

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

August 1, 2023

The Honorable Glenn Youngkin
Governor of the Commonwealth of Virginia
Office of the Governor
P.O. Box 1475
Richmond, Virginia 23218

Dear Governor Youngkin,

We urge you to end the Commonwealth's deployment of 100 Virginia National Guardsmen and 21 support personnel to Texas Governor Abbott's ineffective and inhumane "Operation Lone Star."

Your administration has justified the deployment as an effort to improve fentanyl interdiction capacity, yet there is no indication that this deployment will meaningfully curb the transshipment of fentanyl into the Commonwealth. Almost 90% of all fentanyl enters the United States through legal ports of entry rather than through unauthorized crossings, and often in the possession of U.S. citizens, not migrants.¹ On February 15, 2023, Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) Administrator Anne Milgram confirmed, "Our investigations do tell us that the vast majority of fentanyl is coming in the ports of entry," far from where our Guard has been deployed under Texas command.² This is simply not an effective use of Virginia resources to combat the scourge of fentanyl.

While Governor Abbott brags about increased criminal arrests and drug seizures, reports reveal the Texas Department of Public Safety's (DPS) metrics are flawed and manipulated to misrepresent Operation Lone Star's success. Governor Abbott, DPS, and the Texas Military Department have also fought two dozen public records requests from news organizations seeking an accurate account of the operation's accomplishments.³ That means Virginia will spend \$3.1 million in taxpayer funding for this ineffective political stunt, an exorbitant amount justified with manipulated information.⁴

Further, we are deeply concerned by the cruel, wild-west nature of Operation Lone Star itself.

Through Operation Lone Star, Governor Abbott has furnished makeshift buoys with sharp razor wire in the Rio Grande in the misguided belief that it would deter migrants from crossing the

¹ Bump, Philip. "Analysis | Most Fentanyl Is Seized at Border Crossings - Often from U.S. Citizens." The Washington Post, October 5, 2022. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2022/10/04/border-fentanyl-seizures-americans/>.

² "Countering Illicit Fentanyl Trafficking." United States Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, February 15, 2023. <https://www.foreign.senate.gov/hearings/countering-illicit-fentanyl-trafficking>.

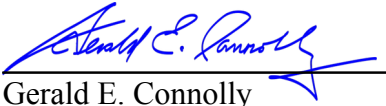
³ Kriel, Lomi; Trevizo, Perla; Rodriguez Calderon, Andrew; and Blakinger, Keri. "Gov. Greg Abbott brags about his border initiative. The evidence doesn't back him up." The Texas Tribune, ProPublica, and The Marshall Project, March 21, 2022.

⁴ Martinez, Glorie G., and Rhonda Fanning. "Texas Has Spent over \$4 Billion on Operation Lone Star. Where Did That Money Come From?" KERA News, September 15, 2022.

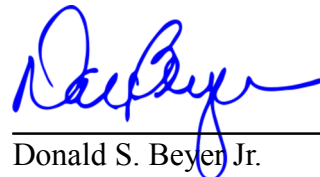
Additionally, as a matter of policy, officers patrolling the border at Gov. Abbott's direction were ordered to treat migrants in an egregiously inhumane manner. A recent report revealed that officers involved in Operation Lone Star were ordered to push migrants, among them young children, back into the Rio Grande River.⁶ With temperatures at times surpassing 100 degrees, authorities with Operation Lone Star were ordered to deny water to migrants. A four-year-old girl who tried to cross razor wire was reportedly repelled by Texas Guard soldiers, passing out soon after from the sweltering heat.⁷ A pregnant woman had a miscarriage while she was entangled in the wire that was set by Texas officials. A fifteen-year-old boy broke his leg trying to get around the barbed wire.⁸ Most Virginians would be horrified to find out that their Commonwealth would have anything to do with government-sponsored cruelty of this kind.

Our Commonwealth values human life and dignity, and our National Guard troops make a great sacrifice to serve our public and reflect our values. We respectfully urge you to bring them home and end Virginia's involvement in Operation Lone Star.

Sincerely,



Gerald E. Connolly
Member of Congress



Donald S. Beyer Jr.
Member of Congress

⁵ Wallace, Jeremy. "DOJ Says It Will Sue Texas over Buoy Wall Barrier in Rio Grande." Houston Chronicle, July 21, 2023. <https://www.houstonchronicle.com/politics/texas/article/doj-abbott-border-buoys-18253897.php#>.

⁶ Moritz, John C., and Kate Perez. "Leaked Emails Allege Texas Patrol Agents Were Ordered to Push Migrants into Rio Grande. What We Know." USA Today, July 20, 2023.

⁷ Garcia, Uriel J. "State Investigating Claim That DPS Troopers Were Told to Push Migrants Back into the Rio Grande and Deny Them Water." The Texas Tribune, July 18, 2023.

⁸ *ibid.*