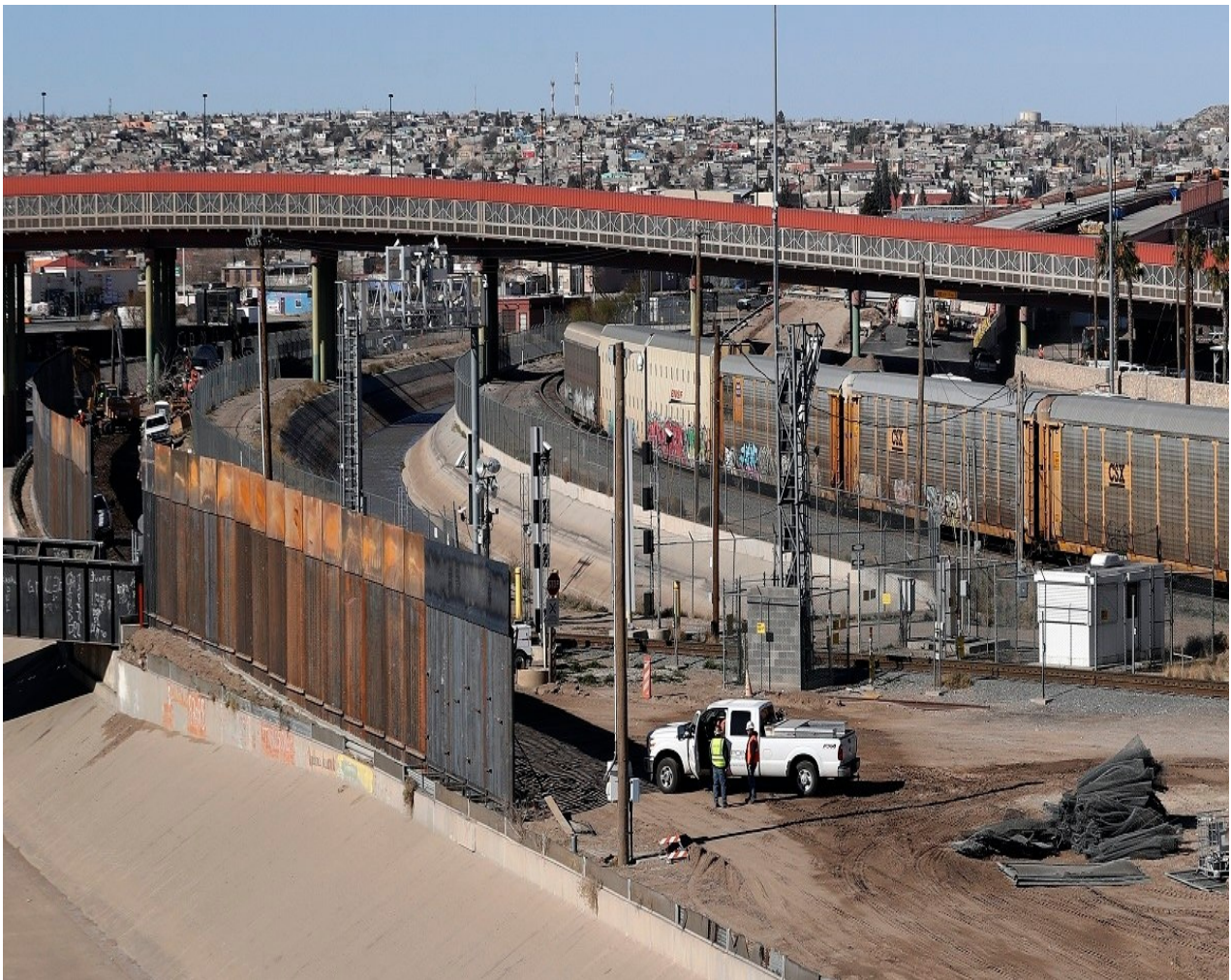


The Virgin Islands Consortium

With Trump Leaning Towards Signing Deal To Fund Gov't, Fears Of Disaster Funds Being Diverted From USVI Subside

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With President Donald Trump leaning towards signing a deal to fund the federal government that includes partial funding for a wall along the US/Mexico border, fears that the president would take unilateral action if Congress failed to act and divert disaster relief funds slated for the U.S. Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico and the states affected by the 2017 and 2018 storms, have subsided.

While Mr. Trump as of Wednesday had yet to say whether he'd sign the deal forged by members of Congress this week, there were signs that he would approve the measure to

prevent another shutdown set to occur at midnight Friday if a deal is not reached. If he were to move forward with his plan to divert funding for disaster relief to build the \$5.7 billion wall, it be a devastating blow to a territory that is still heavily reliant on federal dollars to recover from the storms of 2017, Hurricanes Irma and Maria.

Though Mr. Trump may hesitantly put his signature on the current deal forged by members of Congress to fund the government, what he is getting in return is far less than the amount he demanded.

According to The New York Times, the agreement that lawmakers produced this week would allocate \$1.375 billion for fencing along the border, even less than was on the table at one point last year. The Senate plans to vote on the measure today, followed by the House. Mr. Trump would not say whether he would sign it, but he seemed to be leaning toward it in the interest of avoiding another government shutdown at midnight Friday.

“With the wall, they want to be stingy,” Mr. Trump complained about Speaker Nancy Pelosi and other congressional Democrats during an encounter with reporters on Wednesday, according to The Times. “But we have options that most people don’t really understand.”

Even as he expressed disappointment, however, the president and his aides tried to look on the brighter side, stating that the \$1.375 billion would provide some fencing and overall security. Mr. Trump also said that the shutdown was important as it helped educate Americans of the dangers of having an unprotected border.