. Gen. Todd Semonite.

By the end of this year about 97 miles of border fencing is expected to have been updated, with an additional 277 miles of upgrades expected in 2020 as well, Semonite said.

"By the end of December of 2020 the total amount of money will be \$8 million and about 450 miles put in the ground," he said.

Calexico Police Department Chief Gonzalo Gerardo said he has seen firsthand how the barrier has improved public safety in the border city since it was initially installed in the 1990s.

He also expressed gratitude for Trump's pledge to continue to enhance border security. (from Imperial Valley Press - [ivpressonline .com](http://ivpressonline.com))