



Riverside County Sheriff's Office

Chad Bianco, Sheriff-Coroner

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RE: The Biden-Harris Border Crisis: California Perspectives

Dear Chairman Jordan, and members of the Committee,

I am Undersheriff Don Sharp of the Riverside County Sheriff's Office in California. I have been in law enforcement for 35-years and have worked for the Sheriff's offices of Los Angeles and Riverside counties. My dedication to my duties, and that to our citizens, compels me to testify to the important matter of border security.

Riverside County is the fourth largest county in the state of California covering over 7,300 square miles and the tenth largest county by population in the United States, serving more than 2.5 million residents. The Riverside County Sheriff's Office covers this expansive region with a staff of over 4,100 who are dedicated to serving the citizens of its communities with integrity and professionalism. Riverside County is not a border county, but we are neighbors to the border counties in California. We are a major artery of highways utilized by cartels, and other bad actors, to facilitate the trafficking of narcotics and human smuggling to other major cities and criminal hubs across our state and nation.

The current border crisis has impacted all areas of our country, and Riverside County has felt the devastating effect of a weak border sanctioned by this administration. I spent over 10-years of my career in the assignment of narcotics enforcement. The catastrophic impacts cartels have on our communities is, and has always been, abundantly apparent. Our communities are facing an unbelievable flow of Fentanyl, and Fentanyl laced drugs, to suppliers, dealers, and tragically addicted individuals. Deputies and emergency response personnel in Riverside County respond to dozens of overdoses and overdose fatalities daily. The flood of deadly Fentanyl to our streets is overwhelming and only made possible by complete border security failures under the current administration. As a public safety leader in Riverside County, I frequently must answer questions as to what we in law enforcement are doing to combat this growing Fentanyl epidemic. In order to do so, I have toured the border and spoken to my United States Border Patrol (USBP) partners. The USBP is overwhelmed by the task of dealing with illegal migrants flooding our border. This has caused them to abandon their normal duties of protecting our borders from criminal smuggling, to instead babysitting the flood of unvetted migrants knocking down our doors. The one thing I have always known in working narcotics and analyzing cartel actions, is that the price of drugs goes down and the shipments

across the border grow larger with weak border protection. When our Border Patrol agents are diverted from their proper duties, and the border is wide-open, there will always be larger drug and human smuggling loads. The risk of detection and loss of illicit contraband becomes less, and the shrinking risk is easily worth the reward for cartels and criminals. When border security is strong and robust, we see smaller loads and more fearful cartels, as they should be when breaking our laws and harming society. Our border security is important to the citizens of Riverside County, and it makes a difference if the strategy is to harden our borders, not weaken them.

In Riverside County alone, our narcotic investigation units seized 359 pounds of Fentanyl and 2,322,533 Fentanyl pills in 2023. This does not cover other multi-agency taskforces or other police agencies in Riverside County. This is a staggering statistic of poison seized. What did we miss? We know we missed plenty. We continue to wish the current administration understood what the full effect of their actions has created. The problem must be corrected immediately. Including the apprehension of dangerous substances and criminals that have already crossed our open borders.

Another issue we must face is the terrible reality of human trafficking. In Riverside County we are on the forefront of the movement of humans being exploited and victimized in sex and labor trafficking. We often hear on the news of migrants paying thousands of dollars to get passage to the United States. Paying does not mean they paid upfront! Many are brokered into a deal of slavery by means of labor and sex trafficking. The lack of true vetting of the adults bringing a child into our country is horrific. The current administration could be complicit in the delivery of a child into the sex trafficking world. The thought of compassion and humanitarian passage is often not at all what we have delivered as a country. The current administration emboldens the cartels to send misinformation and promises of funding and a better life to potential migrants, and the cartels can now exploit them for their own criminal gain. These policies create victims, more often than the humanitarian aid promised. In Riverside County the migrant surge only stretched our community-based organizations and county resources to the limit and diverted them from other community concerns like homelessness and addiction. Every business and government agency must have a plan for success and recognize when the plan is not working. This administration does not understand this and has only doubled down on failed policies. Riverside County, like many others, continues to feel the negative effects.

In Riverside County we are extremely aware of terrorist activity and fear the current open border policies have allowed for many to enter our country with the intent to carry out attacks on our people and communities. Our region has always been a frequent destination for current and past presidents and government VIPs. Our concerns have grown to the possibility these terrorists, and other criminal elements, may target our region in an effort to disrupt government and U.S. leadership. Wide-open borders do not work. The lack of appropriate border security clearly endangers the lives of our citizens and our leaders.

As a member of the law enforcement community and a leader making policy decisions, I am sick of battling the deeply flawed changes being made by California politicians and that of the current presidential administration. Our state and nation matter, and our citizens are afraid of the consequences of an open border. Drugs, human trafficking, and the unknown number of terrorists and bad actors entering unchecked is eye opening and terrifying. It puts our county and communities in jeopardy. Duty in government is easy to understand and it starts with the core responsibility of the job you have accepted to do. The current administration has lost their understanding of the job of government and public safety.

I can only hope and pray the obvious and necessary actions needed to protect and strengthen the United States border are taken seriously and repaired immediately. That our United States Border Patrol is again allowed to do the work they are experts at, and the misguided politics is removed. Weak borders DO mean a weak country; one to invade and abuse.

I appreciate the opportunity to share my experience and insights as a leader in Riverside County. We are a solid and dedicated Sheriff's Office, here to assist alongside our partners, in the pursuit of our county, state, and national safety.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Donald Sharp", written in a cursive style.

Donald Sharp
Undersheriff
Riverside County Sheriff's Office

