



# Renville County Sheriff's Office

Integrity, Honor, and Respect  
Sheriff Roger Hutchinson

## United States House Committee on the Judiciary

### Subcommittee on Immigration Integrity, Security, and Enforcement

#### Introduction

Written Testimony of Mr. Roger Hutchinson, Renville County Sheriff, North Dakota, before the United States House of Representatives Subcommittee on Immigration Integrity, Security, and Enforcement of the Committee on the Judiciary hearing titled, "The Biden Border Crisis: North Dakota Perspectives." Appearing on Wednesday, May 29, 2024, at 9:00 AM, in Ballroom 3 of the Alerus Center at 1200 St., Grand Forks, ND 58201.

I would like to thank the Chairman and Distinguished Members of this Committee for allowing me to present testimony on the issues facing North Dakota on the International Border with Canada. With 35 years of local, state, and federal law enforcement, I am currently serving my second term as Sheriff of Renville County, ND. I currently hold board positions with the Fraternal Order of Police, ND Peace Officers Standardized Training Board, and the Dakota Territories Sheriff's Association. I am also a member of the National Sheriff's Association, Western States Sheriff's Association, and National Rifle Association (Life). I have sworn an oath to our county on multiple occasions and I support both our United States Constitution and my State Constitution.

#### Renville County, ND

Renville County is located in the northern most part of central North Dakota; just north of Minot, in Ward County, ND, with a population of 70,000. Renville is a rural farming community and the largest commercial industry supports oil production. Renville is approximately 900 square miles and has 6 cities and 2600 residents which supports (2) kindergarten through twelfth grade public schools. The county seat is Mohall, ND. Renville shares its border with four other counties along with an international border. Renville boasts its own recreational area, Mouse River Park, which is enjoyed by North Dakotans as well as Canadians, and is located just miles south of the international border. Located between Renville and Minot, is Minot Air Force Base, the Air Force's only dual mission base supporting both B52's and intercontinental ballistic missiles with a daily population of over 5000. Within Renville's immediate area, we have 3 Missile Alert Facilities and numerous Launch Facilities, with accompanying troops.

The Renville County Sheriff's Office (RCSO) is the only law enforcement entity located within Renville County. RCSO has seven full-time positions and three part-time deputies. RCSO contracts law enforcement services to three cities and provides support to the Border Patrol through Operation Stone Garden (OSG).

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## Northern Border

The North Dakota – Canada border is 310 miles long and connects to the Canadian provinces of Saskatchewan and Manitoba. There are 18 Customs and Border Protection Ports of Entry (POE). US Border Patrol has three stations in North Dakota, Portal, Bottineau, and Pembina, which fall under Grand Forks Sector (GFS) with approximately 200 agents, however GFS covers area in Montana and Minnesota. Those 200 agents cover 861 miles of Northern Border total. North Dakota has 8 counties located on the Canadian Border; from west to east they are: Divide, Burke, Renville, Bottineau, Rolette, Towner, Cavalier, and Pembina. All of our North Dakota border counties participate in OSG, a federally funded program to support Border Patrol operations by providing support to local agencies with grants to pay personnel to patrol the border area, reimburse operational cost, and purchase vital equipment to support the mission.

This next section is hard for me to speak to, because I know our Border Patrol Agents (PA) with boots on the ground are not responsible for the policies which take personal and money away from GFS operations. This is not meant to be a negative reflection of our local agents from Portal Station. But, when I first became Sheriff, I do not recall a day that went by where I did not see a PA patrolling. At one time we had 4 PA's who lived within our county and a Resident Agent (RA) in Mohall, ND. Now we have one RA in our county who works out of Portal Station. Our deputies rarely see PA's patrolling anywhere in our county. I also can not remember the last time Portal Station has been fully staffed. Discussions I have personally had in the past iterated PA's were being temporarily deployed (TDY) to the southern border or having to sit in the Portal Station remotely virtually processing undocumented migrants from the southern border. With understaffing issues, TDYs, and virtual processing, who was left to patrol the border? I have been told the TDY rate has slowed and the number of PA's in Portal has increased, but we have failed to see increased patrols in our area. RCSO typically has one deputy patrolling per shift and we came to rely upon PA's to be in our area to assist, if needed. Sadly, those days have long passed.

As I prepared my testimony, I reached out to each North Dakota Sheriff on the northern border; for those who chose to respond, the stories were familiar. We all have good working relationships with our local Stations and PA's but have noticed a decline in their presence and/or services. Recently a North Dakota Border Patrol Station Chief provided a presentation at a Sheriff's Conference where he outlined the current policy being followed. The current policy was not to respond to any incidents in which undocumented migrants were detained by local law enforcement unless other mitigating circumstances arose, such as, criminal charges. Even with some criminal charges, such as property damage to a farmer's field, the individual(s) were still released. Our North Dakota Sheriff's have had to deal with border related; dead bodies, high speed pursuits, responding to numerous border incursions, property damage (croplands and fence cutting), humanitarian rescues in extreme conditions, illegal substances, counterfeit goods, and subjects with warrants. GFS acknowledged Pembina Station is their busiest station for cross border activity and recently seized 65 firearms attempting to be smuggled into Canada.

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The majority of the nationalities we have come across are Nigerians, Romanians, and Indians, however, our biggest concern is who we did not catch. We have a wide-open, vast border, with no natural physical barriers and very few man-made ones. I have traveled to the southern border and have seen first hand the chaos our law enforcement deals with daily basis and also the unintended consequences of our current immigration policy. I am in no way comparing our northern border to our southern border, but what I am saying is our northern border is open and not secured. Canada's entry requirements into the county differ from the US, which provides opportunity for would be bad actors to easily gain entry to the US. One last concern would be the operating times of certain POE's which are not open 24 hours. Our North Dakota POE's close at 7 PM, but the Canadian POE's are open until 10 PM. Thereby allowing traffic to pass though our POE with the gates left open. There is nothing to stop southbound traffic into the US.

## Conclusion

Again, I would like to thank the Committee for making the trip to North Dakota and listening to the issues which affect North Dakotans. I hope we can continue to move forward in reducing the number of undocumented migrants crossing our border and the crimes they are associated with. I believe hearings such as these helps to bring light to the issues. Please leave here knowing our North Dakota Sheriff's will keep doing their part to keep our citizens safe.

Thank you for allowing my testimony. I would be happy to answer any questions the committee members may have.

Respectfully Submitted,

*R. Hutchinson*

Sheriff Roger Hutchinson

Attachments:

- 1) Renville County Map
- 2) Arial map of Sherwood POE
- 3) Photo of Sherwood POE
- 4) West side of Sherwood POE
- 5) Photo of Canadian border west of Sherwood POE
- 6) Photo of Texas License Plate
- 7) Photo looking west of Sherwood POE

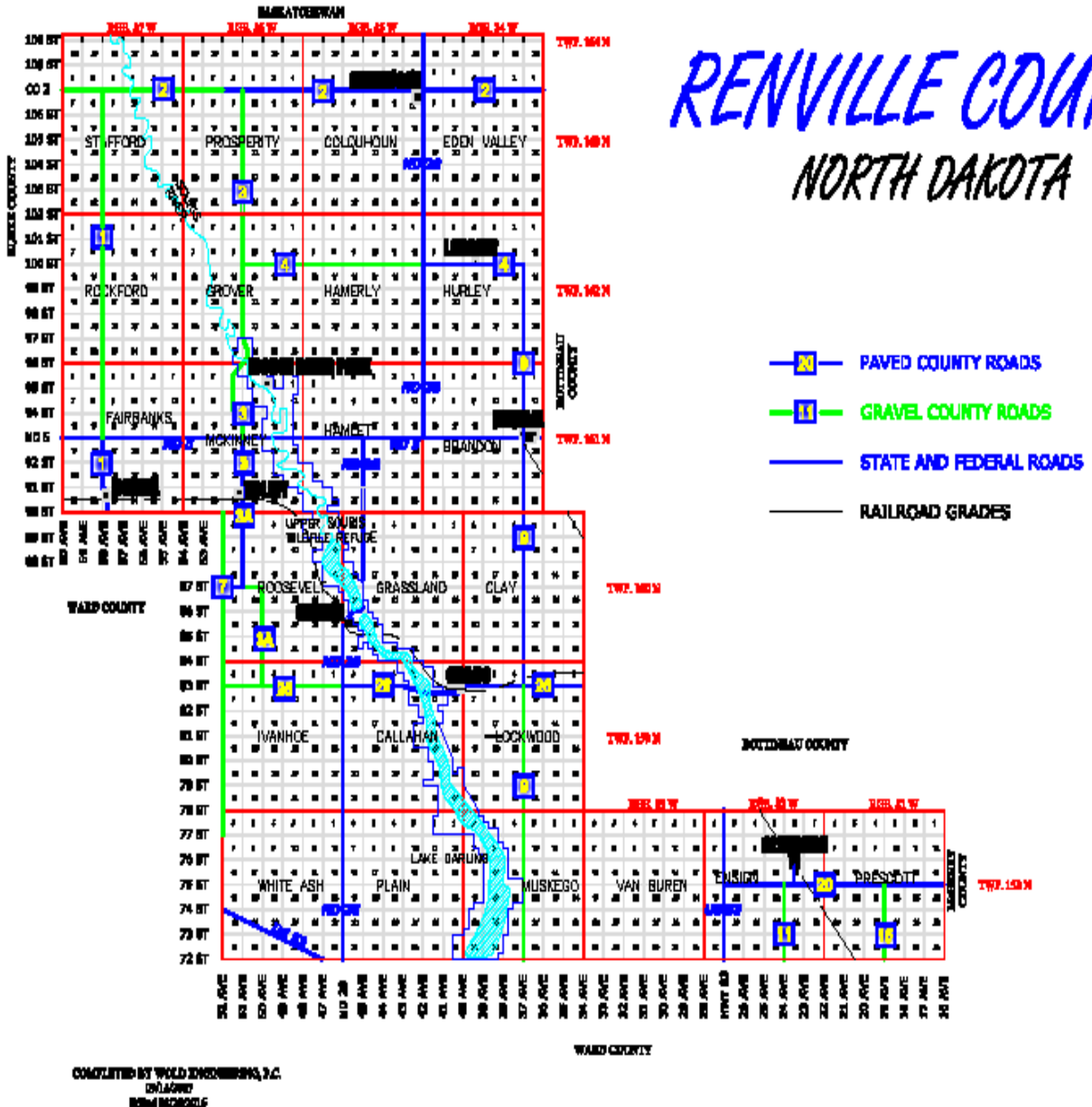
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Attachment 1

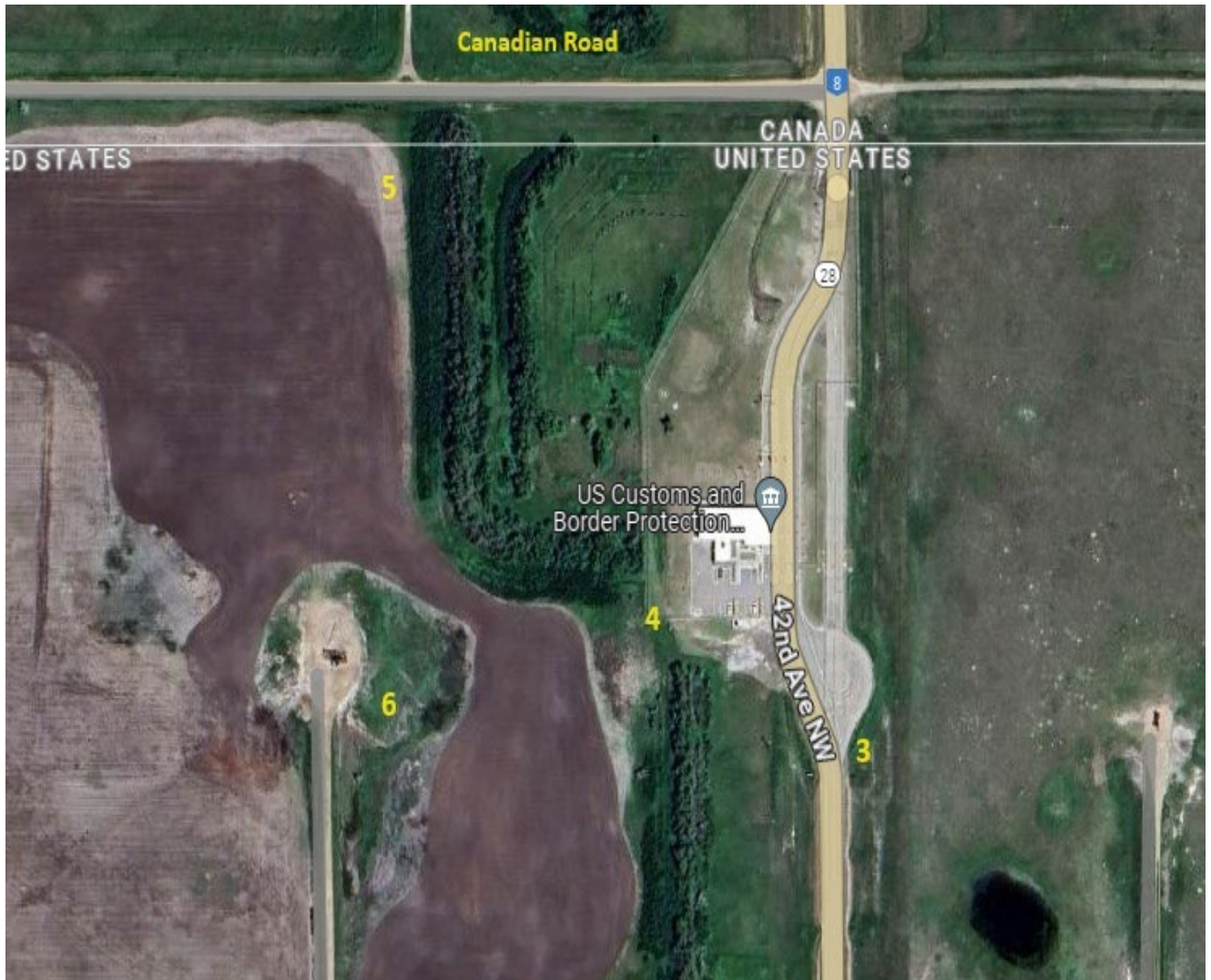
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Attachment 2

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Attachment 3

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Attachment 4

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Attachment 5

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Attachment 6

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Attachment 7

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