

More Military Zones Planned on South Texas Border

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PHARR, Texas – Plans are underway to expand military operations along the South Texas border, despite illegal crossings recently falling to record lows. U.S. Representative Henry Cuellar, a Texas Republican who serves on the House Appropriations Defense Subcommittee, confirmed this week that the military is assessing the creation of new National Defense Areas in Webb, Zapata, and Starr counties.

From the House floor, Cuellar explained that military officials are evaluating public lands in his district for possible bases and patrol zones. “The assessment has been done, but no

decision has been made,” Cuellar said. “They have to find public land that can be used.”

Already, the military presence along the border has been expanding. In April, two military zones were set up in El Paso, Texas, and across the New Mexico border. A fourth is taking shape near Yuma, Arizona. Last week, the Air Force announced it had received control of 250 miles of federal land in Hidalgo and Cameron counties, now part of Joint Base San Antonio.

Although Laredo has not been formally designated a military zone, about 100 soldiers and 10 Stryker vehicles are heading there this month. The eight-wheeled Stryker vehicles are designed for rapid deployment and equipped with technology that detects drones. According to Cuellar, Mexican cartels routinely use drones to monitor U.S. law enforcement, making these systems especially valuable. “One of the things these units have is the ability to look at counter-drones,” he said. “That’s a practical use along the border.”

Cuellar believes the deployment is partly meant to project strength. “In my opinion, they’re here to show a show of force along the border,” he noted. The vehicles will be stationed in high-traffic areas, including El Cenizo and Rio Bravo, south of Laredo.

The timing of this military buildup is notable because illegal crossings are at historic lows. On Wednesday, the Department of Homeland Security announced that U.S. Customs and Border Protection recorded just 6,070 apprehensions on the Southwest border in June, a 15% decline since March. On June 28, only 137 apprehensions occurred, the lowest single-day total in 25 years. The agency also reported that for the second month in a row, there were no releases of migrants attempting to enter the country illegally.

Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem credited the reduction in crossings to policies under President Trump. “The numbers don’t lie under President Trump’s leadership, DHS and CBP have shattered records and delivered the most secure border in American history,” she said.

Meanwhile, new warning signs have appeared along the towering 30-foot steel border wall near Pharr. The bilingual signs caution migrants against attempting to climb the barrier, emphasizing the risk of serious injury or death.