



## **The American Sheriff Alliance** **Immigration and Border Security Priorities and Positions**

September 2024

As Sheriffs of this great nation, it is our sworn duty to protect those we serve. We are in office, elected by the people, to give voice to the public safety concerns of the American people. The American Sheriffs Alliance comprised of Sheriffs from the National Sheriffs' Association, Major County Sheriffs of America, Western States Sheriffs' Association, Southwest Border Sheriffs' Coalition, and the Texas Border Sheriffs Coalition, issues this position statement to our nation's leaders and to the American public related to immigration and border security matters.

Although illegal border crossings have decreased from prior record-breaking numbers, they remain exceedingly high and a threat to public safety. For example:

- According to Customs and Border Protection (CBP), there have been more than 10.5 million illegal entry encounters nationwide, with more than 8.5 million of those encounters at the southwest border since the beginning of FY2021. By comparison, CBP recorded around 3.1 million such encounters nationwide from FY2017-2020. Just this fiscal year alone (YTD), there have been 2,597,784 nationwide encounters by CBP.
- More than 5.4 million illegal immigrants have entered the United States in the last 3.5 years. Of those, 1.2 million were released under the CBP One App and the Cubans, Haitians, Nicaraguans, and Venezuelans (CHNV) parole program.
- In addition, there are an estimated 2 million "got-a-ways" who have evaded CBP and are now present in the United States.
- Encounters at the northern border in FY2024 (YTD) are up nearly 600% compared to FY2021.
- Research estimates that the cost of illegal immigration (welfare, medical, processing, transport, etc.) to American taxpayers is in excess of **\$150 billion annually**.
- The processing center in the Yuma, AZ sector costs approximately **\$500,000 per day** to operate. This is just one of seven processing centers along the Southwest border.

The current apprehension and release policy, a practice that allows individuals who are caught crossing the border illegally to be released into the United States while they await their immigration court hearings, is a threat to our local safety and to national security. These hearings are now extended as far out as eight to eleven years due to a significant shortage of immigration judges.

Many of the people entering the United States illegally are risking their lives and paying debts to dangerous criminal cartels in order to get to America. Most are refugees seeking a better way of life for themselves and their families, escaping humanitarian crises, and/or seeking asylum from persecution or violence in their home countries, such as Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador.

However, among those crossing our borders, there are also criminals and members of terrorist organizations who have the intent of harming Americans and destroying our way of life. Since January 2021, almost 400 illegal immigrants from 36 different countries have entered the country who appear on the U.S. government's Terrorist Screening Database (TSDB) and many have been released by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) into American communities. Among the countries they originated from are those with a known active terrorist presence, such as Afghanistan, Iraq, Lebanon, Pakistan, Syria, and Yemen. In

addition to the nearly 400 known or suspected terrorists (KSTs) encountered by CBP agents, another 1,425 KSTs have been encountered at ports of entry on the southern and northern borders.

In this fiscal year alone, CBP has encountered numerous individuals illegally entering our nation from countries which are hostile to the United States. These include more than 33,000 Chinese nationals, 2,100 Afghani nationals, 540 Iranian nationals, 520 Syrian nationals, and 730 Pakistani nationals. These numbers make it easy to understand why FBI Director Christopher Wray testified this past July that he is “increasingly concerned that foreign terrorists could seek to exploit the vulnerabilities at our southwest border or at other ports of entry, or in other aspects of our immigration system, to facilitate an attack here in the United States.”

Innocent Americans have been targeted by criminals who have illegally entered our nation. This includes those who committed the brutal murder of [Laken Riley in Georgia](#), and the heinous rape and murder of [Rachel Morin in Maryland](#). Especially horrific was the crime involving an innocent 12-year-old girl named [Jocelyn Nungaray](#), who was raped and murdered in Houston, Texas. All these crimes were perpetrated by individuals who had illegally entered our country, several of whom were previously apprehended by the CBP and then later released back into our country. In another case, a man unlawfully entered the U.S. after an arrest warrant had been issued for him in El Salvador for murdering a woman. In addition to these appalling and shocking crimes, several communities across our country have been terrorized by [Tren de Aragua](#), a brutal and ruthless Venezuelan gang that has been given a [green light by its leadership to shoot and kill law enforcement](#) officers.

The inability to secure our borders has also led to an influx of deadly, illicit drugs like fentanyl that are poisoning and killing members of our communities at unacceptably high rates. Over the last three years, we have witnessed an annual average of 107,000 people in America die from drug overdoses, with a large majority of those deaths involving fentanyl. The most recent Drug Threat Assessment issued by the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) clearly states the vast majority of these illicit drugs are coming by way of Mexico, where they are being manufactured from precursors provided by China and then smuggled into our country by Transnational Criminal Organizations (TCOs) like the Sinaloa and Jalisco New Generation cartels. The Mexican drug cartels have further capitalized on the open border policies by exploiting and victimizing migrants to enrich themselves through the expansion of their human trafficking, human smuggling, and drug trafficking enterprises, to the tune of hundreds of billions of dollars. They are now the fifth largest employer in Mexico, according to the online research journal, *Science*. The cartels’ deadly reach, power, and control will only increase without some urgent changes in our border and foreign policies.

The American Sheriffs Alliance calls on the White House Administration and Congress to bring bipartisan solutions that would help stem the tide and secure our borders while also creating a legitimate and/or streamlined pathway to citizenship. Congress has remained tentative in our foreign policy relations with Mexico and its leaders’ dangerous partnerships with countries like China, which has fueled the influence of the cartels. While we can appreciate politicians and dignitaries who make visits to our borders, they need to come away with realistic solutions to the problems that would assist sheriffs and our federal law enforcement partners in truly securing our borders and addressing the threats we are facing. The issues at the border are complex and deserve genuine attention by our policymakers, but the solutions will not be solved by using border visits for social media purposes only.

The current situation on our borders and in our communities is untenable. We believe the safety and security of our nation requires bipartisan collaboration between the White House Administration and Congress. The president, the Senate and the House of Representatives must work together cooperatively, in good faith, to complete the border wall, end blanket asylum cooperation agreements, cease widespread apprehension and release practices, and expand the number of CBP and DEA personnel assigned to border security and drug

interdiction. Furthermore, Sheriff's Offices and other local law enforcement agencies across our nation need more federal support to hire more deputies and officers, and to obtain the technology that will better equip us to keep our communities safe.

The American Sheriffs Alliance represents over 3,000 sheriff's offices nationwide. Our member organizations are comprised of sheriffs from across the political spectrum. We want the American people to understand the challenges that we in law enforcement currently face when it comes to immigration and border security and the impacts those policy decisions have on the safety and security of our communities. The consequences of those policies fall heavily on our shoulders. We call upon our nation's leaders to support us and our federal law enforcement partners by providing the necessary financial resources, and by making changes in foreign and border protection policies that will prevent crime, reduce the flow of lethal drugs into our nation, and safeguard the American people. As always, we stand ready to work collaboratively with those leaders to achieve these important goals.

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*The **American Sheriff Alliance** consists of sheriffs, leadership, and chief law enforcement officers from the National Sheriffs' Association, Major County Sheriffs of America, the Western State Sheriffs' Association, the Southwestern Border Sheriffs' Coalition, and the Texas Border Sheriff's Coalition. This alliance was formed to advocate for policy change and reform in order to keep our nation's citizens safe as well as support the men and women who protect and serve the United States of America.*