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Subject: Federal Insider: Trump shows gratitude to Border Patrol union that backs him and his wall

Trump shows gratitude to Border Patrol union that backs him and his wall

By Joe Davidson

President Trump. (Nicholas Kamm/AFP via Getty Images)

President Trump's directive initiating action on a wall along the southern border has upset relations with Mexico and left in its wake the [resignation of the Border Patrol chief](#).

Mexicans, along with many other reasonable people, were offended by Trump from the first day of his presidential campaign because of [his slurs](#) about Mexican immigrants as rapists, criminals and drug runners. President Enrique Peña Nieto demonstrated his anger with Trump's executive order by canceling a trip to Washington for a high-level meeting.

It doesn't take X-ray glasses to see Border Patrol Chief Mark Morgan's resignation as a Trump gift to the National Border Patrol Council (NBPC), which supported the president's candidacy. After Trump's victory in November, the union executive board wrote an article for the alt-right Brietbart.com, formerly run by top Trump's chief strategist Stephen K. Bannon. The headline left no doubt about the union's position: "[Border Patrol Agents: The Chief Obama Gave Us Is a Disgrace](#)."

NBPC is one of two federal employee unions that endorsed Trump during his presidential campaign.

NBPC President Brandon Judd and Chris Crane, president of National ICE Council, the other federal union that backed Trump, attended his immigration speech at the Department of Homeland Security on Wednesday. They received personal presidential shout-outs.

Addressing these “two friends of mine,” Trump said, “You guys are about to be very, very busy doing your job the way you want to do them.”

The Federal Insider spoke with Judd on Thursday about the president’s initiatives. Morgan’s resignation was announced after the interview. When I asked Judd about it later, he said he had no information. But given his close relationship with Trump, Judd is probably somewhere smiling.

Here are edited questions and answers from that conversation.

Apprehensions, a key measure of illegal immigration, have dropped dramatically over the past decade, so why is a wall necessary?

Judd: There’s not as many people crossing, but just because the number of people crossing are fewer, that doesn’t indicate whether or not the border is secure. What indicates whether or not our border is secure is the effectiveness rate. If we’re detecting and arresting nearly everybody that crosses the border illegally or all of the contraband that’s coming across the border illegally, that determines whether or not the border is secure. Unfortunately, we’re not even close. Of illegal persons crossing the border, we arrest about one out of every two. Contraband, we’re a lot less effective.

I do support the wall in strategic locations. We’re not talking about a continuous wall from California to Texas.

The wall is going to be very expensive, perhaps \$20 billion. Couldn’t that money be better used elsewhere, for more technology such as sensors and cameras, for example?

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You have to have all of the different technologies that are available working in concert with each other to keep the border secure. I've worked with all of these different type of technologies throughout my career. When they all work together, they are effective.

How effective do you think a wall will be?

As an example, if you look at the fences, the double fences they currently have in San Diego, Calif., where we used to have five agents per linear mile, those fences have now allowed us to drop the number of agents in certain locations to as low as two per linear mile. That allows us to take three of the agents we used to have at that location and redeploy them so that we can more effectively cover more of the border. It's a force multiplier. That's what a wall is.

Trump has called for the hiring of 5,000 Border Patrol agents, on top of about 20,000 employed now. Though hiring increased during the Obama administration, the agency workforce remains below capacity. Does the Border Patrol have a problem hiring people?

We do. That is an issue that needs to be tackled. It's not that we don't have the applicants that are necessary. We have a polygraph failure rate that is about three times higher than most other law enforcement agencies. That's a problem. The reason it's a problem is the polygraphers just flat out aren't doing their jobs right. There's no way we can have three times the failure rate that other law enforcement agencies have unless something just isn't being done right.

Before the meeting between Trump and Peña Nieto dissolved, we asked Judd if Trump's campaign comments and his pledge to build a wall Mexico opposes and refuses to fund makes relations worse and leads to additional problems for Border Patrol agents.

We don't have good relations with our partners, if you want to call them partners. We don't have good relations now. If we build relations, it's definitely going to help. But if the president [of Mexico] is going to make this a political issue instead of an issue of reality, that's his choice. I don't see how acquiescing to another government is going to help the United States.

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