

## Politics

# Trump threatens to summon military to close U.S.-Mexico border, upend trade deal in response to migrant caravan

By [John Wagner](#) and

[Alex Horton](#)

October 18 at 9:16 AM

President Trump threatened Thursday to summon the military to close the U.S.-Mexico border and upend a trade deal, expressing mounting frustration with a large caravan of migrants from Honduras that has been making its way toward the United States.

In morning tweets, Trump repeated vows to stop U.S. aid to Central American countries that do not disband the caravan and issued a fresh threat to the Mexican government, which said Wednesday that it would treat those in the caravan no differently than it does other migrants.

“In addition to stopping all payments to these countries, which seem to have almost no control over their population, I must, in the strongest of terms, ask Mexico to stop this onslaught — and if unable to do so I will call up the U.S. Military and CLOSE OUR SOUTHERN BORDER!” Trump said in one tweet.

In another, he suggested that the “onslaught” of immigrants could undermine a recently announced reworked trade deal with Mexico and Canada, writing that immigration is “far more important to me, as President, than Trade.”

The new deal, which replaces the North American Free Trade Agreement, has yet to be signed by the three countries. Congress is not expected to ratify it before next year.



**Donald J. Trump**

@realDonaldTrump

I am watching the Democrat Party led (because they want Open Borders and existing weak laws) assault on our country by Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador, whose leaders are doing little to stop this large flow of people, INCLUDING MANY CRIMINALS, from entering Mexico to U.S.....

4:25 AM - Oct 18, 2018

33.8K    16.4K people are talking about this



**Donald J. Trump**

@realDonaldTrump

...In addition to stopping all payments to these countries, which seem to have almost no control over their population, I must, in the strongest of terms, ask Mexico to stop this onslaught - and if unable to do so I will call up the U.S. Military and CLOSE OUR SOUTHERN BORDER!..

4:35 AM - Oct 18, 2018

55.6K 25.5K people are talking about this



**Donald J. Trump**

@realDonaldTrump

...The assault on our country at our Southern Border, including the Criminal elements and DRUGS pouring in, is far more important to me, as President, than Trade or the USMCA. Hopefully Mexico will stop this onslaught at their Northern Border. All Democrats fault for weak laws!

4:45 AM - Oct 18, 2018

35.6K 17.1K people are talking about this

Trump's comments come as he has been urging fellow Republicans to make immigration a central issue in the closing weeks of their midterm election campaigns and blaming Democrats for his inability to pass immigration legislation in the GOP-controlled Congress.

"All Democrats fault for weak laws!" Trump said in one tweet Thursday.

The issue of immigration is certain to be on the agenda Friday when Secretary of State Mike Pompeo is scheduled to meet with Mexican President Enrique Peña Nieto.

Trump's frustration appears to stem in part from record levels of migrants entering the United States with children in the three months since his administration stopped separating families at the border.

The Washington Post reported this week that Border Patrol agents arrested 16,658 family members in September, the highest one-month total on record and an 80 percent increase from July, according to unpublished statistics from the Department of Homeland Security.

Trump has made migrant caravans a symbol of all that is wrong with U.S. immigration policies. In his tweets Thursday, he warned that the latest group includes "MANY CRIMINALS."

Earlier this year, Trump's criticism turned a migrant caravan into a spectacle, with day-by-day media coverage of the journey. That episode caused a spat between the United States and Mexico and was used to justify a deployment of National Guard troops to the border.

When Trump has previously mobilized in response to unlawful migration, their missions have been mostly passive support for border agents, such as logistics and surveillance.

The Posse Comitatus Act forbids using the military for civilian law enforcement duties outside military bases in the United States.

Military officials instructed troops to alert border agents if they encountered migrants, rather than intervene themselves, except in cases of self defense. The Army also restricted the use of weapons to personnel who may need to use force.

The General Accountability Office looked at Bush and Obama administration mobilizations on the border and found that DHS didn't understand what its military support could and could not do, which frustrated DHS and Pentagon officials.

On Wednesday, Mexican officials said those in the Honduran caravan with proper documentation could enter the country and those without it would have to apply for refugee status or face deportation.

The migrants — who say they are traveling in search of jobs, better lives for their families, and an escape from gang threats and violent communities — were blocked at the Honduras-Guatemala border for several hours earlier this week by Guatemalan police in riot gear before being allowed to pass.

*Joshua Partlow contributed to this report.*

#### John Wagner



John Wagner is a national reporter who leads The Post's new breaking political news team. He previously covered the Trump White House. During the 2016 presidential election, he focused on the Democratic campaigns of Hillary Clinton, Bernie Sanders and Martin O'Malley. He also chronicled Maryland government for more than a decade. [Follow](#)

#### Alex Horton



Alex Horton is a general assignment reporter for The Washington Post. He previously covered the military and national security for Stars and Stripes, and served in Iraq as an Army infantryman. [Follow](#)

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