

## **Advocates of an Immigration Overhaul Question a Border Deployment**

The New York Times

May 27, 2010 Thursday, Late Edition - Final

Copyright 2010 The New York Times Company

**Section:** Section A; Column 0; National Desk; Pg. 22

**Length:** 1112 words

**Byline:** By SHERYL GAY STOLBERG; Randal C. Archibold contributed reporting from Los Angeles.

### **Body**

---

WASHINGTON -- In deciding to deploy up to 1,200 National Guard troops to bolster security at the Mexican **border**, President Obama has stepped into one of the thorniest issues facing American presidents -- illegal **immigration** -- and has confounded allies who say he is squandering his chance to address it in a comprehensive way.

The White House says it is sending the troops solely to combat drug smuggling, a problem highlighted by the recent killing of an Arizona rancher. But any move toward **border** security invariably raises passions in the **immigration** debate, and on Wednesday **advocates** for **overhauling** the system were **questioning** the president's intentions.

They said that in focusing first on **border** security, Mr. Obama might be giving up his best leverage for winning approval of broader but more politically contentious steps to address the status of the millions of immigrants already in the United States illegally, and the needs of employers who rely on their labor.

"I'm trying to reconcile the stated belief of this president when he was a candidate, what he has said publicly -- as recently as a naturalization ceremony last month -- and what his actions are," said Angela Kelley, vice president for **immigration** policy at the Center for American Progress, a left-leaning organization that is a close ally of the Obama administration. "I think there's a big gap there."

Mr. Obama's decision to send the National Guard focused attention on the intense political pressures facing him as he wades into the issue during this midterm election year. Republicans are demanding that he improve **border** security before they cooperate on an **immigration** bill. Some moderate Democrats facing difficult re-election races are also demanding tougher action at the **border**.

But Democrats also see an opportunity to win the political allegiance of the fast-growing Hispanic population for years or decades to come if they can handle the issue adeptly. In particular, Democrats are eager to balance support for enhanced **border** security with an approach that they can contrast to the policies championed by many Republicans, starting with Arizona's new law that gives police a greater role in **immigration** enforcement.

Senator Charles E. Schumer, the New York Democrat who is trying to generate support for comprehensive **immigration** legislation in the Senate, said toughening **border** security would help the broader effort.

"Given the fact the problems at the **border** have turned to become seriously drug related, I think it's necessary and helps comprehensive reform," Mr. Schumer said, "because it shows that Democrats will fight for both parts of the issue."

In the Senate, Mr. Obama's 2008 Republican presidential rival, John McCain of Arizona, was driving colleagues toward a vote, originally scheduled for Wednesday but then postponed, on a plan to send 6,000 troops to the

## Advocates of an Immigration Overhaul Question a Border Deployment

**border**. The White House, which has been quietly working on its own plan to send troops, hurriedly released that plan on Tuesday so that Democrats could have an alternative, according to one senior administration official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity.

Representative Gabrielle Giffords, an Arizona Democrat who, like Senator McCain, faces a tough re-election race, has been leaning hard on the administration. Two weeks ago, she showed up for a meeting with Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano carrying a newspaper article about the Arizona rancher, who was her constituent, and asked that Ms. Napolitano show it to the president.

"She tucked it under her arm, and as she left she said she had a meeting with him that afternoon," Ms. Giffords said, adding, "I've been a thorn in the side of the administration, repeatedly calling for the redeployment of the Guard to the area, and I have not backed down."

Since the beginning of his presidency, Mr. Obama has been dogged by **questions** about his commitment to **immigration** legislation that would provide a path to citizenship for the estimated 12 million people who are living in this country without legal documentation. Other priorities, notably the economy and health care legislation, put the issue on the back burner for the first year of his administration.

That changed last month, when Arizona enacted its new law, aimed at identifying, prosecuting and deporting illegal immigrants. The measure unleashed immediate protests, and Mr. Obama, speaking at a naturalization ceremony for active-duty service members, condemned it on the day it was signed into law. He called on Congress to take up an **immigration overhaul**.

On Wednesday, Mr. Obama's attorney general, Eric H. Holder Jr., heard from police chiefs who oppose the Arizona law. The chiefs, representing cities including Phoenix, Tucson, Los Angeles, Houston, Philadelphia and Minneapolis, told Mr. Holder that the law would increase crime, not decrease it, as backers claim.

The Arizona bill put **immigration** squarely back on the Congressional agenda, but Mr. Obama has been having trouble persuading Republicans to sign on. During a Cinco de Mayo celebration in the Rose Garden last month, Mr. Obama told an audience of Hispanic leaders that he was determined to pass legislation, but that he could not do so without Republican support.

The decision to send troops could be an attempt to get that support. At a testy meeting with Senate Republicans on Tuesday, before the White House disclosed its decision about the National Guard **deployment**, Mr. McCain pressed Mr. Obama on what he was doing to improve **border** security. Mr. Obama did not reveal his **border** security plan, but did ask for Republicans' help in passing **immigration** legislation.

"The president told the Republican caucus yesterday that he wants to move forward; he feels that this problem has festered too long and needs a solution," said David Axelrod, Mr. Obama's senior adviser, adding that the decision to send troops was "not related to the meeting."

**Advocates** for **immigration** reform say the two issues cannot be divorced. Clarissa Martinez, director of **immigration** and national campaigns for the National Council of La Raza, **questioned** why Mr. Obama would satisfy Republicans' demands for increasing **border** security without extracting a commitment for comprehensive reform in return.

"Republicans keep saying they need to do these things first before they give **immigration** reform its due," she said. "One could argue that perhaps the White House was trying to say: 'O.K., you're saying this is the impediment to negotiations. Fine, let's remove the impediment and get to the negotiations.' The problem here is, that was not stated. I can't see the strategy in it."

## Graphic

---

PHOTO: National Guard troops are being sent to the U.S.-Mexico **border** as a response to drug smuggling. (PHOTOGRAPH BY MATT YORK/ASSOCIATED PRESS)

## Classification

---

**Language:** ENGLISH

**Publication-Type:** Newspaper

**Subject:** **BORDER** CONTROL (94%); **IMMIGRATION** (92%); TERRITORIAL & NATIONAL **BORDERS** (91%); US PRESIDENTS (91%); NATIONAL SECURITY (90%); US REPUBLICAN PARTY (89%); ELECTIONS (89%); ARMED FORCES (89%); **IMMIGRATION** REGULATION & POLICY (89%); LEGISLATION (89%); LEGISLATIVE BODIES (89%); **IMMIGRATION** LAW (89%); US DEMOCRATIC PARTY (89%); POLITICAL PARTIES (88%); ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS (78%); CITIZENSHIP (78%); PUBLIC POLICY (78%); MIDTERM ELECTIONS (78%); US PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES 2008 (78%); NATURALIZATION (78%); SMUGGLING (77%); LIBERALISM (77%); CONTROLLED SUBSTANCES CRIME (77%); CAMPAIGNS & ELECTIONS (74%); POPULATION GROWTH (73%); HISPANIC AMERICANS (72%); DRUG TRAFFICKING (71%)

**Industry:** ARMED FORCES (89%)

**Person:** BARACK OBAMA (89%); JOHN MCCAIN (58%); CHARLES SCHUMER (56%)

**Geographic:** ARIZONA, USA (93%); UNITED STATES (94%); MEXICO (79%)

**Load-Date:** May 27, 2010