

VFW Statement on New Southern Border Initiative

'...redirecting military quality of life program funding impacts morale – and in the military, morale means everything'

Sep 12, 2019

WASHINGTON – The Department of Defense [announced plans](#) last week to divert \$3.6 billion in military construction funds to build or replace 175 miles of southern border fencing. The reprogramming of funds will significantly delay the start or completion of 127 military construction projects, half of which are overseas. The Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States is monitoring the issue closely, as its senior leaders are well attuned to the housing and associated quality of life construction project needs of the military community, to include the impact that the decision may have on some 3,000 active-duty military personnel and 2,000 National Guardsmen currently deployed to the southern border in support of Department of Homeland Security officials.

While the VFW understands and supports the need to maintain secure borders, the organization is also charged with advocating for a military that is not only combat ready, but combat effective and lethal. This includes advocating for quality of life programs that preserve the all-volunteer force, that increase our ability to counter global threats, and that support America's allies. The delay or deferment of projects such as maintenance and training facilities, as well as schools, child care centers and medical clinics, could impact military and family readiness at home and abroad. Additionally, the decision to defer funding to expand projects such as the European Deterrence Initiative at various locations in Eastern Europe, and the Ground Based Interceptor program at Fort Greely, Alaska, could significantly weaken America's ability to defend herself and our allies from near-peer competitors.

Said VFW National Commander William J. "Doc" Schmitz, "the VFW is concerned by the administration's decision to target projects that directly impact the quality of life of our servicemen and women. We understand that hard decisions must be made to protect our citizens, but redirecting military quality of life program funding impacts morale – and in the

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military, morale means everything. We look forward to a serious discussion in Washington about how best to support two federal departments who share the ultimate mission of protecting the sovereignty of our nation and her citizens.”