

## **Bush May Widen National Guard Patrols at Border**

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President Bush will push next week for a broad overhaul of the nation's immigration laws and plans to tighten security on the borders, possibly with a wider deployment of the National Guard, White House officials said yesterday.

The officials said Bush will use a prime-time television address Monday to outline his plans and then visit the U.S.-Mexico border on Thursday to highlight the problem of illegal immigration.

Officials say he is considering substantially increasing the presence of National Guard troops, some of whom are already deployed under state of emergency declarations in New Mexico and Arizona. Administration officials are exploring ways to allow governors to deploy troops across state lines to help seal the porous border with Mexico.

The militarization of border security would be a dramatic -- and controversial -- gesture in the ongoing political war over illegal immigration. The military has long maintained a small presence under the auspices of drug interdiction, but conservatives in Congress have been pushing for a far more visible and substantial effort.

An administration official stressed that no final decisions have been made on deploying National Guardsmen along the border.

But congressional Republicans who back Bush's call for a guest-worker program and a path to citizenship for illegal immigrants say that is precisely what they need to win over House conservatives. Otherwise, the president's stand will run headlong into a House bill, passed in December, that would make illegal immigrants felons and build hundreds of miles of fence along the Mexican border without offering avenues to legality for undocumented workers.

"I think members of the House will like what the president has to say on border security," said a senior administration official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity because he did not want to upstage Bush's address.

White House officials were intentionally vague on the National Guard deployment, instead emphasizing a plan to hire more contractors to fill administrative posts with the Border Patrol so more agents could be deployed to the frontiers. Pentagon officials emphasized that any military support would be limited.

"Any additional [Defense Department] support for Customs and Border Protection operations would be temporary in nature and allow CBP to recruit and train additional personnel," said military spokeswoman Cynthia O. Smith. The main responsibility for border security lies with the U.S. Customs and Border Protection agency, with the military performing "a limited support role," she said.

New Mexico Gov. Bill Richardson (D) said he was concerned that the administration had not consulted directly with him and other governors of border states. "While the

immediate deployment of troops may create a short-term fix, it creates further problems and concerns regarding our National Guard troops who may be called upon to respond to other emergencies and natural disasters," he said.

The Monday night speech, Bush's first prime-time television address since December, will come the same day the Senate takes up immigration again, more than a month after a bipartisan compromise measure collapsed amid partisan acrimony. This time, Senate leaders from both parties are confident that a bill will emerge before Memorial Day, and they are already preparing for difficult negotiations with the House.

Rallies that have brought millions of illegal immigrants and their supporters to the streets of Washington, Los Angeles, Dallas and Chicago have convinced politicians they must act, Republicans and Democrats say.

The winds have shifted," said Sen. Lindsey O. Graham (R-S.C.), who will serve on the conference committee that will negotiate a final deal with the House. "The American people are outraged at all of us for not controlling our borders and coming up with a legal system that works. They are not looking for revenge. They are looking for results."

With their agreement Thursday to bring the immigration bill back to the floor Monday, Senate leaders practically guaranteed contentious, protracted negotiations with the House. Senate Minority Leader Harry M. Reid (D-Nev.) had said he would give up parliamentary delaying tactics only if he received assurances that the conference committee would not be stacked against a final bill that tightened border security, offered a new temporary work permit for future immigrants and granted illegal immigrants a pathway to citizenship.

Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist (R-Tenn.) had to assure conservatives opposed to such legislation that they would have a seat at the table as well.

What they agreed to was an ideological split. Senate negotiators will include some of the strongest supporters of the compromise legislation: Sens. Graham, Edward M. Kennedy (D-Mass.), John McCain (R-Ariz.), Mel Martinez (R-Fla.), Arlen Specter (R-Pa.) and Ken Salazar (D-Colo.) But the committee will also include three of its most ardent opponents, Sens. Jon Kyl (R-Ariz.), John Cornyn (R-Tex.) and Jeff Sessions (R-Ala.).

Across the table from them will be House Judiciary Committee Chairman F. James Sensenbrenner Jr. (R-Wis.), the main author of the House immigration bill, who is considered one of the toughest negotiators the House has to offer.

"Everyone is skeptical that anything can come out of conference," conceded a House Judiciary Committee aide, who spoke on the condition of anonymity because she was not cleared to speak to the media. "We've never had bills as divergent as these."

Republicans who support the president on the issue say Bush must create the momentum for those negotiations by forcefully making the case that it is unrealistic to think 12 million illegal immigrants can be deported, and by making serious commitments to seal the borders. Rep. Tom Price (R-Ga.) said Americans still

remember the 1986 immigration law, when they were promised that an amnesty for illegal immigrants would be coupled with border security and a crackdown on businesses that employ undocumented workers. They got the amnesty, he said, but the flow of illegal immigrants went on unabated.

Martinez told the National Press Club yesterday that "the president probably misplaced what the Americans needed to hear" as this debate was launched. "He needed to have spoken first about border enforcement. He spoke about a guest-worker program," said the senator from Florida.

Sean Spicer, a spokesman for the House Republican Conference, said a tough border security bill with a temporary worker program has the support of a majority of Republicans and enough Democrats to secure House passage. But the idea that illegal immigrants should also be offered a path to citizenship, embraced by most senators and by the president, will still give most House Republicans pause, he said. Sensenbrenner is dead set against it, according to Judiciary Committee spokesman Jeff Lungren.