National Security Experts with Truman National Security Project's Texas Chapter Call on Governor Abbott to Suspend Texas National Guard Involvement at the Border

Austin, TX — Today, the Truman National Security Project's Texas Chapter called on Governor Greg Abbott to refuse any further involvement of Texas National Guard troops on the southern border of the United States in response to the Trump Administration's "zero tolerance" immigration policies.

Ashley Moran, Truman National Security Project Texas Co-Director and former governance advisor in the Middle East and Asia said: "The Administration's inhumane policy to separate families, and its misguided successor to detain entire families indefinitely, is an abdication of American values and constitutional rights to due process afforded all people on American soil. What's more, the deployment of military personnel to implement this policy is a potentially dangerous misdirection of our national security resources. Governor Abbott can and should take action to address the humanitarian crisis unfolding in our state by refusing to have Texas National Guard personnel support implementation of this devastating policy."

Fellow Texas Chapter Co-Director Jim Penniman-Morin said: "As a former Guardsman, I strongly disagree with this wasteful misuse of the National Guard's precious resources in support of an ineffective and intentionally cruel policy. Americans join the Guard to protect families not split them apart. This zero tolerance policy is far from an isolated incident. Since taking office, the President has ignored the real problems faced by Texans and instead demanded construction of an absurd border wall at the American taxpayer's expense, abruptly rescinded the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program without an alternative in place, slashed the number of refugee admissions to historic lows, and tied the hands of local sheriffs and police departments in favor of his anti-immigration policies. Texas has thrived on immigrants since before the days of Stephen F. Austin. Texas should play no part in supporting this coordinated effort to move U.S. immigration policy backwards."

Truman is a nationwide membership of diverse leaders inspired to serve in the aftermath of 9/11 and committed to shaping and advocating tough, smart, and principled national security solutions. The full text of the open letter sent to Governor Greg Abbott is below:

June 26, 2018

Governor Greg Abbott
Office of the Governor
P.O. Box 12428
Austin, Texas 78711-2428

Dear Governor Abbott,

As members of the Truman National Security Project's Texas Chapter—including national security policy experts, political professionals, military veterans, and civilians who have served on the frontlines of conflict zones around the world—we urge you to take state action to help end the family separations that have resulted from the Trump Administration's "zero tolerance" immigration policy.

In addition to national legislative and executive action, state action can and should be leveraged to address this humanitarian crisis unfolding in our state, specifically by withdrawing National Guard personnel and material from the southern border.

The past few weeks have seen upheaval and outrage following the devastating separation of families. As you know, following Attorney General Jeff Sessions' April announcement of a "zero tolerance policy," those charged with illegal entry have been sent to federal prison where their children cannot join them, and more than 2,300 children have been consequently separated from their parents.

Though the president signed an executive order regarding the issue last week, it unfortunately 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, does not address how the administration will reconnect the thousands of children already separated from their parents (and the administration has released few details on this problem since), and burdens the Department of Defense by tasking it to aid in running these new facilities.

Multiple governors have rightly chosen to withhold or recall their National Guard troops from border deployments to prevent their states from contributing to the devastating impact this policy is having on immigrant families. We urge you to refuse to send the Texas National Guard to the border to carry out this ineffective immigration policy—especially family detentions at the southern border.

Our state's National Guard should not be pulled away from their own families to advance a policy pulling families apart. The United States has the systems, structures, and professionals in place to vet those who arrive at our borders; those who do so illegally should be the concern of local and federal law enforcement, not the U.S. military.

Our National Guard is made up of trained warfighters, not law enforcement or border control officers; continuing to deploy the National Guard to the border will leave it with fewer resources and less preparation for critical training and missions overseas and at home. Such a deployment is not an efficient or strategic use of people, funding, or material resources.

The Texas National Guard should only be deployed to advance our national security. There is no national security argument for separating parents from their children or detaining families indefinitely—especially when those concerned are fleeing extreme violence in search of a better life.

Please take action today. By refusing to send our family, friends, and neighbors in the National Guard to enforce this family detention policy, you will send a message that such devastating policies do nothing to keep us safe and instead support traditional Texan and American values of hospitality, diversity, inclusion, and strength through moral leadership.

Very respectfully,

Members of the Truman National Security Project's Texas Chapter