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Moving the Line of Scrimmage: Re-examining the Defense-in-Depth Strategy

Since 1924 the men and women of the U.S. Border Patrol have been asked to protect the United States border from all enemies, foreign and domestic. This is the first line of the Holding the Line in the 21st Century USBP handbook. While I realize it is a stretch to say that illegal traffic from south of the border are enemies, my argument remains that these people are no less than invaders. My statement is, and always will be that if you enter this country illegally, your very first act is an unlawful one. By breaking the first law of the land, how would we expect these people to respect any other law in America? Many of them don't.

The Border Patrol checkpoints, while they probably catch some illegal drugs are not always staffed and are not always open. If the resources used to staff the checkpoints were directly AT the international boundary it stands to reason that they would deter or interdict the drugs before they actually get into the interior.

Our family ranch is 12 miles southeast of Tombstone, Arizona and lies 25 miles north of the Mexican border. My husband's family has been in Cochise County, Arizona since 1867. For many years we lived peaceably with people from Mexico who traveled through from time to time. We had a mutual respect for each other and showed compassion when either of us needed help. However, after 1986 we began to see a significant change in the attitudes of the people illegally coming north. They began to be disrespectful of our property and sometimes confrontational. They cut fences, drained water tanks, killed animals, robbed our home, slept in our barn, stole a vehicle, trampled the grass for our cattle, and left literally tons of trash. In this trash we find plastic bottles, backpacks, plastic bags, blankets, clothing, diapers, feminine hygiene products, cell phone chargers, rotting food, hypodermic needles, medicines, human waste, and pregnancy tests. Abandoned cars and van seats are regularly left in pastures or along the roads. There has been every gender and age that crossed through our property. Picking up this trash was a health hazard for us and ingesting it is not healthy for our livestock. More than once we have found dead cows because they tried to eat plastic bags or acrylic blankets. When cattle to eat these things, they can't digest them so they die a long and miserable death.

In 1995 the trash left by illegal aliens in southern Arizona was out of control. At our ranch alone we have a draw that was a major path that they took on their way north. Because it was a low place that wasn't easily seen, illegal aliens used it as their trash dumpster. Cochise County sent some at-risk kids to pick up trash. They hauled away 16 dump truck loads in one session. Every other rancher has a similar story to tell. Keep in mind that our ranch is 25 miles north of the international boundary. The trash left behind is a health hazard for everyone, not just our cattle. My family has personally picked up countless truck loads, not knowing what kind of health hazards we might face.

Because of the volume of illegal traffic across our property from 1986 to the present, the environmental damage in the borderlands has been extensive. Illegal crossers came through southern Arizona by the millions. In their wake they trampled valuable grazing land, destroyed fragile foliage and cacti, drained tens of thousands of gallons of stock water used by wildlife, cut fences and left tons of trash. The damage left behind has changed the landscape in many places.

Foot paths caused soil erosion when the rains came in the summer. Some of the water holes for wildlife were left unusable because of human waste.

In 2000 David Aguilar, then Tucson Sector Chief and who later served as the U.S. Chief of the Border Patrol from 2004-2010, had reached out to the ranchers in our area who had been experiencing daily illegal traffic and vandalism for several years. He brought with him two of his superiors from the San Diego Sector to our home. They explained that Operation Hold the Line in El Paso in 1993, which focused on intercepting and preventing illegal entries at the border, and Operation Gatekeeper in San Diego proved to be very effective in curtailing the flow into their areas. This forced the illegal activity by alien crossers into the rural areas of Arizona. Chief Aguilar was the architect of the Holding the Line Strategic Handbook which outlines the Defense in Depth Strategy. The Chief explained that the plan is designed to secure the cities, which are the most populated areas. In the cities they only have seconds or minutes to catch illegals before they disappear into society. This forces illegal traffic into the rural areas. However, instead of putting agents near the international boundary in the rural areas, they would be deployed 25 plus miles north of the border to allow hours or days to catch those who crossed the border illegally! I distinctly remember Chief Aguilar asking me what I thought about this plan. I replied that I thought it was the dumbest idea I had ever heard. I shared my thoughts with him about how nonsensical it was to allow aliens to get well inside of the actual border instead of catching them right at the boundary line like they had been doing in El Paso. I asked, if the El Paso plan worked so well, then why doesn't the Border Patrol do the same thing in the rural areas? I received no answer. Time has proven that aliens will go anywhere they need to go to avoid detection. This failed strategy has forced illegal aliens into the rural areas of Arizona where ranchers and other rural residents have become the first line of defense because the majority of the Border Patrol agents are north of where we live! Ranchers and residents along the border have begged for agents on the border for over 15 years. Even though the success of Hold the Line and Gatekeeper were largely due to stopping the flow of illegal traffic directly at the border, we have been told repeatedly for the last 15 years that "it would not work". Later in 2011, Border Patrol Council President T.J. Bonner admitted to several ranchers on a congressional conference call that the Council did not want agents to patrol at the border because it was too dangerous. I submit to Congress that if the border is too dangerous for agents, then why is it not too dangerous for residents? We have become sacrificial lambs.

In 2010, Chief Aguilar made the following statement to the Arizona Republic newspaper: The border is not a defined line, but a corridor between the U.S. and Mexico. This "corridor" Chief Aguilar eludes to is 30 to 100 miles inside the interior of the United States. How can a government official have the audacity to state that the border is not a boundary? We hear repeatedly that agents ARE on the border, when we know that isn't a fact. When Border Patrol refers to agents on the border, they are actually referring to the 25-30 mile "corridor" instead of the actual international boundary. I maintain that Mexico definitely has a boundary and their immigration laws are tougher than ours.

In 2010, our good friend, Rob Krentz was murdered on his own property 30 miles north of the border. Rob was a humanitarian and stopped to render aid to an illegal that was pretending to be injured. As he stopped to try to help, the man shot him and his dog. Evidence showed that the man was an illegal drug runner who had robbed at least two nearby residents on his way south. At one place he stole a gun, which he used to shoot Rob. Further on, he stole food. The food

wrappers were found at the murder location. The day of Rob's murder there were no Border Patrol agents nearby. It took the Sheriff's department over 12 hours to find his body.

My personal opinion is that rural residents are expendable to those in power. We aren't many votes and our land and livelihoods are not important to most of the population. Keeping the cities and highways patrolled allows for the majority of the population to feel safe, thus securing more votes.

Border Patrol checkpoints, while they may catch some illegal drugs are not very valuable as a deterrent tool. For example, the checkpoint which is nearest to me is about 15 miles north. At this checkpoint there are no less than 10 Border Patrol vehicles on any given day parked there. There are usually two or three agents stopping cars and sometimes there is also a drug dog. The checkpoint is open only if weather permits! If there are high winds or rain, the checkpoint is immediately closed. Drug traffickers only need to look at the weather report to determine if it is safe to avoid detection.

On Highway 191 30 miles north of Douglas there is a checkpoint which is rarely open, even when the weather is good. We travel through this a few times per week, and we estimate that it is open less than 25% of the time. We are told that they are understaffed. In order for checkpoints to do any good, they must remain open 24/7, and they shouldn't close because of inclement weather. When we asked about why they close when it is rainy or windy, we were told it was because it was a danger to the agents. I fail to see how. In short, perhaps if the checkpoints cannot be manned 24/7, those agents should be deployed at the border instead of having checkpoints.

That being said, there is NOT a checkpoint at all on Highway 80 traveling north of Douglas, Arizona through the San Bernardino Valley; a remote area of southern Arizona which is the main drug trafficking route out of Sonora, Mexico. This is also the area where the Krentz Ranch is located and where Rob was murdered. Residents in this area are vandalized and threatened on a regular basis. There are very few agents on the international boundary stopping illegal crossers from entering, so they have a free ride into the interior. After they drop their load, they rob and vandalize on their way back south. One homeowner near Portal had been robbed over 100 times. At this point their home had lost so much value that they couldn't sell it. They had to walk away and abandon it. In addition, drug traffickers on their way back south after they have dropped their load are told to rob as many residents as they can. With the majority of the agents north of them, they are free to do whatever they want on their way back across the border. We are told that they are threatened by the drug cartel that if they fail to steal as much money and firearms as they can, members of their families will be killed. This makes them very desperate, which was probably the case with the man who murdered Rob Krentz.

The large checkpoint station on Interstate 19 from Nogales to Tucson is a sore subject for those people living nearby. There is a lot of traffic out of Nogales. Drug runners know that they will be stopped there, and it forces them into the outlying areas. I know people who live there and sometimes they find cartel members sitting in their yard furniture waiting for a ride.

My son was robbed by drug traffickers who were on their way back south to cross back into Mexico. They took nearly everything he owned. They even pried up the boards on the floor of the house. After eating all of his food, they used his electric clippers, shaved their hair and left

the hair in the entry way as a calling card. There were no agents nearby. The County Sheriff said that the hair that was left was sort of a message that they could come and go as they please, and to try to stop them would mean consequences.

My husband found a dead body on our ranch in July 2012. The Sheriff's Department determined that it was the body of a drug runner. The man had on brand new Nike shoes and new clothes. His wallet contained a Bally's Fitness card. The cause of death could not be determined, but his backpack was empty. It is possible that he was not traveling alone and his companion took the drugs and/or money and left him for dead. All of my rancher friends have found one or more dead bodies on their property. Allowing them to come into Arizona instead of stopping them at the international boundary has created a humanitarian crisis for them. If they knew they couldn't cross illegally, then they wouldn't put their lives at risk.

In January of 2001, my husband and I were out of the state, so our daughter came home from Tucson where she attended college at the University of Arizona, to check on our home and to feed our horses. It was snowing so she fed in a hurry and went back to our house. In a few minutes our dogs began to bark violently and she looked out the window to see what they were barking at. A man was standing in the front yard. He was wearing a nice leather bomber jacket and he yelled at her in English to open the door. Instead she cracked the window to ask him what he wanted. He replied that he and his friend, who he said was crippled, wanted a ride to town. She said that she couldn't give him a ride which made him angry. He said that his friend wanted to confront her when she was feeding the horses, but he wanted to wait to make sure she was alone first. This statement made her very nervous, so she said that she was not alone, but that her Dad was on another part of the ranch and was on his way home. At this point she told him that she could call the Border Patrol and he got even angrier. He began waving one arm and yelling at her, saying "a Mexican would help me". She picked up the phone to call for help and he left. She made three phone calls. The first one was to the Border Patrol who said they couldn't be there for about 45 minutes. Next she called the Sheriff's Department and she also called a friend who lived about 15 miles away. It was the friend who arrived first. The Sheriff's deputy arrived next, and the last to show up was the Border Patrol. After the Sheriff's deputy arrived, they concluded in their search of the outlying buildings on the ranch that a knife was missing from a butcher block. My daughter had noticed that the man wouldn't use but one arm while talking to her. The other hand he kept behind his back. We can only conclude that this man meant to do her harm when he got her alone. Obviously, both men got away. My daughter attended college with many people from the Middle East. Based on his statement that "a Mexican would help me", and his appearance and accent, she concluded that he was not Mexican but from a Middle Eastern country.

John Ladd's ranch is on the Mexican border. He has 10 1/2 miles of border fence. On his ranch, the US Government built a 13 foot metal wall with 42 million dollars of infrastructure complete with cameras, lights, and sensors. Between April 2012 and August 2014, 54 times drug cartel members cut the fence with a saw or a torch, lay down the fencing, drove their drug load 3 miles north to highway 92 and drove back through the opening in the fence unmolested. If they had ample time, sometimes they would even weld it back in place. Only one was caught, and that was because the drug runner hit an embankment and deployed his air bag. It is important to note that the Brian Terry Border Patrol Station was only 4 miles away. If agents were on the international boundary instead of 25 to 100 miles north these incidents would not have happened. Over the years, the Ladd Ranch estimates over half a million people have crossed his land. On

their way through to a community near you, some of them cut his fences, killed livestock, left trash, and vandalized his home. Many ranchers feel as if they are prisoners in their own home.

Last year, fellow rancher Kelly Kimbro was driving from her ranch into Douglas AZ along the border road. This is a very remote area. Suddenly she saw 13 men run out of the brush and into the road when they ran in front of her vehicle and forced her to stop. Needless to say, she was terrified. They jumped on the hood of her truck and into the back. She rolled her window down part way and spoke to them in Spanish. They answered her in English and explained they were from India, not Mexico and they wanted her to call the Border Patrol so they could turn themselves in as refugees. Obviously there were no agents on the border.

On one occasion, my husband was out riding a horse on our ranch when he came upon seven aliens. He told them in Spanish to stop. One of them ran up to him and grabbed his bridle reins, intending to pull him off of his horse. Confrontations like this are common among border residents.

One time, a fellow rancher was driving his truck and horse trailer on his ranch road. When he stopped to open a gate, illegals jumped out of the brush, got in his pickup and drove off leaving him stranded with his truck, gun, phone, trailer and horse stolen.

One morning my husband went to our barn to do the chores and 13 illegals were asleep in our barn. It wasn't uncommon to find one or two sleeping there.

Last December near Animas, New Mexico drug runners kidnapped a man who worked for a local company who provided well service for ranchers in the area. They tied him up, threw him in the back of their truck with their load of drugs and forced him to guide them to Willcox, Arizona to deliver their load. When they were close to Willcox, he was blindfolded and left over night. The next day he was found and rescued. Had there been agents near the border, this wouldn't have happened.

Virtually every rancher I know who lives near the border has a horror story to tell similar to these. I don't know even one who has not been vandalized. I had to quit my job as a Mary Kay Sales Director because I needed to drive at night and the drug traffic made it unsafe to do so, and there is not adequate cell phone service where we live. I back my car in the garage so nobody can sneak in while I am closing the automatic door.

Drug scouts frequently set up camp on the mountains of southern Arizona. They have sophisticated equipment that I am told puts ours to shame. Within Aguilar's "corridor" most of the Border Patrol is north of the scouts, but the few agents in this area are easily located by the scouts and they pass on the information to the drug mules who can easily avoid the small number of agents within this area. They know when shift changes occur, and this is usually the time when the drug runners have a green light to travel north.

Another problem is that many of the Border Patrol stations are many miles north of the international boundary. Some are as much as 80 to 100 miles north. Tucson, Casa Grande, and Willcox are three examples. More Forward Operating Bases are needed. A brand new one was built east of Douglas in an area that desperately needs it, but it is not in use.

Those of us who live in proximity of the border see first-hand the failures of the Border Patrol. While we know the agents would like to do their job, their hands are tied to bureaucratic and political decisions. Last year a few of us met with DHS Secretary Jeh Johnson. After recounting our examples he said that he knew we had problems. However, he also stated that he was appointed by the President and will support his policies. These policies do not help our cause; rather they increase the chance of further problems. Ranchers along the border have become the “bad guys”. We are labeled vigilantes and racists, which is far from the truth. I had personally provided shelter, food and water, given medicine and care to hundreds of illegal crossers over the past 40 years. All of my fellow ranchers have done the same. I have never personally known a case of abuse by a rancher to an alien in all of those years. The Mexican people are our neighbors, but the strategy of our government and the reluctance to enforce the law has created an atmosphere of animosity at times.

I have read the entire Holding the Line Handbook, and I find it to be a fascinating work of fiction in places. For example, on Page 10 the Risk-Based Approach to apprehending illegal aliens is described as compared to NASA identifying the highest risk areas near the International Space Station and how they can avoid space debris! These similarities are compared, even though space debris is hardly a living breathing human being. The comparison is not valid and insults my intelligence.

One of the most troubling aspects of not patrolling the international boundary and putting the majority of agents 50 miles or more from the border, is the probability of Transnational Criminal Organizations and terrorists entering our country. The example on John Ladd’s ranch of the 54 drug traffickers breaking through the wall is evidence that other unsavory characters and come and go as they please. On the San Pedro River, which runs out of Mexico and into the U.S. west of the Ladd Ranch, the 13 ft. wall ends and there is a 3-strand barbed wire fence going across the river. During flash flood season there is often no fence at all. I have been there dozens of times and rarely is an agent watching this quarter mile area which almost never has water running through it. Anyone can simply walk in. Also, during this same season the flood gates are raised from mid-June until the end of September to allow flood water to flow out of Mexico. The Border Patrol covers those holes in the fence with 3 strands of barbed wire which isn’t even stretched tightly.

In parts of southern Arizona as far north as 100 miles there are signs which have been put up by the government stating, “CAUTION. Smuggling activity is common in this area, due to proximity of the border. Be aware of your surroundings at all times”. I should not have to be advised by my own government to beware of foreign drug smugglers in my own country. If my country were enforcing the immigration laws on the books, this wouldn’t be an issue.

Diversions fires in Aguilar’s “corridor” have been set by illegal aliens and drug runners. They have destroyed hundreds of thousands of acres of valuable forest, grassland, wildlife, homes, and other resources.

Many of the old-time family ranchers in the area have sold out to big companies with absent owners in order to get away from the vandalism problems and for their safety. Land values in our region have dropped to about half of their value in the 1980’s simply because nobody wants to live in an area overrun by illegal aliens.

It is a terrible lie when the government tells America that the border is secure. It seems to be a calculated plan to not enforce immigration laws. A lot of powerful people have something to gain by allowing illegal aliens to invade our country. Meanwhile, the American public is suffering and our national security and sovereignty as a nation is in jeopardy.

For the checkpoints to be really affective, they should be open 24/7. If there is not enough staff to keep them open round the clock, then perhaps they should be patrolling the border itself.