

# No Telling How Long US Troops Will Stay on Southern Border: NORTHCOM Commander



U.S. Air Force Gen. Terrence J. O'Shaughnessy, commander, United States Northern Command and North American Aerospace Defense Command, briefs the media and Department of Defense about Hurricane Michael at the Pentagon, Washington, D.C., Oct. 10, 2018. (DoD photo/Angelita M. Lawrence)

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The general in charge of U.S. troops on the southern border said Monday there is no telling how long they will have to remain in support of the law enforcement effort against illegal immigration.

"How long this will go will be interesting to see," said Air Force Gen. Terrence O'Shaughnessy, commander of U.S. Northern Command and North American Aerospace Defense Command.

In an address and follow-up question-and-answer session at the Center for

Strategic and International Studies, O'Shaughnessy was not pressed to expand on his remark about the U.S. troop presence on the border.

He also gave no indication of whether the Defense Department is going ahead with the plan to house up to 1,400 migrant children at Fort Sill, Oklahoma, to ease the strain on overcrowded facilities at the border.

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Over the weekend, there were more demonstrations at Fort Sill's gates against housing migrant children on the base, including some protesters who are descendants of Japanese-Americans detained there during World War II, local news outlets reported.

Policy decisions dealing with the border crisis are not his to make, O'Shaughnessy said.

"We're not the lead federal agency" in responding to the flow north of asylum seekers and "don't want to be," he said of the military's role.

O'Shaughnessy said a mix of active-duty and National Guard troops continue to support the Customs and Border Protection and Department of Homeland Security mission at the border.

Active-duty troops have been on the border since late October 2018, when they began deploying to meet President Donald Trump's demand to stop the caravans of migrants seeking to enter the U.S. About 2,100 National Guard troops have been on the border since April 2018.

Last week, Acting Defense Secretary Richard V. Spencer approved sending 2,100 more troops to the border in a move that would eventually bring the total there to more than 7,000.

About 1,000 of the 2,100 additional troops would come from the Texas National

Guard; the rest would be active duty, according to a Pentagon news release.

Currently, about 5,000 military personnel are deployed for the border mission — about 3,000 active duty and 2,000 National Guard, according to the Pentagon.

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