

**More Military news**

## **National Guard pulling some troops at border**

### **Newly hired agents to be replacements**

**By Leslie Berestein**  
UNION-TRIBUNE STAFF WRITER

September 22, 2007

National Guard troops stationed along California's border with Mexico are being scaled back, as are Guard troops elsewhere along the southern border.

By the end of next month, only about 600 troops – roughly half the number deployed to the California-Mexico border earlier this year – will be left assisting the Border Patrol with air and land surveillance, engineering and other non-law enforcement duties in the agency's San Diego and El Centro sectors.

Guard troops have been leaving gradually since February, but the heaviest departures began last month, a National Guard spokeswoman in San Diego said yesterday.

The rollback comes at roughly the midpoint of Operation Jump Start, a Bush administration plan begun in mid-2006 that called for sending 6,000 National Guard troops to the southern border to assist the Border Patrol until next year.

The plan called for scaling back troops by half after the first year, Guard Capt. Kimberly Holman said.

Nationwide, there are now roughly 3,100 Guard troops assisting on the border, Border Patrol spokesman Lloyd Easterling said. The idea is to replace departing troops with new hires, also as directed by the administration.

By the end of this month, the agency will have hired 2,500 more agents since Oct. 1, Easterling said. The federal government's goal is to hire 6,000 agents by the end of next year, boosting staffing to roughly 18,000 nationwide.

A year ago, there were slightly more than 1,500 Border Patrol agents in San Diego, sector spokesman James Jacques said. He said a more recent head count was not available.

The local president of the agents union estimated there had been 100 to 150 new hires this past year, but that at the same time, agents have been lost to attrition, duty in Arizona and fence-building crews elsewhere along the border.

"I don't think our numbers have really changed all that much," said Chris Bauder, president of Local 1613 of the National Border Patrol Council, which represents San Diego-area agents.

Among the tasks Guard troops have been assigned in San Diego is grading land in a rugged area west of the San Ysidro port of entry known as Russian Hill, moving 188,000 cubic yards of dirt to make the area easily traversable by Border Patrol vehicles, Holman said.

Most of the remaining troops are expected to leave by July, she said, though some will remain to work on an anti-drug enforcement program that existed before last year.

---

■Leslie Berestein: (619) 542-4579; [\*\*leslie.berestein@uniontrib.com\*\*](mailto:leslie.berestein@uniontrib.com)

**Find this article at:**

<http://www.signonsandiego.com/news/military/20070922-9999-7m22guard.html>

Check the box to include the list of links referenced in the article.

© Copyright 2007 Union-Tribune Publishing Co. ? A Copley Newspaper Site