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Dept. of Interior More Interested in Working with Mexico and Canada than U.S. Border Patrol to Secure Our Borders?

WASHINGTON D.C. – As the Obama Administration and the Congressional Democrats scramble to cobble together a response to growing concerns on the U.S.-Mexico border - particularly on federal lands, where Border Patrol is unable to effectively monitor and patrol - a recent comment from Department of Interior (DOI) Secretary Ken Salazar has shed some light on DOI's inability to address the problem.

When [recently asked](#) by a reporter:

"Last week Republicans introduced legislation that would prohibit the Department of Interior from impeding Border Patrol operations on federal lands. Do you think the Department of Interior should get out of the way of the Border Patrol agency, from, from them doing their, their job?"

Secretary Salazar responded:

"We have a national security imperative in our borders, but we believe that the national security can be met at the same time that we recognize the important ecological values that we have across the border and it has certainly been the case where we've worked well with both Mexico as well as with Canada in terms of transnational cross border issues that have to do wildlife and national parks issues and we hope to continue that agenda."

Strikingly absent from Secretary Salazar's statement is any mention of communication with U.S. Border Patrol or the acknowledgement that Border Patrol is blocked from effectively doing their job on federal lands due to Wilderness designations and endangered species concerns.

Apparently, the Secretary believes that communication between DOI and our two border neighbors is more important than getting the Interior Department to reverse course and start working with, rather than against, the Department of Homeland Security – the U.S. agency with primary jurisdiction over the border.

It is imperative that Border Patrol have access to the public lands on our borders for the purpose of ensuring our national security from drug smugglers, human traffickers, known murderers and potential terrorists who target our federal lands as access points into the U.S.

Because the Interior Department has failed to address these concerns, Republicans introduced legislation ([H.R. 5016](#)) to ensure that the Interior Department and Department of Agriculture do not impede or restrict Border Patrol from effectively doing their job to secure the border on public lands.

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