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Field Hearing: "An Unsecure Border and the Opioid Crisis: The Urgent Need for Action to Save Lives"

Chairwoman McSally, Congressman Grijalva, distinguished Members of the Subcommittee, and other Members in attendance, good morning and thank you for giving me the opportunity to testify on Arizona's efforts to combat the opioid crisis and criminal activity across our southern border.

Illegal activity perpetrated across the southern border of the United States infiltrates communities across federal, state, local and tribal jurisdictions making it absolutely necessary for law enforcement agencies at every level to work together in order to stop the threats.

Arizona's border county sheriffs, police chiefs, and their teams are on the front lines, protecting their communities every day.

No one knows the effects of transnational crime on our citizens better than they do.

They see the devastation of human trafficking on victims and their families.

They see the destructive power that illegal drugs, overdoses, illegal weapons and ammunition have on human lives- and they are dedicated to stopping it.

Formed in 2015, Arizona's Border Strike Force, led by the Arizona Department of Public Safety is truly unique in the United States in that it harnesses the expertise and dedication of our local law enforcement and combines it with the power of the federal government to keep America safe.

This team's intra-agency collaboration is unparalleled and they have results to prove it.

No day or night is routine for this team, and I want to share a little more of what they interdicting on our behalf: A vehicle is stopped going north on I-17 and 5 pounds or almost 225,000 hits of heroin are found concealed in the spare tire.

And yet another vehicle is stopped going westbound on I-10. Indicators of criminal activity prove true when 6 pounds of fentanyl are found wrapped in a gift bag.

To give you some perspective, a 2-3 milligram dose of fentanyl is known to be lethal. So in that one car driving down I-10 was enough to potentially kill anywhere from 900,000 to over 1.3 million people.

And those aren't even the large-scale operations like Operation Cascabel One and Two that resulted in the seizure of 131 pounds of meth, 12 pounds of cocaine, 618 pounds of marijuana, and 32 stolen vehicles along with the arrest of 39 felons.

I want to emphasize that we can quantify results in a number of ways, but there's one metric we can't account for- and that's the number of lives that have been saved.

Every human trafficker caught is one less wreaking havoc in the lives of their victims.

Every dose of narcotics seized is one less destroying lives within our communities.

We are saving lives, because the Border Strike Force, and our federal partners- across two presidential administrations- are taking the fight to heavily armed drug cartels and those who would do us harm.

Arizona is also doing more, in real time, to prevent deaths from the scourge of opioid overdoses.

Since Arizona's opioid emergency was declared in June 2017, we have provided over 6,000 kits or more than 12,000 doses of the overdose reversal drug Naloxone to 63 law enforcement agencies across our state.

Nearly 1,000 law enforcement officers have been trained to recognize and treat an opioid overdose. These officers have administered naloxone to 364 individuals, all but 9 of whom survived the immediate out-of-hospital event.

Also since June, approximately 84 percent of the suspected non-fatal opioid overdoses received naloxone pre-hospital from EMS, law enforcement or community members.

In closing, I want to say thank you once again to our federal partners and everyone at the state, local, and federal levels who support our efforts.

I am confident that as our partnerships continue to grow in the form of information-sharing, man power and monetary support, more lives will be saved- and we are grateful for that.

Thank you again for affording me the opportunity to testify this morning.