

Opening Statement

- Good afternoon, everyone.
- I'd like to thank our witnesses for traveling here today and echo the sentiments of Chair Gallego by expressing my deep disappointment that the White House and the Department of Homeland Security did not send representatives to answer the most important question for this hearing and future hearings involving Indian Country When will you stop destroying sacred sites?
- Last month, on Martin Luther King, Jr. Day – the Tohono O'odham Nation Chairman Norris led me on a tour of sacred sites located in Organ Pipe National Monument. These sites were areas of significant cultural and historical importance to the Tohono O'odham people including other tribes in the state of Arizona.
- As I speak, you'll see photos from our visit.
- The first site we visited was Monument Hill. This is an area sacred to the O'odham people because it is a place where they respectfully placed Apache warriors following a raid.

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This hill is first documented and mentioned in Father Kino's letters when there was no Sonoita.

- To my knowledge the tribe notified the administration that this area was of cultural significance, yet the grading and widening of the road was still conducted – as you can see in this photo. DHS mentioned that they would back off on developing the Hill, but the work is still being done.
- Two weeks following my visit at Monument Hill on February 6, 2020 I received word that the Department of Homeland Security began using explosives on the Hill to construct its wall. We have a video of that.
- The second place we visited was just outside Quitobaquito Springs, an area mentioned in historical papers as early as the 17th century. Not only does this area host sacred spring water, it was also the location of a village and burial grounds for the Hia-ced (He-YAH-CH-hood) O'odham. Tribal archeologists showed me bone fragments in this area.
- On January 27, 2020 – just 7 days following my visit the Department of Homeland Security bulldozed the artifacts area that held sacred seashells, bone fragments, and pottery fragments. Thousands of years of history and cultural significance gone.

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- Since my visit – 50% of the sacred sites identified by the Nation has been destroyed. The fact that the federal government is continuing to blast this area with human bone fragments of several tribes in the 21st century is barbarous.
- What would normally be considered a war crime for destroying cultural sites in another country is NOW considered the status quo of this President and his administration. This needs to stop.
- In fact, just last week the Department of Homeland Security spokeswoman stated “The United States is in a border emergency, we are building more wall faster than ever before.” The Department is not consulting the tribe faster than it was before.
- It is clear this administration will not uphold its trust responsibility for tribes. We see that with inconsistencies with each agency's tribal consultation policy and their lack of implementing some form of communication with tribes especially when it comes to major projects that drastically impact sacred sites.
- As a country – we should be completely appalled by the steps this Administration has taken to ensure the

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desecration of sacred sites is completed before its hideous wall is erected.

- I look forward to hearing from our witnesses today and getting some answers to why this Administration continues to treat tribes as second class citizens in the lands they owned before the very development of this country.
- Thank you.