

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Trump Declares National Emergency To Build Border Wall; Funding Will Not Be Diverted From Disaster Areas

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President Donald Trump on Friday declared a national emergency at the U.S./Mexico border, giving him extraordinary power to bypass Congress and find money to build the wall. The bold action comes in light of Democrats' refusal to fund Mr. Trump's request of \$5.7 billion to protect the border.

Importantly, funding for the wall will not be diverted from disaster areas, though the idea was said to be on the table. Instead, the president will divert \$3.6 billion budgeted for military construction projects to the border wall, White House officials said. Mr. Trump will

also use more traditional presidential budgetary discretion to tap \$2.5 billion from counter narcotics programs and \$600 million from a Treasury Department asset forfeiture fund, according to the New York Times. Combined, Mr. Trump's total funding for border construction amounts to \$8 billion.

The national emergency declaration was made at the White House in the Rose Garden. The president was also set to sign a spending bill that would fund the federal government, but only included \$1.375 billion for border wall construction, which the president has concluded was not sufficient.

The announcement elicited swift condemnation from Democrats who vowed to challenge the president's action. Mr. Trump also received backlash from Republicans.

Rep. Jerrold Nadler (D., N.Y.), chairman of the House Judiciary Committee, said he would support a resolution to terminate an emergency declaration and that he intends to "pursue all other available legal options," according to The Wall Street Journal.

Republican lawmakers also criticized the president's plan, saying it undermined Congress and set a dangerous precedent if future Democratic presidents sought to declare emergencies over their priorities, such as climate change, the Journal said.

"I don't think that this is a matter that should be declared a national emergency," Sen. Lisa Murkowski (R., Alaska) said.