

Securing Our Border: Saving Our National Parks

Presented to:

House Committee on Natural Resources
(Subcommittee for Oversight and Investigations)

Presented by:

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My name is John Nores, and I am a retired special operations game warden Lieutenant from the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW). It was an honor to be a game warden and serve 28 years protecting our nation's wildlife, waterway and wildland resources and stopping wildlife and environmental protection law violators was a privilege.

California game wardens are statewide police officers while also being Federally deputized to enforce Federal wildlife protection laws. I began my journey with the police training academy in 1992 and at that time I could never have anticipated that the end of my operational career two decades later would be spent leading a specialized unit of game wardens dedicated to combating Transnational Criminal Organizations (TCO's), aka "cartel" infiltration of our nation's pristine public and rural private lands to grow toxically tainted black-market cannabis for nationwide distribution.

This proved to be true as drug cartel operations within and outside of our nation's border have become some of the most egregious environmental and wildlife resource crimes and public safety threats we have seen throughout America. These crimes are occurring not only on our border, but throughout the rest of America with many of these crimes committed by non-citizens here illegally.

Through their use of US EPA banned chemical insecticides and rodenticides (carbofuran, Metaphos, Q-Furan, etc.) and massive amounts of water theft (especially alarming during recent peak drought years in the country) throughout tens of thousands of clandestine cannabis grow sites on both public and private land, cartel cells are poisoning waterways, killing numerous wildlife species, destroying wildland trees, vegetation and grass lands while posing a severe threat to our public's safety.

The public safety threats posed by these criminal cells are evident in cartel grow sites we have encountered with firearms, stabbing blades, and various anti-personal traps (i.e., Vietnam war era punji pits) as well as toxic poisons and other public safety threats common throughout these sites.

The cartel's propensity for violence, however, was first witnessed on a deadly cannabis grow arrest and eradication mission in the Silicon Valley

foothills we conducted with the Santa Clara County Sheriff's Office on August 5th, 2005.

While entering the grow site, our allied agency enforcement team was ambushed by cartel gunmen defending their multi-million dollar complex and a gunfight ensued. A near-fatal bullet from a grower's AK47 struck our young warden teammate, penetrating both of his legs before an agonizing three hour wait for his helicopter evacuation to the hospital.

That incident was the first time a law enforcement officer in America had been hit and nearly killed by a clandestine marijuana grower's bullet, and our first violent encounter with tactically savvy cartel operatives from Mexico running their operations in the US, in this case within the Silicon Valley.

We would have four more officer involved shooting incidents and numerous other violent encounters with cartel grower groups defending their black-market cannabis operations throughout California before I was tasked with co-developing and leading a special operations group of game wardens within our agency called the Marijuana Enforcement Team (MET).

Comprised of officers with extensive tactical experience, wilderness fieldcraft, (stalking, apprehension, and survival skills), amazing lifesaving apprehension and detection K9 partners, a sniper unit, national guard, and allied agency law enforcement helicopter teams, the MET's mission was clear:

- Apprehend and prosecute illegal and dangerous growers to protect our public.
- Eradicate their black market (in many cases poisonous and highly toxic) crop before reaching the national black market.
- Environmentally restore illegal outdoor trespass grow sites by removing water diversions, restoring waterways, removing grow site poisons, encampments, and other waste to reclamate the site back to its natural state on pristine public and private lands.

I led the MET until operational retirement in December of 2018 and between July 2013 and December 2018, our documented production levels paint an ominous picture during those first five years:

- **800** arrest, eradication, environmental reclamation missions.
- Destroyed **three million** toxically tainted cannabis plants.
- Destroyed **58,677 pounds (29 tons)** of toxically tainted processed cannabis for sale and distribution.
- Made **973 felony arrests** (*approximately 90% of those arrests made on cartel or cartel affiliated Mexican nationals operating in the US illegally*).
- Seized and destroyed **601 firearms**.
- Removed **899,945 pounds (450 tons) of grow site waste** and other pollutants.
- Removed **2.35 million feet (455 miles) of irrigation pipe**.
- Removed **91,728 pounds (46 tons) of fertilizers**.
- Removed **756 gallons of illegal toxic chemicals**.
- Dismantled **793 water stealing dams** from these clandestine grow complexes with these dams (and many other illegal cannabis water diversions) *depleting billions of gallons of water during California's peak drought period*.

Having seen numerous cartel generated public safety, wildlife, and waterway destruction threats in my home state of CA for decades, it was not until February 2020 that I would witness these same threats on and near our remote southern border. While hosting and producing the pilot film for our Thin Green Line documentary series we were big game hunting on a remote 50,000-acre ranch near Candelaria, Texas. Our outfitters for that project were well aware of the cartel trafficking routes through this ranch, having had several violent encounters with trafficking groups moving drugs and people into the US through the property.

During filming, we witnessed and documented canyonland caves on the property being used for cartel trafficking way-stop camps, all littered with trash, human excrement, other waste, and graffiti delineating gang and/or cartel group affiliation. When contacted by a border patrol helicopter

shortly after this find we learned that approximately 20 cartel affiliated drug and human traffickers were being pursued by border agents on another area of the ranch. I was informed by the border patrol pilot that these trafficking operations through the ranch (and many other ranches along that area of the border) were happening weekly, and often more frequently.

While our MET unit's production figures between 2013-2018 and the trafficking activity we witnessed on the Texas/Mexico border are alarming, we must be cognizant of the disturbing reality this relates to today. These statistics were generated during a period when some form of border security measures was in place, and more were in the works in an effort to slow down TCO members from entering and committing crimes throughout the US. Now five years later and lacking any effective border security policy and the recent expiration of Title 42, our border has never been easier to cross with threats to our public's safety and wildland and water resources continuing to escalate.

I witnessed this first-hand in May of 2022 when being interviewed for and assisting on the production of Daily Caller's Narcofornia documentary film in northern California's Siskiyou County. One of the most remote and pristine counties on the west coast, Siskiyou County contains a handful of small towns comprised of families that have lived there for generations. Livestock ranching, agricultural farming, trade jobs and a love for community prevail throughout the region.

Shortly after California's new recreational cannabis regulations under Proposition 64 were passed in 2016 that demographic began to change. While Prop 64 was hailed as a law to eliminate the black market and drive the cartels out of the weed market, the new law has done just the opposite. With unregulated outdoor public and private land cannabis production now watered down from a felony to a misdemeanor (and bumped down from a misdemeanor to an infraction for juvenile offenders) under the new law, the cartels have faced little, if any, penalties for mass producing illegal cannabis for our nation's black market. This law structure is incentivizing illegal cannabis production for a lucrative nationwide black market while driving legitimate and environmentally regulated cannabis growers out of business.

This has led to massive increases of unregulated private land grow sites throughout California and other states now dominated by the Asian (Chinese and Hmong) crime groups. According to my colleagues at the Drug Enforcement Administration, and just like Mexican cartel operatives, many Chinese nationals are currently entering the US through the flooded open border to conduct crimes for their organization.

These illegal Chinese cannabis production operations are not only widespread throughout California but other states including Oklahoma, Oregon, and Maine, with diverted and stolen water used for their black-market plants. We are also seeing new Chinese poisons that are being smuggled across the border and may be even more toxic than the Carbofuran type insecticide poisons traditionally used by the Mexican cartels with widespread human trafficking and coerced labor of grow site workers (primarily Mexican and Chinese nationals) throughout these private land sites being the norm.

While raiding grow sites throughout Siskiyou County with the Sheriff's Department we learned of approximately 10,000 illegal, outdoor private land grow complexes that have taken over the rural county. These grow sites are depleting millions of gallons of above ground and under-ground water table resources daily and stealing city water supplies for their grow operations. We saw numerous well drilling rigs and illegal wells throughout these grow complexes along with tons of trash, waste, and other pollutants in and around pristine streambeds adjacent to these sites.

Very alarming were the thousands of gallons of unknown chemical poisons in 55-gallon drums at every grow complex and the Tyvek hazmat like suits and respirator mask systems within each site. The growers were using these suits when spraying or smudge pot burning these insecticide poisons onto their cannabis plants indicating the toxic, and potentially deadly, nature of this cannabis reaching our nationwide black market.

Many Siskiyou County farmers, ranchers and other community members have been threatened with violence by cartel growers to look the other way as their farm and ranch water supplies are now being depleted

and emptied by these criminal groups. Feeling over run and in danger, many long time Siskiyou County community members have moved out of the area. Other crimes we saw throughout these grow operations included human trafficking, animal cruelty, water pollution and streambed alteration to name a few.

These travesties are not isolated to this specific region. Cartel generated crimes are occurring far beyond our northern and southern borders in every state and impacting us all. While I have outlined the wild land, waterway and wildlife resource crimes engendered by these criminal groups and the associated dangers to our public's safety from my experiences, we must remember that these TCO's are poly-criminals whose organizations engage in other damaging crimes beyond toxically tainted black market cannabis production.

DEA officials point out that the Mexican cartels (Sinaloa and Jalisco New Generation) are now partnered with the Chinese cartels to the benefit of both organizations. Chinese crime groups supply the pre-cursor chemicals the Mexican cartels need to produce and distribute fentanyl and meth-amphetamine killing hundreds of thousands of Americans annually, while the Chinese have virtually taken over the black market cannabis trade using America as the middle man to launder billions of untraceable cash dollars (<https://youtu.be/xMsLDv4M0VM?si=Bkk8lqHS5F4DEZsH>).

In all cases our nation's people and our pristine wildland, waterway and wildlife resources are poisoned and destroyed in the process. Even more disturbing is the multi-billion-dollar human and child sex trafficking networks these TCO's are running not only throughout America but across the globe and growing rapidly.

With growing awareness of these embedded cartel crimes, I am witnessing more interest and outrage from fellow Americans like never before as evident from a 100 times wider distribution rate of the 2022 second edition release of my latest book, Hidden War compared to distribution levels of the first edition published in 2019. High reach public figures like Joe Rogan are alarmed and networking these issues in an effort

to make Americans aware of the criminal activities transpiring across our nation and their support and passion is inspiring.

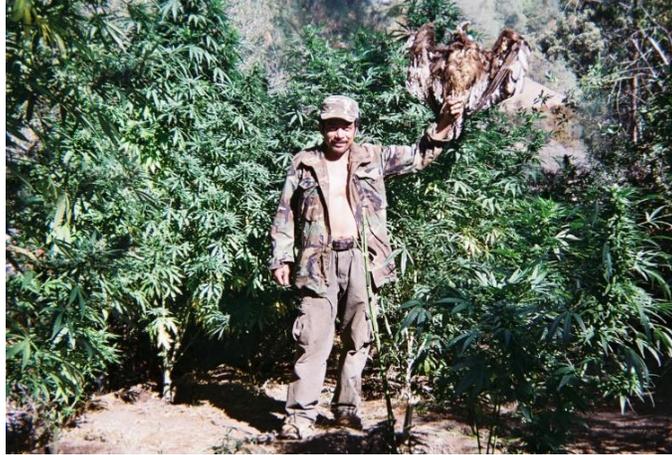
Given everything we have seen while combating these criminal groups, stopping TCO's from operating within America to poison our citizens and to prey upon our children must be a top policy priority. With the doorway for these groups to begin operations throughout our nation is our border, that door must be closed and controlled carefully.



Cartel gunman in national forest grow complex



Carbofuran grow site poisoned Mountain Lion



Cartel grower with poisoned golden eagle



Mexican cartel EPA banned grow site poisons



Vietnam era anti-personnel punji pit in National Park



Outdoor cartel grow site in state park



Mexican cartel grow – public river water stealing



Northern CA National Forest cartel grow site waste



Tyvek poison protection suit in Chinese private land outdoor grow site



Mexican cartel gunmen in outdoor grow complex - CA



Cartel grow – EPA banned poison killed grey fox



One of several new and highly toxic Chinese grow site poisons

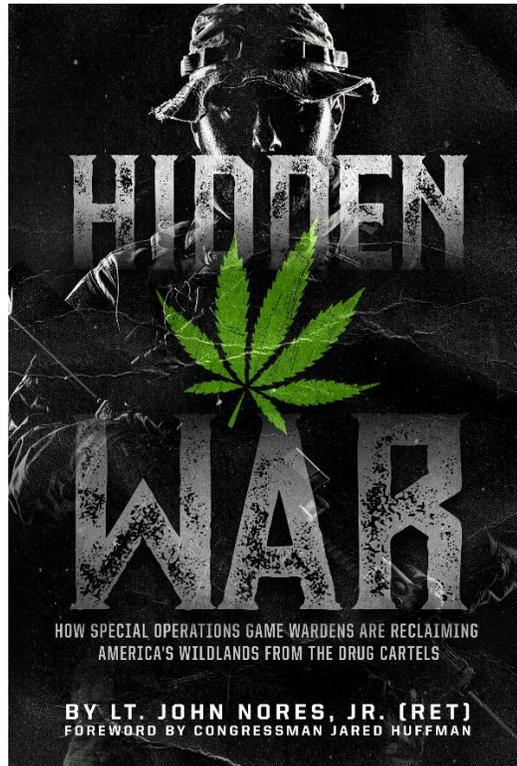


Massive cartel illegal private land cannabis complex – LA County

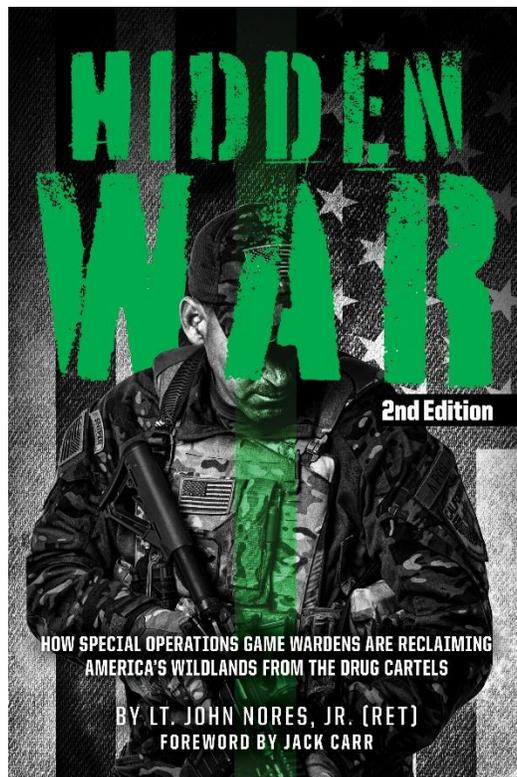
Note: Each red circle is a water truck pumping in stolen water with trucks running 24/7



Poisoned water and illegal well drilling operation on private land cartel grow site



Hidden War Edition 1 – Forward by Congressman Jared Huffman



Hidden War – Updated Edition 2 – Forward by Jack Carr

