

## Troops at the Border

### Background:

VFAI and veterans across the country are deeply concerned with recent domestic troop [deployments](#) amid anti-immigrant rhetoric that poses a unique threat to our democratic traditions. As we watched the [end of Title 42](#) in early May and saw the beginning of [Title 8](#) and President Biden's [new asylum rule](#), border politics have escalated to a point where American values and the independence of the military have been put at risk. America's veterans deserve border and asylum policies that reflect our values and do not betray the ideals which we swore to defend. Yet what we've seen from political leaders across the country is, when it comes to the border - cruelty is the point. Rather than promote humanitarian assistance, political leaders ramp up pressure that harms migrants and asylum seekers and puts Americans at risk. The Biden administration is treating asylum seekers as threats to national security, rather than as victims of persecution who seek refuge.

In recent months, public discourse around immigration and our borders has seethed with anti-immigrant bigotry and malign disinformation. Human Rights First has [documented](#) the connection between this rhetoric and the mainstreaming of xenophobia and anti-immigrant extremism.

### Context:

**President Biden's militarized border response isolates asylum seekers and politicizes the military.** In May, the Biden administration [deployed the first](#) of nearly [two battalions of active duty troops](#) to the U.S.-Mexico border. The White House has tried to assuage fears by saying that the military will be doing "[back room](#)" jobs, like transport and logistics, yet these same fear-mongering tactics were used by the Trump administration, who similarly sent active-duty troops to the border, as a militarized border was a routine part of Trump's immigration policy.

- **This is a political stunt.** After candidate Biden's [campaign promises on asylum](#), the administration's use of active duty troops to signal their "toughness" at the border is disappointing. As Title 42 ended on May 11, it's clear that the Biden administration is using troops as political props to reinforce its "tough on the border" narrative. Their presence exacerbates the militarization of border communities without addressing the humanitarian crisis at our border.

Troops are proscribed by law from engaging in law enforcement activity and cannot provide meaningful relief to the humanitarian crisis at the border. It is sadly ironic for the migrants who are fleeing militarized situations to be met with soldiers.

- **This politicizes the military.** Democracy demands a distinct separation between civil and military operations. Blurring this line often serves to threaten democratic values, norms, and processes. Additionally, this blurring threatens the public’s trust in the armed forces.

Sending troops to the border reinforces messages of hate towards migrants and boosts those promoting racist and xenophobic ideologies like the “Great Replacement” conspiracy, most famously espoused by noted racist Tucker Carlson.

- **This betrays the values we hold as veterans.** America’s veterans deserve border and asylum policies that reflect our values and do not betray the ideals which we swore to defend. Being political pawns to prove how tough an administration can be does a disservice to military service, to the legal and treaty responsibilities of this country to those fleeing persecution and seeking asylum, and to an administration that entered office promising to rebuild a humane asylum system.

It’s our duty as veterans and public servants to stand up for what is right, especially when the government uses its power to politicize the armed forces in a way that simultaneously endangers migrant communities and destabilizes our democratic institutions.

### **What Should be Done:**

- President Biden should immediately rescind any orders that mobilize active duty troops for border missions.
- To fill critical roles and provide humanitarian assistance, President Biden should activate National Guard units for their traditional security missions or mobilize other federal resources to provide the critical humanitarian assistance that is needed.
- The administration should moderate its tone. The challenges at our southwestern border are not military crises that demand a military response, it is a humanitarian situation that deserves a humanitarian response.
- Congress must act to ensure the administration stops using our nation’s military as a political prop by demanding that these troops return to base.
- Veterans across the country must push back against the militarization of our border, and continue to welcome refugees and asylum seekers into the United States.