

border. Media reports indicate that 17,000 National Guard troops were deployed to the Gulf region to respond to the recent oil spill. Yet, you have only pledged 1,200 National Guard troops to protect the border—and according to media reports only a small fraction of those troops have arrived to date. It is unrealistic, if not pure insanity, to believe that a mere 1,200 National Guard troops, even with the support of the Border Patrol, can effectively cover the nearly 2,000 mile long Southwestern border of the United States. We must put additional bodies on the ground and we must give them the weapons and specify rules of engagement that give them the authority to do whatever is necessary to secure the border. A National Guard trooper armed with only a pistol and given no authority to engage the enemy is useless against a criminal armed with military grade weapons and ammunition.

Mr. President, we implore you to view this situation for what it is, a war and to act accordingly.

Sincerely,

DAN BURTON,
TED POE,
RALPH HALL,
PETE OLSON,
ED ROYCE,
Members of Congress.

NOVEMBER 4, 2010.

Hon. BARACK OBAMA,
President of the United States of America, the White House, Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. PRESIDENT: On October 26th I and four of my colleagues, sent you a letter expressing our extreme concerns regarding the deteriorating security situation along our Nation's southern border. Since that time five more Americans have been killed along the border region. Protecting our borders and our citizens is a paramount responsibility of the Federal government; enshrined in the preamble of the Constitution. I strongly urge you to consider the proposals laid out in my letter from October 26th. Americans are dying; it is time to recognize that the drug violence along the border is a direct threat to the United States and act accordingly.

Thank you for giving your personal time and attention to this critically important issue.

[January 16, 2011]

DODGING BULLETS IN EL PASO

(By Jeannie DeAngelis)

In the ghost town of Fort Quitman, 80 miles southeast of El Paso, four U.S. road workers were up at dawn attending to "shovel ready" jobs by filling potholes with gravel. Unfortunately, "at least one Mexican gunman," who probably just wanted a chance to do jobs Americans won't do, "fired a high-powered rifle across the border," barely missing the workers.

"The bullets struck private land . . . about half a mile from the border fence." Thankfully, the quartet escaped unharmed. "Mike Doyle, Chief Deputy of the Hudspeth County Sheriff's Office, said after the fact, a rancher spotted a white pickup fleeing the area on the Mexican side at 10:30 a.m.—the time the shots were fired."

According to Doyle, "Drug cartels use this busy smuggling corridor in between the Quitman Mountains and mountains in the northwestern part of Chihuahua State to traffic marijuana and sometimes cocaine." The chief deputy explained the incident by saying: "The gunman might have shot at the road workers to distract them or get them to flee."

So in other words, criminal interlopers tried to get American workers to disperse from territory where they had every right to work and exist in order to "get them outside [the] area?"

Francisco "Quico" Canseco, R-Texas said: "It is completely unacceptable that Americans at work, doing their job in America, come under gunfire from across the border in Mexico. Our border is not secure from violence that threatens American lives. Securing our border against the cartels and their violent threat must be a top priority."

After the shooting, two Texas Rangers and Hudspeth County Sheriff Arvin West and Chief Deputy Doyle were at the scene looking for the bullets with a metal detector, which when weighed against the alternatives is preferable to a medical examiner digging bullets out of heads.

"The U.S. government built narrowly spaced steel poles north of the Rio Grande to fence the border in that West Texas area. The slots are not wide enough for people to cross, but small objects can fit between the 15-foot-tall poles." Thus, the lone gunman must have been dedicated to scattering the workers because nothing deterred his squeezing the gun barrel through or shooting off the bullets.

This particular shot across the border initiated Hudspeth County into an elite group. "In El Paso, stray bullets from a drug-related gunfight hit City Hall in June. Another stray bullet struck a University of Texas at El Paso building in August." And to date, newlywed David Hartley's body has yet to be recovered after being shot by Mexican gunmen on Falcon Lake, a border area near Laredo, Texas.

After the bullets missed the U.S. four workers, the men were escorted away from the scene, which successfully accomplished the original intent of the shooter: Disperse the crowd and clear the area so as to drive unhindered right on through to Texas. Moreover, and much to the relief of the high-powered rifleman, Border Patrol spokesman Bill Brooks assured drug- and gun-runners, as well as marauding banditos with high-powered rifles, that Border Patrol does not plan to deploy additional agents to the area. Brooks vowed: "There is no beefing up in any way."

Governor Rick Perry's spokeswoman, Katherine Cesinger, said that "If these reports are true, it is yet another incident of border violence and spillover. It goes back to the need for the federal government to provide more resources to the border, which is certainly feeling the effects of the escalating violence in Mexico."

Nevertheless, not all is lost. Texas could follow Arizona, a state that recently chose to address violent behavior by distributing "Together we Thrive" tee shirts.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Ohio (Ms. KAPTUR) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. KAPTUR addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

IN SUPPORT OF THE AFFORDABLE CARE ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. BLUMENAUER) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, we are having debates about health care because Americans are nervous about changing something so important to their families, and that, of course, makes politicians nervous about reform.

This skepticism is understandable. Attempting to adjust policies and programs that comprise now 17 percent of

our economy, the biggest driver of the Federal deficit that literally touches every American family, poses daunting challenges. Yet, as people begin the analysis, the appropriate comparison is not some idealized, magical state but the comparison to the path we are on, which everybody agrees is unsustainable.

Medical costs, left unchecked, will literally bankrupt the country. The Department of Defense will spend more on health care this year than China uses to run its entire military operation for 7 months. Every objective, independent expert acknowledges and laments the fact that the United States is the world's health care underachiever. We pay more for health care than our major allies and competitors in Europe, Japan, and Canada, but our people get sick more often; they die sooner, and unlike any other country, people are bankrupted by medical costs—about 2,000 people per day. All the while, we have a record number of uninsured Americans—now over 50 million.

Sadly, we are getting exactly what we paid for: more procedures, multiple providers, an emphasis on specialty care rather than someone who can help us with our own efforts to negotiate this complex, fragmented health care system. America actually spends more administering our health insurance system and finding ways to deny care than any other country in the world spends on providing care.

Starting from scratch, we could give better care for less money, but we are not starting from scratch. We are starting with an economic and structural behemoth, encompassing, as I said, 17 percent of the economy. It is the largest employer in most communities, and it has evolved over two-thirds of a century of public and private investment and government legislation. Today, our hybrid system is largely administered through hundreds of agencies, programs, and large providers, with the Federal Government paying half the bill directly.

The good news is that we have proven that we can get better results for less than we are spending, and the health care reform legislation provides this framework. First, we don't need more money. In fact, if we implement the existing legislation, it can be a source of savings in the future.

The good news is we don't have to deal with unproven techniques or technologies. We know what to do. We don't even have to look at foreign models that are more successful than ours. We can look right here in the United States. My community of Portland, Oregon, delivers better health care for Medicare, for instance, to its recipients than other communities where costs are twice as high. It's not just Portland. This can be found in areas in the