

Bush Now Favors Some Fencing Along Border

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Body

President **Bush** traveled on Thursday to a blistering stretch of scrub land surrounding the nation's busiest **Border** Patrol station and declared that he supported **fencing** some but not all of America's 1,950-mile **border** with Mexico.

"It makes sense to use **fencing along** the **border** in key locations in order to do our job," Mr. **Bush** said in a speech at the headquarters of the Yuma Sector **Border** Patrol. "We're in the process of making our **border** the most technologically advanced **border** in the world."

Mr. **Bush** has in the past indicated he is opposed to **fencing**, and White House officials were kept busy on Thursday trying to explain the change in his position. Tony Snow, the new White House press secretary, told reporters on Air Force One that the White House supported a Senate amendment, passed on Wednesday, that would build 370 miles of **fence** in areas most often used by smugglers and illegal workers.

"We don't think you **fence** off the entire **border**," Mr. Snow said. But, he added, "there are places when **fences** are appropriate."

Earlier on Thursday, Mr. **Bush** sent a letter to Congress requesting \$1.9 billion to pay for putting up to 6,000 more National Guard troops on the **border** with Mexico. The troops were the main news in his immigration speech on Monday.

The request for money and Mr. **Bush's** tough words on **fencing** amounted to his latest effort to win over House conservatives who want an immigration bill focused on strengthening **border** security instead of a temporary guest worker program **avored** by the Senate. Mr. **Bush** likes the Senate plan, which would give most of the nation's 11 million illegal immigrants a chance to become American citizens, but he is trying to meld both approaches into a single bill that he hopes will be the major legislation of his remaining two years as president.

"Our country is a country of laws, and we've got to enforce our laws," Mr. **Bush** said at the **Border** Patrol headquarters, where outside temperatures reached 104 degrees. "But we're also a nation of immigrants. And we've got to remember that proud tradition, as well, which has strengthened our country in many ways."

Mr. **Bush** said that he believed a temporary worker program would reduce the number of people trying to enter the country illegally. Hundreds of Mexicans have died in the heat in recent years trying to enter the country through the Sonoran Desert, between Yuma in the west and Nogales, Ariz., to the east. Since October 2005, the Yuma sector of the **Border** Patrol, which stretches for some 125 miles **along** the desert boundary between the United States and Mexico, has reported 17 deaths.

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"I understand there are many people on the other side of the **border** who will do anything to come and work," Mr. **Bush** said. "And that includes risking their life crossing your desert, or being willing to be stuffed in the back of an 18-wheeler."

The president was met here by Gov. Janet Napolitano of Arizona, and then toured a dirt field a few hundred feet from the **border**, where there were five watch towers and a **fence** of corrugated metal about 20 feet high.

After the tour, Mr. **Bush** gave back-to-back interviews of three to five minutes each to five broadcast and cable networks -- CNN, Fox, NBC, ABC, CBS -- to press his immigration plan.

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Graphic

Photo: President **Bush** toured part of the Mexican **border** yesterday near San Luis, Ariz., as he tried to win support for his immigration bill. The driver of the vehicle was Agent Rocky Kittle of the **Border** Patrol. (Photo by Sandy Huffaker/The New York Times)

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