

**Biden's Border Crisis: The Consequences of Failing to Secure Federal Border
Lands**

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Subcommittee on Federal Lands

The Honorable Tom Tiffany, Chairman

House Committee on Natural Resources

By

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Biden's Border Crisis: The Consequences of Failing to Secure Federal Border Lands

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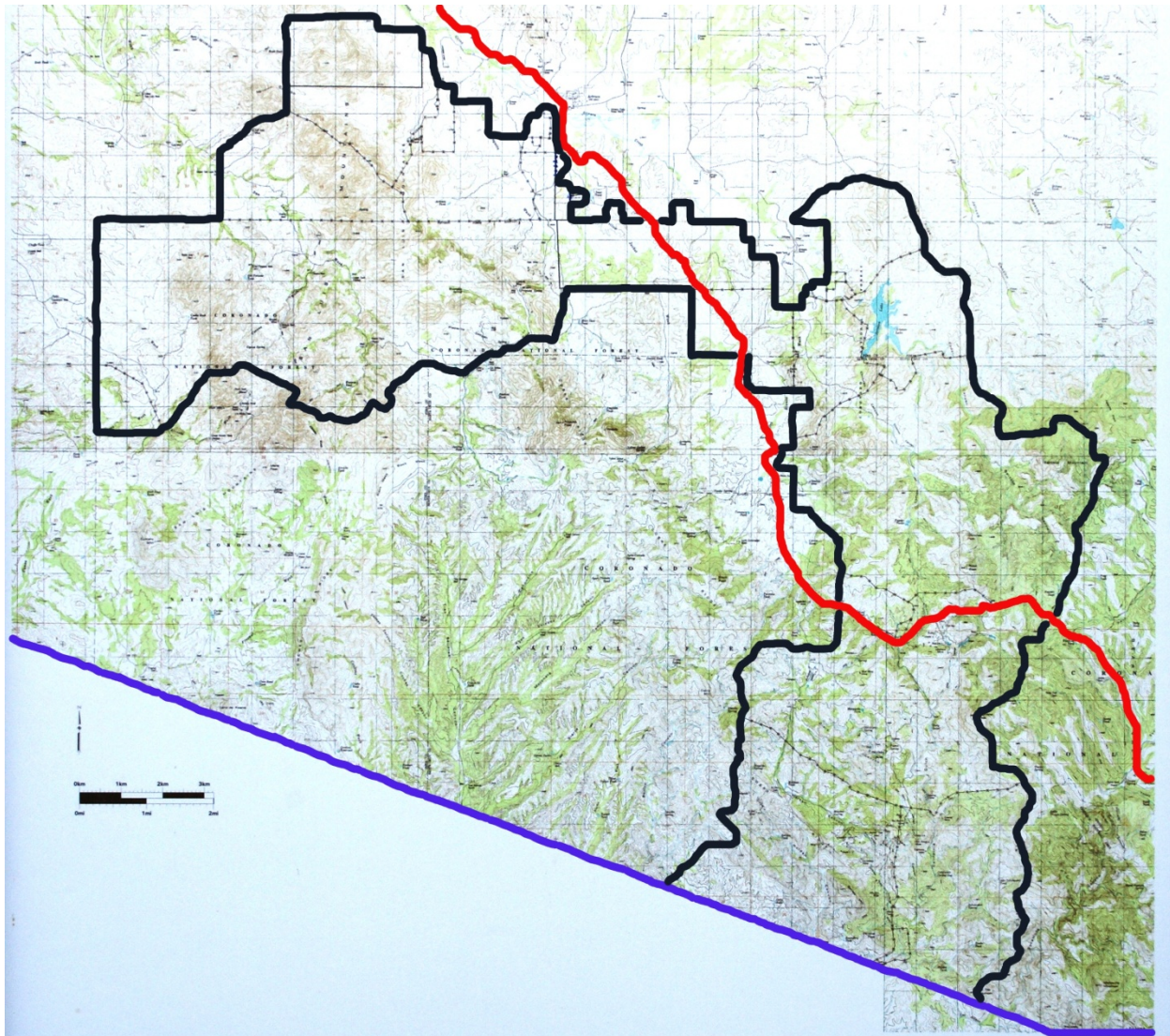
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My name is Jim Chilton. I am a 5th generation rancher from Arivaca, Arizona. Arivaca is a small rural town approximately 55 miles southwest of Tucson, Arizona. Our ranch is adjacent to the town and extends south to the international border with Mexico. The ranch includes private property, State School Trust lands and three federal grazing permits in the Coronado National Forest. Our entire family, my wife of 60 years, are blessed to be able to preserve our western ranching customs, culture, and heritage dating back to our pioneering ancestors who drove cattle from Texas to Arizona Territory in 1885. Our family has been in the cattle business in Arizona for about 139 years. We have a long-term view of the necessity to be excellent stewards of the grasslands we carefully manage. We are honored to have received various valued awards for resource conservation and wildlife stewardship.

Chilton Ranch and the International Border

Our family ranch is in a corridor identified as among the most active for drug smuggling and human trafficking in the Nation. My comments generally relate specifically to the portion of the border at the southern edge of our ranch extending from Nogales, AZ to Sasabe, AZ. However, my border concerns are similar to those of most ranchers in the Tucson Sector regardless of whether their ranch is located adjacent to the international boundary or one hundred miles from the border.

The following is a map of our beef-producing family ranch. Please notice that the southern end of the eastern part of the ranch is the international boundary for about five-and-one-half miles. Mexico is just across the fence. Our ranch boundary goes north and west bordering three other ranches. Border crossers on the western side of the ranch go through our neighbors' grazing lands and then through our Federal land pastures.



Chilton Ranch boundaries- South of Arivaca, Arizona and west of Nogales. Five-and-one half miles of the southern end of the ranch is the United States/Mexico international border. The 50,000-acre ranch, like many western ranches, is composed of U. S. Forest Service grazing allotments, State Trust and private land. The blue line is the international border with Mexico and the red line is the Ruby Road that runs through much of the ranch.

International Border Crossers on Chilton Ranch

For about ten years, my wife Sue and I and my friends at *Secure Border Intel* have collected motion activated camera film of drug packers, previously deported persons, criminals and other illegals crossing through our ranch. Of approximately 100 trails traversing our ranch, only five

have hidden motion-activated cameras. As a consequence, our video images of crossers represent a small sample of the probable border crossers trespassing through our ranch.

Since January 2021, these cameras on our ranch have recorded evidence of **3,050 images of unlawful border crossers**. Importantly, my Testimony today includes a computer thumb drive of the 3,050 photographed crossers (the actual film footage can also be googled at: <https://youtu.be/j2pzKHRwmeY?feature=shared>).

On their way north through our southern pastures, illegal border crossers are wearing camouflaged clothes, carpet shoes and often identical backpacks. Almost all are men, in stark contrast to other border crossers along the international boundary in Texas, who wear casual street clothes and include women and/or children. There have never been any women with small children observed on our motion activated cameras during the last decade. Approximately only two percent--of these 3,050 intruders—do appear to be women. Why would a woman hike twenty to or more miles over this rugged mountainous terrain when other women just walk across the border and look for immediate apprehension, expecting to be released into the interior of the nation with a court date five or more years in the future? Are they being trafficked in the sex trade? Were they previously deported for an adjudicated violation of our laws?

Who are the 3,050 individuals and why are they being allowed to successfully sneak into our nation over rugged mountains and rough terrain? One Border Patrol intelligence officer estimates 20% of these crossers are drug packers while other knowledgeable individuals claim the percentage of drug packers on our video evidence is likely significantly greater than 20%. **Most critically, are any of the 3,050 trespassers TERRORISTS entering our country to do Americans harm? Securing the border at the border and vetting potential entrants is, in fact, a national security issue.** There are reports that over one hundred seventy different countries' inhabitants have crossed into the United States during the Biden years including Chinese, Russians, Iranians and persons from middle eastern countries.

The aforementioned video documents approximately a five-fold increase compared with what we were documenting during the Trump and Obama years in the number of totally unknown international entrants seeking to evade detection and interdiction by choosing this route.

During the last four months, as I was out on our place working, checking cattle, waters and fences, I have not seen a single Border Patrol agent patrolling these known border entrance trails on our ranch since most agents are reassigned to immigrant-flooded and totally overwhelmed locations. There, out of view of these drug routes on our ranch, they struggle with the impossible requirement to deal with economic asylum seekers whom they are mandated to release into the nation under the catch and release policy. Since this is a rugged, between-ports-of-entry route, it is highly probable that border crossers choosing this rough, mountainous route are exceptionally motivated to evade detection and know they are ineligible for asylum status.

Mexican Cartel Scouts

What is most outrageous to me, is that Mexican Cartel scouts, occupying our ranch mountain tops on US soil, guide these border crossers. The scouts communicate with cartel operatives

through encrypted satellite phones with radio function. Scouts are also equipped with the finest binoculars, night vision and backpack roll-down solar panels. Their purpose is to know where the Border Patrol is at all times and guide the Cartel drug packers or persons ineligible for asylum to sites where Cartel operatives inside the United States can pick up and then distribute the drugs and people throughout the Nation.

Drugs Crisis

From my perspective, it is impossible to separate the drug crisis from the immigration issue. Some border crossers are repeat professionals who work for the Cartels and walk back to Mexico after each fentanyl, heroin, methamphetamine or cocaine delivery. In addition, the Cartel forces other undocumented persons to pay to traverse the international boundary either in cash or at a discounted rate if they pack drugs. Those crossing in this area are reportedly charged about \$3,000 if Mexican, \$7,000 to \$10,000 when from South America or \$25,000 to \$75,000 for Asians. Some groups, after paying the Cartel to cross, are unaware that they are being used as decoys and led into probable detection to distract the Border Patrol while the Cartel is running drugs into the United States five to ten miles away.

Government reports indicate a massive increase in fentanyl traffic through the Arizona border. The precursors of this drug arrive from China, are off-loaded at Mexican seaports to be processed in Mexican labs, packaged and hidden for transport. This is chemical warfare. Many Border Patrol officers who were formerly trying to put a dent in this border disaster, have been dispatched to help handle the diversionary tactic of floods of undocumented immigrants crossing the border in other Tucson Sector locations and the Rio Grande River in Texas. This tactic clearly opens the between-ports rural ranching trails with unfinished border wall openings to nearly unimpeded passage. President Biden has signed a bill to hire 87,000 new IRS agents to “patrol” Americans and zero new agents to patrol illegal immigration and drug packing.

Need to complete the Wall

On our ranch, five miles of the Trump wall were well-started, but still under construction, when President Biden was inaugurated on January 20, 2021. One of President Biden’s first executive orders was to stop all construction on border security structures. At the end of the Wall on our ranch, there is a four-strand barbed wire cattle fence for over five more miles leaving a “convenient” gap of no wall at all along the international boundary right in a favored entry point for the Cartels. In addition, five additional large gaps, where gates were designed to be installed across water gaps and international Boundary markers, were left unfenced because of Biden’s executive order.

This section of Arizona, including our ranch border, was just described by a Trump-era highly informed, highly placed Border Patrol spokesman as leading the entire border in “got-aways”—crossers who are **not** apprehended. In my opinion, President Biden must finish the wall, including all of the planned fiber optic cable, electronics, sensors and cameras. Then, ports of entry on the Mexican border need to be staffed and equipped to interdict the flood of drugs overwhelming these ports. The recent “mobbing-Texas tactic” and now the “mobbing strategically-selected California and Arizona entrance points tactic” guaranteed that between-port ranches and

farms along the entire international boundary were likely to remain under Cartel control and undefended from Cartel operations.



Jim Chilton and cousin Jerry Chilton at the end of Trump wall on our ranch. Large gaps were unfinished and fiber optic cable, electronics, sensors and cameras were not installed when the wall construction “stop order” was given.

Border Crosser Human Tragedies

There are intolerable human tragedies and abuses faced by border crossers, especially women. Crossers currently have no feasible option but to cross in the hands of the Cartel. It is reported by Alvaro Enciso, a Tucson citizen who puts crosses out to mark death sites, that about 4,100 border crossers have died just in Southern Arizona since 1990. Huge numbers of near-death experiences are common along with innumerable serious injuries. Women are often abused and raped. The Border Patrol, which is a first-class search and rescue team, together with humanitarian organizations spend much of their time saving mostly lost and abandoned would-be crossers in distress. These human tragedies could be avoided by securing the border at the border.



Trump wall construction was halted by President Biden on January 20, 2021, leaving large gaps in the wall where numerous washes cross the International Boundary. Five border gaps on the Chilton Ranch are open doors for Cartel border crossers.

Need to Secure the Border at the Border

There are tremendous advantages to finishing construction of the Wall and closing the gaps in the Wall between Yuma, Arizona and New Mexico. To achieve border control, and ensure that rural Arizona is not the "sacrificed route," effective structures and strategies must also be implemented all the way across Arizona's borderlands. Most importantly, a completed Wall must be conscientiously patrolled 24/7 and must include surveillance technology. Congress needs to require the Wall to be completed together with the appropriation of the necessary funds.

Border Patrol

We want to emphasize that we support and deeply appreciate the Border Patrol. The agents are polite, well trained and there is a sincere effort by top officials in the Tucson and Nogales Stations to listen to and try to address ranchers' border issues in our area. We, however are incredibly concerned that due to the massive invasion of economic asylum seekers, Border Patrol checkpoints along Arivaca Road, Sasabe Road and along other roads heavily used by drug packers have been **closed for months** and there is absolutely minimal presence of agents along the border since agents are focused on processing border crossers. I am concerned that drugs are flowing into the interior of our Nation without an attempt to impede vehicles from transporting drugs across our country from known crossing points.

Recommended Border Action

As a sovereign nation, the United States should have complete control of its borders and therefore **only accept legal immigration**. In my opinion, the following actions need to be considered:

1. Complete the construction of the Wall, including all of the planned fiber optic cable, electronics, cameras, and sensors that alert Border Patrol to approaching persons in time to interdict them.
2. Hire and train enough Border Patrol Agents to **secure the border at the border**, together with, if necessary, national guard and military assistance and back-up.
3. Require the Border Patrol to have **complete presence at the Wall, 24/7**, to arrest any person attempting to get over, under, or through the Wall.
4. Immediately deport apprehended arrested illegal intruders.
5. Retain sufficient welders and other maintenance personnel 24/7 to immediately repair any successful breaches or cuts in the wall.
6. Ports of entry on the Mexican border need to be staffed and fully equipped to prevent, to the degree possible, drugs and undocumented individuals from entering our country.
7. Require true asylum claim seekers to be processed at United States embassies, consulates or other government properties **in foreign nations** utilizing the internet backup personnel in the United States to assist in the processing.
8. Persons seeking economic opportunity do not qualify under the asylum category and need to return to their countries and submit an application for legal admittance.
9. As we understand the measure on border security currently being considered in the U.S. Congress, it permits the flood of economic opportunity claimants for asylum/admission to the U.S. to continue virtually unabated. We need to stop this end run around the legal immigration procedures and limitations.
10. Double or triple the current number of **legal** immigrants permitted to gain qualified entrance into our nation with effective vetting following the legally prescribed procedures. We welcome LEGAL immigrants in a number that can be assimilated and

can contribute their future to this nation; we oppose flooding the United States with completely unvetted persons.

Advantages of Securing the Border at the Border

The following are some of the advantages to completing the wall together with effective border patrolling and appropriate technology:

First, multiple reports state hundreds of people crossing the open border sections of our Nation have been on the terrorist watch list. How many border crossers from terrorist nations including Russia, China, ISIS, Iran and other parts of the world have successfully entered our country through routes like those on our ranch without Homeland Security's knowledge. Where are they, what are their plans and when and where will they strike? It took only 19 terrorists to demolish the World Trade Center, and murder citizens and first-responders in New York and attack the Pentagon and people working there.

Second, it is outrageous that Mexican Cartel scouts with satellite phones and other military-grade equipment are free to occupy strategically-selected hilltops for dozens of miles inside Arizona including on our ranch. The cartel scouts know where the Border Patrol is at all times so they can carefully guide drug packers, and people whom they know are not eligible for asylum, through the steep wooded canyons and along approximately one hundred smuggler trails on our ranch. Border Patrol officers report that only 20% of the illegal crossers on our ranch are apprehended while others argue that arrests are fewer than 20%. Securing the border at the border would stop the occupation of Arizona border ranchlands by these foreign cartel operatives and their clients.

Third, environmental costs of the current failure to effectively stop the flood of crossers are well-documented. Much of the border area includes national forests, conservation areas, national monuments, Indian reservations and wildernesses. These designated areas are open routes most used by the cartel-led operations because they are the least accessible to Border Patrol surveillance. The Border Patrol reported at a meeting we attended that undocumented crossers have left a reported average of 8.5 pounds of trash apiece on these lands. It is estimated that over 25,000 tons of garbage have been dropped by crossers in the Tucson Sector alone since 1992. Additionally, thousands of miles of wildcat roads and trails have had severe adverse environmental impacts.

Fourth, we have been burglarized twice by south-bound drug packers who, after depositing their drug load at GPS sites or safe houses, stole laptops, cameras, firearms, including historic pieces, and other valuable items they steal to carry on their return to Mexico. This is a typical situation for those of us near the border all across the Tucson Sector. Ranchers in the border area cannot leave their homes unguarded even for a few hours since their homes and ranch buildings are often broken into if someone is not on guard duty. It can be hours before law enforcement can respond to rural calls.

Fifth, Arizona borderland residents, ranchers and farmers as well as national conservation areas have suffered hundreds of millions of dollars in property damage due to major forest fires set intentionally as decoy operations or accidentally by illegal crossers. The human and property

costs of these fires, like the Monument Fire, the Murphy Complex Fire, Chiricahua Fire and the Horseshoe Fires and many other fires, must also be figured into the cost of NOT securing the border at the border. We have estimated that U. S. Forest Service costs in one year to fight fires caused by border crossers just in Arizona borderlands were about \$600 million. We understand that illegal crosser- caused Forest Service fires are accounted for on the Forest Service books rather than more accurately charged to Homeland Security. The actual cost of fighting crosser-caused forest fires is hidden from the public.

Sixth, we are subjected to anti-ranching activist claims of over-grazing resulting from the constant entrance of Mexican cattle through the breached border. In order to try to reduce these devastating impacts on my grazing program, I personally added barbed wire to the Normandy barriers which were installed to reduce Cartel-managed vehicle access where the Wall had been left unfinished, and cattle, as well as Cartel “clients” were coming in (then that was cut and in came the Mexican cattle), then I welded on reinforcing rod across major entrance points (that was bent back and the crossers and the Mexican cattle came right through), and finally, I spent a lot of money on inch-and-a-quarter PIPE and took a skilled welder to one of these entrance points where we worked all day welding pipe onto the Normandy barriers. So far, this last step is still in place and is now limiting cattle intrusion.

The emotional cost to our families is summarized by noting we are all very much aware of what happened to rancher Larry Link the day after he reported a load of drugs on his ranch and was then murdered and to Sue Krentz's husband Rob when he went out to check his ranch waters and was killed (including his dog) by an illegal who then escaped into Mexico. Recently, myself and others in our area have been called and told NOT to go to our border pastures because competing factions of drug cartels were, at that point, conducting armed warfare ON U.S. PROPERTY on this side or just south of the border over control of these valuable un surveilled drug trails.

Seventh, opponents of effective border control in rural areas advocate prioritizing cross-border wildlife-roaming **over** interdiction of cartel operatives. We disagree. The route through our portion of southern Arizona, the drug traffic and the passage of potential terrorists makes this today's Ho Chi Minh Trail .

Eighth, wildlife genetic diversity on both sides of the border can be achieved along with border security by legally transporting animals as scientifically deemed appropriate. Large mammals can be transported with safe capture across the border to promote genetic diversity while birds can fly over and small animals and reptiles can easily slip through the bollard-style wall. In addition, American engineers can create wildlife friendly, effectively managed passages at some parts of the wall to facilitate wildlife connectivity with Mexico. The “wildlife” currently facilitated by these unguarded portions of the border has two legs and is headquartered in Sinaloa, Mexico.....