

## **Sheriff Lamb Proposed Testimony**

Chairman Green, and Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify before you. As Sheriff of Pinal County, Arizona, I must share with you the critical and life threatening issues pertaining to border security that my agency is facing.

Pinal County sits just 55 miles north of the U.S./Mexico Border at its closest point. And Interstate 10, a busy smuggling corridor, crosses into my county 71 miles north of the border. We are not a "border county," rather a pass-through community. A high percentage of the drug and human smuggling plaguing our country must come through my county on its way north into Phoenix and ultimately the rest of the United States.

Over the last two years, human smuggling/trafficking incidents in Pinal County are up 377%, and vehicle pursuits related to human smuggling are up 461%. The drivers are typically American teenagers, recruited on social media by the cartels. Their passengers are not "give ups", the people who self-surrender at border or at entry points. The majority of the people we see and deal with are being trafficked by the cartels. The people we deal with are the "got-aways" we always hear about. They are adult military aged men wearing camouflage clothes, carpet shoes, carrying backpacks and often times drugs. They have eluded Border Patrol by walking through the desert for several days and have no intentions of giving up. Many of them have been deported before, have criminal records or work directly for the cartels. Their goal is to enter our country undetected and illegally.

This is an incredibly dangerous journey. My agency's resources are often used on humanitarian missions to recover the undocumented individuals who become injured along the way and are left behind to die in our summer heat by the cartel coyotes.

Many people from around the world who seek a better life are being tricked and trapped into the human trafficking business by Cartel gangs who are taking advantage of this Administration's inability to take action. Our nation's weak border security policies are practically hand delivering these people to the Cartels, to be caught up in a form of modern slavery, indebted to their traffickers indefinitely.

If it's not humans being trafficked, it's drugs. The number of fentanyl pills my deputies have seized along this same route since 2020 is up 610%.

Despite our best efforts to stop these drugs before they enter any further into our communities, the sad realization is we are only catching a fraction of these smuggling attempts. We are having very little impact on these transnational criminal organizations' bottom line.

What we miss unfortunately has a ripple effect on the rest of the country. These things were not designed to stay in my county. They only pass through on their way into North Carolina, New York, Alabama and every other state in this country. What is in my backyard today will be in all of your front yards tomorrow.

Fentanyl poisoning is one of the leading causes of death in children across the United States, including my home state of Arizona. American teenagers are dying in their beds from a synthetic pill they purchased on social media. No state, no community, nobody is immune from the reach of this terrible poison. Even my own family has been deeply affected. This is truly a crisis.

And while we are pleased to be able to partner with Border Patrol through the Operation Stonegarden (OPSG) Program, and our local and state partners stand beside us in our mission, unfortunately that is where the partnerships end. The lack of communication on the Federal level leaves us to wonder if our efforts are in vain.

Our biggest frustration stems from being told by this Administration and the Media that there is not a crisis at our southern border, and the lie that our southern border is secure. Clearly, our statistics tell a different story. And that story is that the border is not secure.

Our federal government must put forward a real and honest effort into curbing these epidemics, before more innocent American lives are lost.

I look forward to answering your questions. Thank you.