

U.S. sending 5,200 troops to border

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — A week out from the midterm elections, the Pentagon said Monday it is sending 5,200 troops, some armed, to the Southwest border this week in an extraordinary military operation to stop Central American migrants traveling north in two caravans that were still hundreds of miles from the U.S. The number of troops is more than double the 2,000 who are in Syria fighting the Islamic State group.

President Donald Trump, eager to focus voters on immigration in the lead-up to the elections, stepped up his warnings about the caravans, tweeting: “This is an invasion of our Country and our Military is waiting for you!”

His warning came as the Pentagon began executing “Operation Faithful Patriot,” described by the commander of U.S. Northern Command as an effort to help Customs and Border Protection stiffen defenses at and near legal entry points. Advanced helicopters will allow border protection agents to swoop down on migrants trying to cross illegally, he said.

“We’re going to secure the border,” Air Force Gen. Terrence O’Shaughnessy, the Northern Command leader, said at a news conference. He spoke alongside Kevin McAleenan, commissioner of Customs and Border Protection.

Eight hundred troops already



Migrants climb on the trailer of a truck as others wait on the road that connects Tapanatepec with Nilttepec, Mexico, as a caravan of Central Americans continues its slow march toward the U.S. border.

are on their way to southern Texas, O’Shaughnessy said, and their numbers will top 5,200 by week’s end. He said troops would focus first on Texas, followed by Arizona and then California.

The number of people in the first caravan has dwindled to 3,500 from about 7,000, though a second one was gaining steam and marred by violence. About 600 migrants in the second group tried to cross a bridge from Guatemala to Mexico en masse on Monday but were met by ranks of Mexican federal police who blocked them from entering. The riverbank standoff

followed a more violent confrontation Sunday when the migrants used sticks and rocks against Mexico police. One migrant was killed Sunday night, but the cause was unclear.

Overall, they are poor, carrying the belongings that fit into a knapsack and fleeing gang violence or poverty. It’s possible there are criminals mixed in, but Trump has not substantiated his claim that members of the MS-13 gang, in particular, are among them.

The president’s dark description of the caravan belied the fact that any migrants who complete the long trek to the south-

ern U.S. border already face major hurdles, both physical and bureaucratic, to being allowed into the United States. Migrants are entitled under both U.S. and international law to apply for asylum, but it may take a while to make a claim. There is already a bottleneck of asylum-seekers at some U.S. border crossings, in some cases as long as five weeks.

McAleenan said the aim was to deter migrants from crossing illegally between ports, but he conceded his officers were overwhelmed by a surge of asylum-seekers. He also said Mexico was prepared to offer asylum to the

caravan.

The White House is also weighing additional border security measures, including blocking those traveling in the caravan from seeking legal asylum and preventing them from entering the U.S.

The military operation drew quick criticism.

“Sending active military forces to our southern border is not only a huge waste of taxpayer money, but an unnecessary course of action that will further terrorize and militarize our border communities,” said Shaw Drake of the American Civil Liberties Union’s border rights center at El Paso, Texas.

Military personnel are legally prohibited from engaging in immigration enforcement. The troops will include military police, combat engineers and others helping on the southern border. The escalating rhetoric and expected deployments come as the president has been trying to turn the caravans into a key election issue just days before the midterm elections that will determine whether Republicans maintain control of Congress.

On Monday, he tweeted without providing evidence: “Many Gang Members and some very bad people are mixed into the Caravan heading to our Southern Border. Please go back, you will not be admitted into the United States unless you go through the legal process. This is an invasion of our Country and our Military is waiting for you!”

Study: Guns send 8,300 U.S. kids to ER

The Associated Press

Gun injuries, including many from assaults, sent 75,000 U.S. children and teens to emergency rooms over nine years at a cost of almost \$3 billion, a first-of-its-kind study found.

Researchers called it the first nationally representative study on ER visits for gun injuries among U.S. kids. They found that more than one-third of the wounded children were hospitalized and 6 percent died. Injuries declined during most of the 2006-14 study, but there was an upswing in the final year.

The researchers found that 11 of every 100,000 children and teens treated in U.S. emergency rooms have gun-related injuries. That amounts to about

8,300 kids each year.

The scope of the problem is broader though; the study doesn’t include kids killed or injured by gunshots who never made it to the hospital, nor does it count costs for gunshot patients after they’re sent home.

“I don’t know what more we need to see in the world to be able to come together and tackle this problem,” said Dr. Faiz Gani, the lead author and a researcher at Johns Hopkins University medical school.

The study is an analysis of estimates on emergency department visits in a national database created by the U.S. government’s Agency on Healthcare Research and Quality.

The researchers focused on victims under age 18; the aver-

age age was about 15.

Almost half the gun injuries were from assaults, nearly 40 percent were unintentional and 2 percent were suicides. There were five times more ER visits for boys than for girls.

Pediatric ER visits for gun injuries fell from a rate of 15 per 100,000 in 2006 to about 7 per 100,000 in 2013, then jumped to 10 per 100,000 in 2014, the most recent data.

University funding paid for the analysis, published Monday in JAMA Pediatrics.

The findings highlight that gun violence involving kids extends beyond mass shootings that gain the most attention, said Dr. Robert Sege, co-author of an American Academy of Pediatrics gun injuries policy.

STUDENT DIES IN GUNFIRE AT N.C. SCHOOL

A North Carolina high school student shot and killed a fellow student during a fight in a crowded school hallway Monday, officials said, calling the incident a case of bullying that “escalated out of control” which had students scurrying to escape and parents rushing to campus to check on their children.

The student accused of firing the fatal shot was arrested quickly as investigators secured the campus at Butler High School in Matthews, about 12 miles southeast of downtown Charlotte. Matthews Police Department Capt. Stason Tyrrell identified the suspect at a news conference as Jatwan Craig Cuffie, a 16-year-old ninth-grader. He is charged as an adult with first-degree murder

and is being held in the Mecklenburg County jail.

Tyrrell identified the victim as Bobby McKeithen, 16, a 10th-grader at Butler.

According to Tyrrell, a school resource officer was in the school cafeteria at 7:14 a.m. when he and security officers heard a commotion and encountered students running in an adjacent hallway. Tyrrell said the resource officer encountered the victim, tried to give aid and called for a school lockdown. Within five minutes, a teacher notified school officials that she was with the student who committed the shooting, Tyrrell said, adding that the teacher said the student admitted to the shooting and was ready to surrender. — AP