

Statement for Record
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Mr. Chairman, members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony for the record. I regret not being able to attend this hearing in person, as I believe what I have to say has significance and the chance to answer your questions under further examination would be invaluable.

This is the 10th time over the past 15 years that I have offered Congressional testimony relative to the state of affairs on our Nation's southwest border, specifically the border with the Republic of Mexico. I have lived in this environment for almost 60 years and worked as a deputy sheriff for over 20 years. I am now serving in my 15th year as Sheriff in Cochise County, Arizona which has been part of the most active drug and human smuggling areas in our entire nation for at least the past 13 years. I tell you this so you may understand that I know something of what I speak.

SITUATION--GROUND ZERO:

U.S. Customs and Border Protection is divided, as far as Border Patrol is configured, into 9 Sectors. The Tucson, Arizona Sector "boasts" if you can use that word to be the most active sector along the entire border. In fact, it accounts for almost 50% of all illegal alien arrests and half the marijuana seizures **in the entire nation**. Cochise County sits in the southeast corner of this sector, with 83.5 miles of international boundary with Mexico.

Since 1997 we have seen a tremendous proliferation of federal law enforcement assets in our area in an attempt to counter burgeoning drug and human smuggling activity. As law enforcement has become more effective, in one sense, smugglers have become more creative, more competitive, more determined and more dangerous. This is the core of my testimony today.

JUST THE FACTS, M'AM:

Our current Secretary of Homeland Security and many Department of Homeland Security employees have been and are still making statements that, and I quote, "The border is more secure than it has ever been." "You need not be concerned about the border." "Cities along the border are among the safest in the country." In support of these declarations, we have been presented with statistical evidence that includes reduced or flat crime rates, diminishing numbers of illegal alien arrests and increasing drug seizures. What I will try to convey to you, is that while the numbers are interesting, they are not probative as presented of "border more secure than it has ever been," and certainly not demonstrative of community safety and welfare.

When defining border security, statements from multiple levels of DHS employees make

it clear that they do not have a definitive idea of what that means. I quote Secretary Napolitano, "If I knew what securing the border means, that would be one thing." And the Chief of the Border Patrol, a great guy I must say, recently publicly stated that "We are still trying to define what securing the border means", or words to that effect. Well, my question to all is, how can you meaningfully assign assets to a task for which you have no clear objective? And again, the Secretary recently made a statement when discussing asset requirements that "there comes a time when enough is enough." Excuse me and my crudeness, but that attitude is akin to suggesting that as long as there are long as we have elderly among us, we will just have to put up with a certain amount of exploitation, identity theft and abuse. Sorry. You can try to sell that, but the people I work for aren't buying. Such an attitude should never be allowed to influence our determination to stamp out crime and that includes drug and human smuggling.

DEFINING A SECURE BORDER:

The reality is that currently, in spite of all the efforts at deterrence, anyone who wants to cross the southern border can. Communities all over our nation are suffering as a consequence and the threat to our homeland security is huge. Every day in cities, towns and rural areas there is untold damage and destruction and lives are destroyed or forever changed at the hands of people who should never have been allowed into our country. We do not know the intentions of people who enter our country illegally until they act out, but we can measure the consequences and it is not a pretty picture.

So where do you start with border security. We simply need to be able to detect through the application of technology and human observation every single incursion across our border. Those who say this is impossible are wrong; it has been done in certain areas and is achievable if we have the will along our entire border. Then we must have the ability to launch a predictable interdiction and finally apply sanctions to those who have been caught.

Now you can throw up all the numbers you want to demonstrate progress or declare victory, but the true test of whether our borders are secure and safe or not is and will be heard in the voices and seen through the eyes of those who live here. How do you quantify that? You can't, but you will know it when they see it and you hear it. We are talking quality of life issues.

Recently, Senator McCain and several U.S. House of Representatives members toured our southern Arizona border. They heard, they saw and they know of what I speak. It is not up to Congress, any Presidential Administration or any Sheriff to tell when that quality life has returned. The people we work for will tell us, the smile will return to their faces and they will be most appreciative. In the words of almost every Border Patrol agent that works this problem every day, "We've made some progress, but we still have a long way to go."

So, in the words of Larry the Cable Guy, "get 'er done!"