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# Office of the Sheriff Cochise County



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**United States Congress**

**January 18, 2024**

**The Committee on Homeland Security**

**Hearing Topic**

**“Voices for the Victims:  
The Heartbreaking Reality of the Mayorkas Border Crisis”**

**Sheriff Mark J. Dannels**

**Opening Statement**

Good Afternoon Chairman (Mark) Green, Ranking Member (Bennie) Thompson and the Honorable members of both subcommittees. On behalf the citizens of Cochise County and the State of Arizona, and my fellow Sheriffs, Thank You for having me.

I have served our border communities for 40 years and prior to that, as a member of our military serving in the U.S. Army stationed at Fort Huachuca located within Cochise County. I have always been a genuine believer in my Oath of Office to protect my Country, and now my County as the duly elected Sheriff for the past 12 years. I am the past-President of the Arizona Sheriffs Association, Chair of the National Sheriffs Association Border Security, the Executive Board for Western States Sheriffs and past leadership positions with the Southwest Border Sheriffs.

All these associations share 3-Objectives:

**Public Safety, National Security and Humanitarian.**

In my submitted brief, I have shared with you all an overview of Cochise County and the history of our border. I have personally experienced the good, the bad and the ugly of being a border county. My office has always addressed border-related crimes, smuggling of both illicit drugs, humans, weapons and cash by our Transnational Organizations i.e. Criminal Cartels.

I am proud of our relationships with all our law enforcement partners that serve our communities.

To begin, I want to “Thank” our Customs & Border Patrol Officers and Agents who have worked tirelessly and diligently to protect this great nation. I want to “Thank” our Governors; Ducey and Hobbs and our State Congressional Members for all their support. The men and women of the Cochise County Sheriff’s Office for their dedication and commitment in keeping our communities safe. To all my fellow Sheriffs that stand united for the Rule of Law in the protection of their communities. And, finally, I want to “Thank” my citizens for their patience and support in a time of crisis and disarray.

To best understand my presentation is to understand where we were over 3 years ago. My county was one on the safest border counties based on our collective governmental efforts, prioritization, messaging and yes, enforcement efforts supported by the Rule of Law.

**The direct impact to my county/office:**

My citizens and law enforcement address mostly Got-Aways “Fight & Flight” in my County versus those giving up.

100% Camouflaged migrants being illegally smuggled by the Cartels, price tag per UDA begins at \$7000 and up.

These smugglers include juveniles being recruited via social media by the Criminal Cartels.

Border Related Booking (Detention) Costs over the last 24 months is \$9.4 million, absorbed by my local and state taxpayers.

**Border-related Crime at an all-time high:**

Death/Murder investigations, Illicit Drug Poisonings, Aggravated acts against my citizens, Failure to Yields, Search and Rescue/Recovery and yes, assaults against law enforcement officials.

My deputies/law enforcement continue to be placed in life-threatening scenarios as the Cartels shows no regard for my citizens and/or those that wear a badge.

Agents, Troopers, Deputies and Officers are addressing dangerous scenarios/criminals as a direct result of an “Open Border” exploited by these criminal cartels for Violence, Fear and Greed.

Cochise County Sheriff’s Office Detention Bookings related to Border:

In calendar years 2022/2023: 2884 Suspects booked into my jail for border-related crimes.  
566 Smugglers (state law violation)  
414 Failure to Yields  
154 Non-Citizens  
\$9.4 Million Cost to local/state

Fentanyl continues to poison/kill Americans at an alarming rate leaving families and communities devastated. Arizona efforts by law enforcement are remarkable, but the War on Drugs must be a priority topic and not deserted by political rhetoric. Arizona fentanyl seizures accounts for 51% of

all the fentanyl seized in the country. In federal fiscal year 2022 Arizona seized over 60 million Fentanyl pills. The 4-Arizona border counties seized 35 million Fentanyl pills with an anticipated increase for 2023 Federal fiscal year.

**In closing**, my fellow Sheriffs and I have tried to partner with this administration to include the President of the United States with high hopes to share a **Collective Message, Collective Action Plan, Support the Rule of Law, Prioritize our southern border and provide updates reference Community Impacts and Concerns with little to no success.**

By allowing our border security mission and immigration laws to be discretionary, these Criminal Cartels continue to be the true winners, their exploitation of mankind is simply “Modern Day Slavery”; allowing thousands of pounds of illicit drugs into our country that continue to erode the core-values of families, schools and subsequently killing Americans on an average of 290 every day is completely unacceptable at any level. Experiencing migrant deaths without a reasonable process while members of our U.S. Congress and this Administration intentionally avoids reality is gross negligence.

Our voice of reason has been buried during what I call an “Intellectual Avoidance” by this Administration and yes, members of U.S. Congress. Communities have been neglected and abandoned relying on our own local and state resources to address a border that is in crisis mode.

Our southern border, against all public well-designed statements out of Washington D.C. is in the worst shape I have ever seen it. When one looks at Public Safety, National Security, and Humanitarian, our southern border is the largest crime scene in the country.

The morale of agents is extremely low, and the collective frustration is very high amongst law enforcement at all levels and most important, our citizens.

I am a true believer that Customs and Border Patrol are the experts of Border Security while Sheriffs and Police Chiefs are the experts of community, together, this is a Recipe of Success for all communities!

I will leave you with this final statement, we all serve the priorities of Americans based on our shared Oaths of Office to keep them Safe, enhance their Quality of Life and Support the Rule of Law absent political affiliation or the concern of reelection; I ask each one of you to reflect on this statement as you make your next decision to vote.

Once again, I thank this committee for the invite and opportunity and now, stand ready to answer any questions by members.