

Most of Pentagon's \$10 billion diverted to border wall by Trump not recoverable



Washington, May 10 (RHC)-- Most of the nearly \$10 billion that the administration of previous US president Donald Trump diverted from the military budget to build barriers on the country's border with Mexico will never be recoverable, Pentagon and congressional authorities have confirmed.

Chairwoman of the U.S. House of Representatives Defense Appropriations Subcommittee, Minnesota Democrat Betty McCollum, told panel members at the conclusion of a Friday hearing that they are "not going to be getting any money returned" from Defense subcommittee appropriations that were diverted to border projects during the fiscal years of 2019 and 2020.

That includes some of the money diverted from military construction funds and all the money the Trump administration had reprogrammed from a variety of other Defense Department's initiatives, such as

National Guard equipment, a new amphibious assault ship for the Navy, F-35 fighter jets for the Marine Corps, Osprey tilt-rotors for carrying forces to battle and C-130J transport planes.

The development came after the Pentagon and White House claimed on April 30 that unspent border construction funds would be recouped. However, the details about how few dollars were available were not unveiled.

Although McCollum did not offer specific details at the congressional hearing, the Washington-based Roll Call newspaper – which specifically covers the US legislative developments – cited a House aide and a Pentagon official as elaborating on so few of the diverted defense dollars are still available.

According to the unnamed sources, nearly \$14 billion was spent on the border barriers through the military budgets as well as those of the departments of Homeland Security and Treasury.

Most of the funds was not appropriated by the US Congress but was instead redirected from other federal programs that had been enacted into law. Of that \$14 billion, a total of \$9.9 billion came from the Pentagon through two funding streams in fiscal years of 2019 and 2020.

In the first stream, the report said, \$3.6 billion was moved from military construction projects at home and abroad, including many in Eastern European member states of the US-led NATO military alliance near the Russian border.

In the second stream, \$6.3 billion was moved from other military projects — including several high-profile weapons systems favored by US lawmakers and backed by the military brass.

According to the report, the \$6.3 billion was routed through “a Pentagon counterdrug account” under a law that allowed money to be moved from that account to other agencies “that are deemed to be fighting the drug trade.”

As for the \$3.6 billion that was taken from military construction programs, only about half the border construction work that was planned to be completed with that money was completed before Biden froze the project in January, the Pentagon official added, noting that approximately half of that money may still be available though it does not amount to much.

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