

## U.S. House of Representatives

December 14, 2018

The Honorable James N. Mattis  
Secretary of Defense  
U.S. Department of Defense  
1000 Defense, Pentagon  
Washington, D.C. 20301-1000

Dear Secretary Mattis:

I write to you with my concerns regarding assertions from the Department of Defense that the Pentagon could fund construction of the President's border wall in support of counter drug operations or a national emergency. While the President has significant discretion in determining a state of national emergency – diverting funding from our military to a project of limited value to our national security is dangerous during a time when we face competition from major adversaries.

Over the last two years, Democrats and Republicans have achieved bipartisan consensus to significantly increase funding for the Department of Defense and provide greater budget certainty. We have supported the warfighter in a bipartisan manner at every opportunity we have had, and have made critical investments in improving our capabilities. This was a result of the Department's request to prepare our nation against increased threats from China, Russia, and non-state actors. Any attempts to fund the wall with already-appropriated funding would face serious obstacles in Congress, and would undermine much of the bipartisan progress we have made to increase readiness, support the warfighter, and improve lethality.

The Department of Defense's counternarcotics funding is intended for operating programs, not major infrastructure projects, and permissible construction in support of this mission is limited in scope. Use of emergency MILCON funds would not only do little to improve border barriers, but would be gravely irresponsible given the nearly \$10 billion backlog of necessary military construction projects that require our attention across the country. The use of emergency executive authority – typically reserved for times of war – in order to access unlimited funding for the wall would be unprecedented.

I write to respectfully request the following information regarding current proposals for the Department of Defense to manage the construction of the President's border wall.

1. The authorities the Department of Defense will rely on to fund the President's border wall.
2. The sources of funds that would be used to construct the President's border wall.
3. The current MILCON backlog, including the name of each project, and the location and estimated cost.
4. The impact the diversion of funds will have on the current MILCON backlog.

5. The impact the diversion of funds will have on readiness and the current Defense budget.
6. The amount of funding, if any, from the Department of Defense budget that has been spent on the President's border wall, to date.

Thank you for your attention and prompt reply regarding my concerns. I look forward to hearing from you, and continuing to work with you to strengthen our national defense, support our warfighters, and ensure we are realizing the most value from each dollar appropriated to the Department of Defense.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'AG Brown', with a stylized, cursive script.

Anthony G. Brown