

# TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

TODD STAPLES  
COMMISSIONER

December 13, 2011

The Honorable Barack Obama  
President of the United States  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

The recent cartel-related violence in Texas necessitates a greater federal response to the crisis in Mexico that is spilling over into the United States. In the last few weeks we have seen cartel hit-squads murder people in Houston and near McAllen and several attempted murders of law enforcement officers in the metropolitan and border regions of my state. These assailants and tactics are directly linked to the violent drug cartels in Mexico.

There are multiple reports you intend to reduce the number of National Guard troops currently deployed along the Texas-Mexico border, which currently stands at 274, and shift focus to “personnel carrying out surveillance by aircraft, helicopters and unmanned drones.” I applaud the expanded use of these resources and tactics but must stress the current number of Guard resources is woefully small for the 1,241 miles of border Texas shares with Mexico. Filling the shortage of our Border Patrol agents with National Guard troops remains an important commitment that you have made to the people of Texas. As you know, the National Guard presence provides a temporary, but necessary added protection until our Border Patrol agents reach staffing levels necessary to secure the border.

Currently, there are serious deficiencies in the level of Border Patrol agent stationed in Texas, which as of May of this year, stand at 6.2 agents per border mile as compared to the 14 agents per border mile in California, Arizona, and New Mexico. These levels, along with the differences in strategic fencing, reinforce the Border Patrol’s own estimates that they have operational control of less than 44% of the border, far lower in Texas according to testimony from the Government Accountability Office. While your administration may cite decreases in crime in cities along the border as reason to withdraw National Guard troops, Texas farmers and ranchers who work and live in rural border areas continue to be threatened and assaulted by these dangerous cartels. You can



hear many of their stories on [www.ProtectYourTexasBorder.com](http://www.ProtectYourTexasBorder.com). I urge you and Secretary Janet Napolitano to view their testimonials and act on the needs of our citizens.

The U.S. Southern border and our vital trading neighbor, Mexico, need the commitment of the federal government to confront the drug cartels with the full resources at our disposal. Reducing National Guard troop levels should only be done when verifiable metrics justify their redeployment away from the border region.

Finally, bipartisan members of Congress, including Congressmen Michael McCaul and Silvestre Reyes, continue to support an increase in the number of Customs and Border Protection Officers, agriculture inspection specialists, support personnel and the infrastructure necessary to improve our ports of entry to allow for expanded legal trade that ensures interdiction and inspection activities can be done effectively and timely. I urge you to champion these and other efforts along with providing the officers on the ground with access to technology, communications, and the military assets necessary to secure the border and take the fight to an enemy that continues to move drugs and people measured by the ton across our border while reaping profits counted in the billions.

The valiant men and women currently deployed along our southern border, be they federal, state, or local law enforcement officers, need back-up and they need a commitment to a strategy that puts the cartels on the defensive. My state and our country need that commitment from you, and frankly, reducing National Guard troops sends the wrong message.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Todd Staples". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Todd Staples

TS/JM/jm