

June 18, 2014

The Honorable Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Obama:

We extend a sincere thank you and congratulations for the designation of the Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monument on public lands in New Mexico.

As you know, this region is filled with natural wonders and incredible hunting and recreational opportunities. Its protection will ensure that future generations will be able to enjoy diverse mountain ranges and expanses of Chihuahuan desert, a rich archaeological record, and numerous important historic sites, all while supporting new jobs and economic activity far into the future.

From a veterans' perspective, we understand the importance of protected public lands as a place for men and women serving in our armed forces to recreate after returning from strenuous overseas missions to recuperate and reconnect with family and friends. Three significant military installations (Fort Bliss, Fort Huachuca, and White Sands Missile Range) and a large population of military personnel and retirees live within a two hour drive to the monument, and we are convinced the monument will directly contribute to the health and well-being of these veterans and their families. And we are pleased that the new monument protects some of the Deming Bombing Targets, where World War II military history unfolded as bomber pilots and crew practiced using the Norden bombsight technology.

We also appreciate that Interior Secretary Sally Jewell, U.S. Senators Tom Udall and Martin Heinrich, and others worked diligently to establish the monument in a manner that does not, in any way, hinder the ability of U.S. Customs and Border Protection to do their job of securing our nation's borders.

A vocal minority continues to make false claims that the designation of the new monument poses a threat to border security; to the contrary, we believe the designation of the new national monument has no bearing on our nation's security. The portion of the Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monument near the U.S.-Mexico border—the Portillo Mountains—has not been a problem area for illegal border crossings, and will similarly not be one in the future. Highway 9, which runs just north of the border in this area, is paved, well-maintained, and well-patrolled, enabling Border Patrol to react quickly to any incursions. In addition, this area is remote, dry, and wild country where covering large distances on foot is very difficult.

Protecting this area as a national monument ensures that there is no encroachment of businesses, residences, or facilities in the area. It is our experience, minimizing human activity in any area makes the area easier to monitor and effectively keep secure.

According to the [Albuquerque Journal](#), the Santa Teresa station of Border Patrol's El Paso Sector apprehended only 13 illegal immigrants south of the Potrillo Mountains in Fiscal Year 2009. This was 0.1 percent of the 14,999 total apprehensions in the El Paso Sector, which covers the entire state of New Mexico and the two western most counties in Texas.

We appreciate that your [monument proclamation](#) specifically addresses the issue by stating, "Nothing in this proclamation shall be deemed to affect the provisions of the 2006 Memorandum of Understanding between the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, the U.S. Department of the Interior, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture regarding 'Cooperative National Security and Counterterrorism Efforts on Federal Lands along the United States' Borders.'"

[Confirming this](#), a spokesperson for the U.S. Customs and Border Protection said: "This designation will in no way limit our ability to perform our important border security mission, and in fact provides important flexibility as we work to meet this ongoing priority."

Moreover, Sheriff Raymond Cobos of Luna County, New Mexico, home to some of the new monument lands near the border, has said: "I am satisfied that the President's [monument proclamation] will not hamper the ability of the Luna County Sheriff's Department to enforce applicable New Mexico statutes within the area covered by the proclamation. I am comfortable with the manner in which local law enforcement jurisdiction and authority is preserved. I am always glad to see protection of our environment balanced by the safety of New Mexicans particularly in my jurisdiction."

Thank you for responding to local communities and the need to protect our shared heritage, and preserving the Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monument. This designation will help our veterans recover from the impact of over a decade of continuous warfare, stimulate the local economy, preserve our history, and protect a beautiful part of our nation -- all while allowing Border Patrol to continue doing their job keeping these public lands among the most secure along the Southwest border.

Sincerely,

Gen. Charles Campbell
Shreveport, LA
40 years of service

Gen. John Coburn
Lorton, VA
38 years of service

Gen. Paul Kern
Arlington, VA
38 years of service

Gen. Leon LaPorte
San Antonio, TX
37 years of service

Gen. Lee Saloman
Gulfport, FL
37 years of service

Gen. Thomas Schwartz
Spring Branch, TX
38 years of service

Gen. Johnnie Wilson
Fort Belvoir, VA
38 years of service

Lieutenant Gen. Steven Arnold
Huntsville, GA
35 years of service

Lieutenant Gen. Steven Boutelle
Arlington, VA
36 years of service

Lieutenant Gen. John Caldwell
Washington, DC
36 years of service

Lieutenant Gen. John Castelaw
Washington, DC
35 years of service

Lieutenant Gen. Chris Christiansen
Alexandria, VA
35 years of service

Lieutenant Gen. Daniel W. Christman
Alexandria, VA
38 years of service

Lieutenant Gen. Robert Dail
Reston, VA
35 years of service

Lieutenant Gen. Tony Jones
Charleston, SC
35 years of service

Lieutenant Gen. William Lennox
Alexandria, VA
35 years of service

Lieutenant Gen. Clarence "Mac" McKnight
McLean, VA
35 years of service

Lieutenant Gen. William Mortensen
Southport, NC
35 years of service

Lieutenant Gen. Richard Newton (USAF)
McLean, VA
33 years of service

Lieutenant Gen. David Ohle
Fairfax, VA
35 years of service

Lieutenant Gen. Norman Seip
McLean, VA
35 years of service

Lieutenant Gen. Stephen Speakes
Cibolo, TX
34 years of service

Lieutenant Gen. Mitchell H. Stevenson
Fairfax, VA
35 years of service

Lieutenant Gen. Theodore Stroup
Arlington, VA
35 years of service

Lieutenant Gen. Guy Swan
Arlington, VA
35 years of service

Lieutenant Gen. Ross C. Thompson
Alexandria, VA
35 years of service

Lieutenant Gen. David Valcourt
Potomac, MD
35 years of service

Lieutenant Gen. David Weisman
Fort Lee, VA
35 years of service

Major Gen. Vincent Boles
Huntsville, GA
34 years of service

Major Gen. Guy Bourne
Arlington, VA
33 years of service

Major Gen. James Chambers
San Antonio, TX
32 years of service

Major Gen. John Deyermond
Pelham, NH
32 years of service

Major Gen. Jannette Edmunds
Alexandria, VA
33 years of service

Major Gen. William N. Farnen
Fairfax, VA
34 years of service

Major Gen. Yves Fontaine
Rock Island, IL
33 years of service

Major Gen. Jerry Harrison
Manassas, VA
33 years of service

Major Gen. Duane Jones (USAF)
Denver, CO
32 years of service

Major Gen. Thomas Kane (USAF)
Purchase, NY
34 years of service

Major Gen. Michael Lally
Bothell, WA
33 years of service

Major Gen. Kevin Leonard
Greenville, SC
33 years of service

Major Gen. Larry Lust
Olathe, KS
33 years of service

Major Gen. John MacDonald
Arlington, VA
34 years of service

Major Gen. Timothy McHale
Alexandria, VA
34 years of service

Major Gen. John McMahon
Seoul, South Korea
32 years of service

Major Gen. Hamp McManus
Fort Mill, SC
32 years of service

Major Gen. Nordie Norwood (USAF)
Alexandria, VA
33 years of service

Major Gen. Robert Radin
Charleston, SC
34 years of service

Major Gen. James Rogers
Huntsville, GA
32 years of service

Major Gen. Bruce C. Scott
Alexandria, VA
33 years of service

Major Gen. Randy Strong
Washington, DC
33 years of service

Major Gen. Keith Thurgood
Washington, DC
32 years of service

Brigadier Gen. Steven M. Anderson
Arlington, VA
31 years of service

Brigadier Gen. Stephen C. Cheney
Washington, DC
33 years of service

Brigadier Gen. Thomas Dickinson
Atlanta, GA
30 years of service

Brigadier Gen. Barbara Doornink
Alexandria, VA
30 years of service

Brigadier Gen. Robert Floyd
Fairfax, VA
32 years of service

Brigadier Gen. William Forrester
Huntsville, GA
31 years of service

Brigadier Gen. Uri French
Fairfax, VA
30 years of service

Brigadier Gen. Rebecca Halstead
Charlottesville, VA
30 years of service

Brigadier Gen. Jeffrey Horne
Alexandria, VA
32 years of service

Brigadier Gen. Michael Kelleher
Atlanta, GA
30 years of service

Brigadier Gen. Thomas Landwermeyer
Clifton, VA
33 years of service

Brigadier Gen. Ann McDonald
Arlington, VA
29 years of service

Brigadier Gen. David Reist (USMC)
Alexandria, VA
31 years of service

Brigadier Gen. Guy Sands
Alexandria, VA
32 years of service

Brigadier Gen. Douglas Satterfield
Washington, DC
31 years of service

Brigadier Gen. E.J. Sinclair
Huntsville, GA
32 years of service

Brigadier Gen. Paul Wentz
Dallas, TX
32 years of service

CC: Honorable Sally Jewell, Secretary, U.S. Department of the Interior
Honorable Charles T. Hagel, Secretary, U.S. Department of Defense
Honorable Jeh Johnson, Secretary, Department of Homeland Security
Honorable Tom Udall, U.S. Senate
Honorable Martin Heinrich, U.S. Senate
Honorable Michael Boots, Acting Chair, White House Council on Environmental Quality