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Address to the Nation on Border Security
January 8, 2019

My fellow Americans, tonight I am speaking to you because there is a growing humanitarian and security crisis at our southern border.

Every day, Customs and Border Patrol agents encounter thousands of illegal immigrants trying to enter our country. We are out of space to hold them, and we have no way to promptly return them back home to their country.

America proudly welcomes millions of lawful immigrants who enrich our society and contribute to our Nation. But all Americans are hurt by uncontrolled, illegal migration. It strains public resources and drives down jobs and wages. Among those hardest hit are African Americans and Hispanic Americans.

Our southern border is a pipeline for vast quantities of illegal drugs, including meth, heroin, cocaine, and fentanyl. Every week, 300 of our citizens are killed by heroin alone, 90 percent of which floods across from our southern border. More Americans will die from drugs this year than were killed in the entire Vietnam war.

In the last 2 years, ICE officers made 266,000 arrests of aliens with criminal records, including those charged or convicted of 100,000 assaults, 30,000 sex crimes, and 4,000 violent killings. Over the years, thousands of Americans have been brutally killed by those who illegally entered our country, and thousands more lives will be lost if we don't act right now.

This is a humanitarian crisis, a crisis of the heart and a crisis of the soul. Last month, 20,000 migrant children were illegally brought into the United States, a dramatic increase. These children are used as human pawns by vicious coyotes and ruthless gangs. One in three women are sexually assaulted on the dangerous trek up through Mexico. Women are—children are the biggest victims, by far, of our broken system. This is the tragic reality of illegal immigration on our southern border. This is the cycle of human suffering that I am determined to end.

My administration has presented Congress with a detailed proposal to secure the border and stop the criminal gangs, drug smugglers, and human traffickers. It's a tremendous problem. Our proposal was developed by law enforcement professionals and border agents at the Department of Homeland Security. These are the resources they have requested to properly perform their mission and keep America safe, in fact, safer than ever before.

The proposal from Homeland Security includes cutting-edge technology for detecting drugs, weapons, illegal contraband, and many other things. We have requested more agents, immigration judges, and bed space to process the sharp rise in unlawful migration fueled by our very strong economy. Our plan also contains an urgent request for humanitarian assistance and medical support.

Furthermore, we have asked Congress to close border security loopholes so that illegal immigrant children can be safely and humanely returned back home.

Finally, as part of an overall approach to border security, law enforcement professionals have requested $5.7 billion for a physical barrier. At the request of Democrats, it will be a steel

barrier rather than a concrete wall. This barrier is absolutely critical to border security. It's also what our professionals at the border want and need. This is just common sense.

The border wall would very quickly pay for itself. The cost of illegal drugs exceeds $500 billion a year, vastly more than the $5.7 billion we have requested from Congress. The wall will also be paid for, indirectly, by the great new trade deal we have made with Mexico.

Senator Chuck Schumer—who you will be hearing from later tonight—has repeatedly supported a physical barrier in the past, along with many other Democrats. They changed their mind only after I was elected President.

Democrats in Congress have refused to acknowledge the crisis. And they have refused to provide our brave border agents with the tools they desperately need to protect our families and our Nation. The Federal Government remains shut down for one reason and one reason only: because Democrats will not fund border security.

My administration is doing everything in our power to help those impacted by the situation. But the only solution is for Democrats to pass a spending bill that defends our borders and reopens the Government. This situation could be solved in a 45-minute meeting. I have invited congressional leadership to the White House tomorrow to get this done. Hopefully, we can rise above partisan politics in order to support national security.

Some have suggested a barrier is immoral. Then, why do wealthy politicians build walls, fences, and gates around their homes? They don't build walls because they hate the people on the outside, but because they love the people on the inside. The only thing that is immoral is the politicians to do nothing and continue to allow more innocent people to be so horribly victimized.

America's heart broke the day after Christmas when a young police officer in California was savagely murdered in cold blood by an illegal alien, who just came across the border. The life of an American hero was stolen by someone who had no right to be in our country.

Day after day, precious lives are cut short by those who have violated our borders. In California, an Air Force veteran was raped, murdered, and beaten to death with a hammer by an illegal alien with a long criminal history. In Georgia, an illegal alien was recently charged with murder for killing, beheading, and dismembering his neighbor. In Maryland, MS–13 gang members who arrived in the United States as unaccompanied minors were arrested and charged last year after viciously stabbing and beating a 16-year-old girl.

Over the last several years, I've met with dozens of families whose loved ones were stolen by illegal immigration. I've held the hands of the weeping mothers and embraced the grief-stricken fathers. So sad. So terrible. I will never forget the pain in their eyes, the tremble in their voices, and the sadness gripping their souls.

How much more American blood must we shed before Congress does its job? To those who refuse to compromise in the name of border security, I would ask: Imagine if it was your child, your husband, or your wife whose life was so cruelly shattered and totally broken? To every Member of Congress, pass a bill that ends this crisis.

To every citizen: Call Congress and tell them to finally, after all of these decades, secure our border. This is a choice between right and wrong, justice and injustice. This is about whether we fulfill our sacred duty to the American citizens we serve. When I took the oath of office, I swore to protect our country. And that is what I will always do, so help me God.

Thank you, and goodnight.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:01 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to police officer Cpl. Ronil Singh, who was killed during a traffic stop on December 26, 2018; Gustavo Perez Arriaga, suspected gunman in the shooting of Cpl. Singh, who was arrested on December 28, 2018; Victor Martinez, who was convicted of the July 24, 2015, murder of Santa Maria, CA, resident Marilyn Pharis; and Christian Ponce Martinez, who was charged with the November 8, 2018, murder of Morrow, GA, resident Robert Page.

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Locations: Washington, DC.

Names: Arriga, Gustavo Perez ; Martinez, Victor; Ponce Martinez, Christian; Schumer, Charles E.; Singh, Ronil.

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