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## President Obama Disregards Dangers on Federal Lands Along U.S. Border

**WASHINGTON, D.C.** – Today, President Obama gave a speech at the U.S.-Mexico border in Texas touting the Administration’s improvements in border security and commitment to immigration reform. However, during the speech Obama failed to mention the continued security and safety issues on federal lands along the U.S. border. Despite the President’s claims of increased security, environmental restrictions on Border Patrol operations on public lands along our border create a haven for criminal activity and result not only dangerous gaps in security but increased environmental destruction to the land.

*“It seems premature to discuss immigration policies when thousands of criminals continue to cross our border - many of whom enter completely undetected. In his remarks today, the President failed to acknowledge the rampant criminal activity occurring on public lands throughout the southern border region. Gaining full operational control of the border should be our number one priority. If your bathtub is overflowing, your first step isn’t to start bailing out water, it’s to turn off the spigot. The same practice should apply to the border,”* said **National Parks, Forests and Public Lands Subcommittee Chairman Bishop (R-UT)**.

Unfortunately, federal land managers are using environmental regulations to prevent Border Patrol from accessing portions of the 20.7 million acres along the U.S. southern border and over 1,000 miles of the U.S.-Canada border. Border Patrol agents are consistently unable to use motorized vehicles to patrol these areas or place electronic surveillance structures in strategic areas. As a result, our federal lands have become a highway open to criminals, drug smugglers, human traffickers and potentially terrorists. This has led to escalated violence and also caused destruction of the environment.

House Republicans, led by Subcommittee Chairman Bishop, have introduced [H.R. 1505](#), the National Security and Federal Lands Protection Act, to ensure Border Patrol, not federal land managers, have operational control of our borders.

While President Obama failed to acknowledge and address the dangers on federal lands along the U.S. border, several witnesses at a recent Joint Subcommittee Oversight [hearing](#) testified to the need for increased border security measures and access for Border Patrol experts to quell the criminal activity and environmental damage that currently occurs on our federal lands:

- *“Our losses have been great and our sense of security in our own country has been severely damaged. We live with weapons near our bed, at the doors, in our vehicles and attached to our saddle,”* said **Arizona Rancher James K. Chilton, Jr.**

- *“Of special concern to us as former agents is the prospect of violent reactions as criminal enterprises fight to protect what until now has been almost exclusively their turf. Recent drug related murders of Border Patrol Agents Brian Terry, Robert Rosas and Luis Aguilar are sobering reminders that protection of our sovereignty is not without cost,”* **said Gene Wood, a retired member of the U.S. Border Patrol.**
- *“There is a tremendous difference of opinion between what the law enforcement officers working along the Arizona-Mexico Border believe is the current state of National Security and Public Safety there and what the Department of Homeland Security Officials represent as the current state of National Security and Public Safety along that very same border,”* **testified George Zachary Taylor of the National Association of Former Border Patrol Officers.**

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