

THE SPARSE WATCH ON AMERICA'S BORDERS 4/bl;

by Hamilton Fish Jr.

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Body

To the Editor:

The smuggling of aliens which prompted your July 7 article on our undermanned **Border** Patrol is the vilest and most frustrating aspect of illegal migration.

he U.S. **Border** Patrol is charged with maintaining the integrity of our **borders** between points of entry. Numbering only 350 at any given time on our 2,000-mile **border** with Mexico, it is no match for the smugglers, who are well-organized on both sides of the **border**.

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Illegal **border** crossings increase annually; in 1979, apprehensions exceeded one million. While it is more humane to turn aliens back at the **border** than to apprehend them in the interior of the country, reassigning personnel while failing to increase levels makes the mission of the **Border** Patrol virtually impossible. More officers are needed, particularly since South Florida is now an area of vulnerability.

The President's policy statement of August 1977 calling for improved **border** control has been followed up by reductions in patrol strength. Personnel on duty in May 1980 was 214 below levels authorized by the Congress in fiscal 1978.

Congressional concern was expressed on July 1, when the House adopted, 337 to 72, my amendment to provide for 311 additional **Border** Patrol positions in Justice Department appropriations for fiscal year 1981.

As long as Mexico and other Central American countries experience rapid population growth, poverty and high unemployment, pressures on our **border** will continue. Cooperative arrangements with Mexico to develop labor-intensive industry and agriculture would help. Likewise, the magnet effect of the U.S. economy could be reduced by economic disincentives.

All aspects of this complex phenomenon, including the status of aliens already here illegally, are being explored by the Select Commission on Immigration and Refugee Policy. Its recommendations, due in March of 1981, will certainly include more effective control of our **borders**.

Recognizing the magnitude and importance of the problem, recruitment and training of **Border** Patrol personnel should not be delayed. (Rep.) **HAMILTON FISH JR.** Washington, July 11, 1980

The writer is ranking member on the House Subcommittee on Immigration, Refugees and International Law and a member of the Select Commission on Immigration and Refugee Policy.

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