

Fact Check Ahead of President Trump's Speech

It's been 18 days since President Trump shut down the government. Since the President and Administration officials have consistently misled the public about the situation at the border and the need for a border wall, here's a look at the facts ahead of tonight's address:

CLAIM: Ahead of tonight's address, Vice President Pence [claimed](#) a "humanitarian and security crisis" at the border requires the building of a wall.

FACT CHECK: This is false. Unauthorized migration has been declining significantly for over a decade. According to U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP), over [1.6 million people](#) were apprehended at the border in Fiscal Year 2000. In Fiscal Year 2018, [less than 400,000](#) people were apprehended. Arrests for border crossing also hit a [46-year-low during 2017](#), according to Department of Homeland Security data. In 2018, this number has risen slightly, but crossings remain nowhere near what they were in during the high-point of the 2000s. The uptick we're seeing at the border-- in the context of near-historic lows of apprehensions--is from families and children fleeing violence in Central America.

CLAIM: The President and Administration have made [claims](#) that terrorists are coming to the United States through the U.S.-Mexico border.

FACT CHECK: [U.S. Customs and Border Protection](#) (CBP) data debunks this claim itself. In the first half of Fiscal Year 2018, CBP stopped six non-U.S. persons who they believe could be suspected terrorists. Last year, more suspected foreign terrorists were apprehended at the Northern border between the U.S. and Canada than were apprehended on the southwest border with Mexico.

U.S. State Department: There is "no credible evidence indicating that international terrorist groups have established bases in Mexico, worked with Mexican drug cartels or sent operatives via Mexico into the United States." [Associated Press, [1/8/19](#)]

CATO Institute: "Zero people were murdered or injured in terror attacks committed on U.S. soil by special interest aliens who entered illegally from 1975 through the end of 2017. However, seven special interest aliens who initially entered illegally have been convicted of planning a terrorist attack on U.S. soil. They all entered illegally from Canada or jumped ship in American ports before the list of special interest countries even existed. None of them successfully carried out their attacks and none illegally crossed the Mexican border." [Report, [12/7/18](#)]

CLAIM: In a briefing from DHS Secretary Nielsen, the Administration [claimed](#) that a dramatic spike in illegal drugs at the southern border makes clear the need for an effective physical barrier.

FACT CHECK: A [Drug Enforcement Administration](#) threat assessment report said: "The majority of the [heroin] flow" comes through legal ports of entry at the border.

Stephen D. Morris, Middle Tennessee State University political science professor whose research has largely focused on Mexico: "The wall will not do very much to stop drugs." [Fact Check.org, [1/2/19](#)]

Vanda Felbab-Brown, Senior Fellow at the Brookings Institution: "The wall won't stop the flow of drugs into the United States." [Fact Check.org, [1/2/19](#)]

CLAIM: President Trump [has claimed](#) that other Presidents support a border wall.

FACT CHECK: After President Trump [erroneously claimed](#) former Presidents supported his idea, the [Washington Post](#) checked with Presidents Obama, Bush, Clinton, and Carter. None of them confirmed support for President Trump's costly and ineffective border wall.

In addition, a number of Republicans have also spoken out against the wall, including Members of Republican Senate leadership and the current Acting White House Chief of Staff.

Then-Secretary of Homeland Security John Kelly: "A physical barrier in and of itself will not do the job.... It has to be really a layered defense." [USA Today, [1/10/17](#)]

Acting Chief of Staff Mick Mulvaney: "...To just say build the darn fence and have that be the end of an immigration discussion is absurd and almost childish for someone running for president to take that simplistic of [a] view." [WRHI, 8/25/15]

Senator John Cornyn (R-TX): "I don't think we're just going to be able to solve border security with a physical barrier because people can come under, around it and through it." [CNN, [2/6/17](#)]

Senator Lindsey Graham (R-SC): "The border wall is probably not a smart investment." [Politico, [3/28/17](#)]

CLAIM: In a briefing from DHS Secretary Nielsen, the Administration [claimed](#) staggering numbers of sick people are crossing the border each day.

FACT CHECK: This is an attempt to suggest that migrants will contaminate Americans with deadly diseases, when there is no evidence of that. DHS claims that 50 migrants per day are referred to medical providers. In a population of 2,000 migrant crossers per day, 50 people is only 2.5% -- not a "staggering" number.

Dr. Paul Spiegel, Director of the Center for Humanitarian Health at Johns Hopkins School of Public Health: "There is no evidence to show that migrants are spreading disease... That is a false argument that is used to keep migrants out." [NBC News, [12/5/18](#)]

Terry McGovern, Columbia University's Department of Population and Family Health: "Contrary to the current political narrative portraying migrants as disease carriers who are a blight on society, migrants are an essential part of economic stability in the U.S." [NBC News, [12/5/18](#)]

CLAIM: Throughout the campaign, President Trump [repeatedly said](#) Mexico would pay for the wall.

FACT CHECK: President Trump is holding the government hostage for \$5.7 billion for his costly, ineffective wall – and expects the American people to foot the bill. This shut down is harming federal employees, Coast Guard service members, and contractors who are furloughed or working without pay, as well as the American public they serve. It will also have a significant impact on our economy. In fact, we know the 16-day shutdown in 2013 [cost the economy](#) \$24 billion.

Let's be clear: Democrats are willing to discuss the best way to keep the border secure, but there's no reason for the government to be shut down while those discussions take pace. Democrats continue to urge the President to end this costly, reckless shutdown and reopen government so it can serve the American people.