

HOMELAND CHIEF VOWS BORDER CRACKDOWN

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Body

WASHINGTON - Stung by an explosion of illegal immigration, the nation's homeland security chief promised yesterday to overhaul protective measures along the Southwestern border, including tougher treatment for illegals already in the U.S.

"We have decided to stand back and take a look at how we address the problem and solve it once and for all," Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff said.

Acknowledging that the flow of illegals has inflamed public opinion and border-state politicians, Chertoff said yesterday the Bush administration believes immigration regulations must be revamped.

The homeland security czar said a top-to-bottom review of border security policy was under way before the Democratic governors of Arizona and New Mexico recently declared an immigration "emergency" in their adjoining states.

A department spokesman said Chertoff has declared the illegal influx a major priority for homeland security and will ask for beefed-up budgets to stem the flow of hundreds of thousands of illegals.

The homeland security review, which should be completed within the next several weeks, will examine how best to tighten U.S. borders while catching, detaining and deporting immigrants already in the country, Chertoff aides said.

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