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Truman Project NC Applauds Gov. Cooper for Calling Back NC National Guard from U.S.-Mexico Border

CHARLOTTE, N.C.—The Truman National Security Project's North Carolina Chapter applauded North Carolina Democratic Gov. Roy Cooper for halting the state's involvement of North Carolina National Guard troops in the Trump administration's ramped-up immigration enforcement program along the U.S.-Mexico border.

"The president's 'no-tolerance' policy that separated parents and guardians from their children at the U.S.-Mexico border has caused unjustifiable harm to thousands of migrants since April, many of whom are refugees fleeing violence in places like Guatemala and Honduras," said Ryan McGill, co-director of the Truman National Security Project's North Carolina Chapter. "We thank Governor Cooper for demonstrating courage and integrity by refusing to allow this state to participate in such an unconscionable policy, and recalling North Carolina National Guard troops from the U.S.-Mexico border."

While the president signed an executive order regarding the issue this week, it actually worsens the situation by calling for entire families to be kept in detention facilities indefinitely while awaiting prosecution.

"U.S.-Mexico border security is undoubtedly complex, but the decision by the administration to isolate children from their families was not made out of negligence," McGill said. "Much worse, this family-separation detention policy was a deliberate decision made by the president to intimidate and frighten migrants in the name of 'deterrence,' which then backfired once the American public saw the horrors of this tragic situation on the nightly news." He continued, "Only then did the president attempt a U-turn on his cruel policy, and Governor Cooper showed he has no tolerance for policies invoked to terrify children and torment parents in order to send a message."

This latest executive order also does not end the zero-tolerance policy, fails to address how the administration will reconnect the thousands of children already separated from their parents and guardians, and directs the Department of Defense to aid in running these new facilities.

Truman National Security Project is a nationwide membership of diverse leaders inspired to serve in the aftermath of 9/11 and committed to shaping and advocating for tough, smart national security solutions. The full text of the open letter sent to Gov. Cooper is below.

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June 25, 2018

The Honorable Roy Cooper
Office of the Governor
20301 Mail Service Center
Raleigh, NC 27699

Dear Governor Cooper,

As members of the Truman National Security Project's North Carolina Chapter—including national security experts, public policy professionals, military veterans, and civilians who have served on the frontlines of conflict zones around the world—we are writing to thank you for standing against the Trump administration's cruel immigration policy by withdrawing National Guard personnel and material from the U.S.-Mexico border.

The past few weeks have seen upheaval and outrage as a particularly harmful policy enacted by the Trump administration has resulted in the devastating separation of thousands of families. In April, Attorney General Jeff Sessions announced a "zero-tolerance policy," which focused on charging more people with illegal entry; since those charged are then sent to federal prison where their children cannot join them, more than 2,300 children were consequently separated from their parents and guardians.

While the president signed an executive order regarding the issue this week, it actually worsens the situation by calling for *entire families* to be kept in detention facilities indefinitely while awaiting prosecution. This latest executive order also does not end the zero-tolerance policy, fails to address how the administration will reconnect the thousands of children already separated from their parents and guardians, and directs the Department of Defense to aid in running these new facilities.

U.S.-Mexico border security is undoubtedly complex. However, the decision by the administration to isolate children from their families was not made out of negligence. In fact, the family-separation detention policy was a deliberate decision made by the president to intimidate and frighten migrants in the name of deterrence, which then backfired once the American public saw the horrors of this tragic situation on the nightly news. Only then did the president attempt a U-turn on his cruel policy, and we are appreciative, Governor Cooper, that you demonstrated your unwillingness to tolerate such immoral policies.

In opposition to these and other policy failures, multiple governors rightly joined you and have chosen to withhold or recall their National Guard troops from border deployments, whether those deployments were urged by the Trump administration or not. Thank you, Governor Cooper, for being one of these governors who have refused to send National Guard troops to the border in order to carry out any more of the administration's cruel and ineffective immigration policy.

Our National Guard is made up of trained warfighters, not law enforcement or border control officers. They have too many critical missions around the world to deploy along a nearly 2,000 mile border; such a deployment is not an efficient or strategic use of people, funding or material resources. Moreover, because units of the National Guard are made up of troops from across state lines but deployed to the border in different groups, these deployments undermine training efforts, unit cohesion and readiness. Put simply, continuing to deploy the National Guard to the border will leave them with fewer resources and less preparation for lethal combat abroad and humanitarian work at home.

Our state's National Guard troops should not be asked to assist in any way in the implementation of policies that ultimately do nothing for our national security. There exists not a single national security argument for tearing parents from children or detaining families indefinitely—especially when those concerned are fleeing extreme violence in search of a better life. The United States has in place the systems and structures to vet those who arrive at our borders; those who do so illegally should be the concern of local law enforcement, not the U.S. military.

The Trump administration's zero-tolerance policy is a moral failure and abdication of American values, but it is far from an isolated incident. Since taking office, the president has demanded an ineffective border wall at the American taxpayer's expense, abruptly rescinded the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program without an alternative in place, ended multiple Temporary Protected Status programs for people whose home countries are still devastated by natural disasters, slashed the number of refugee admissions to historic lows, unconstitutionally sought to punish sanctuary cities, and launched increasingly cruel and expansive immigration raids countrywide. This is all part of a coordinated effort to move U.S. immigration policy backward, and North Carolina should play no part in supporting it.

We thank you for taking action. By refusing to send North Carolina National Guard troops—our family members, friends and neighbors—to enforce this and other Trump administration immigration policies, you have made a strong stand against these atrocious policies that do nothing to keep us safe and in favor of traditional American values of diversity, inclusion and strength through moral leadership.

Very respectfully,

Truman National Security Project's North Carolina Chapter