

Chairman Lieberman, Members of the Committee, I appreciate the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss “Southern Border Violence: State and Local Perspectives” We are all aware of the International situation as it relates to the drug-cartel violence that has been occurring along the Southwest Border. What I would like to address the Committee with, are the effects of border violence in our community of Nogales, AZ.

Since May 2007, the City of Nogales AZ. has been a witness to several highly reported brutal slayings that are occurring between drug-cartels in our sister City of Nogales Son. MX., The Department of National Drug Intelligence Center has identified the Mexican drug trafficking Organizations as the greatest organized crime threat facing the United States today; although in our neighboring City the violence committed against innocent parties and tourism is very rare. In October 2008 the State Department issued a travel advisory mentioning the City of Nogales Son. MX; this advisory has had an effect on the economy of the City of Nogales AZ. We are experiencing: longer waits in border crossings and a decline in tourism.

Nogales, Arizona is on the front lines in the fight against drugs, we see continued record high tonnage of drug seizures, cash and weapons all result of the effort between Federal, State and Local entities working in conjunction.

Nogales is a thriving safe community that has always put the safety of citizens and tourists on the top of the list. Nogales reported “**zero**” Drug related homicides in 2008 and what we call “small crime” such as vandalism and shoplifting were at a minimum.

The principal effect of border violence in my community of Nogales, Arizona are as follows:

1. The Drug trafficking has reached a point where this activity is even occurring in our sewer system. Last week alone, numerous loads of marijuana were intentionally channeled through our IOI, which is the main sewer line flowing through Nogales, Sonora into Nogales Arizona. This shows the length to which drug traffickers have resorted to in getting their product into this country. What is normally a drug trafficking problem has now become an infrastructure problem because these actions can damage our sewer line infrastructure to the tune of millions of dollars.
2. Locally, we can't go more that a few months without discovering another drug tunnel going under the border and into Nogales, Arizona. These tunnels cause great damage to the structural integrity of our streets and buildings.
3. The wait times at our port of entry continue to be considerable. It is our understanding that a great portion of these wait times are due to heightened security at the border. While this ensures our national safety the burden of longer wait times for commercial and pedestrian entry which can frequently exceed one to two hours falls on border cities. We estimate that approximately 75% of people in vehicular lines at the border are coming to shop in the U.S. When the wait times exceed one to two hours many potential visitors and customers are discouraged from coming into the U.S. to buy our products. This affects Nogales, Tucson, Phoenix, and the rest of Arizona.

4. State and national media reports discourage people from other parts of the state and the U.S. from coming to Ambos Nogales. Tourists used to come and lodge in Nogales AZ. and shop and dine in Nogales, Sonora, that is not happening much anymore.

5. Whether merited or not, the perception alone of increased violence in Nogales, Sonora has greatly reduced the amount of business and tourist visitors to Ambos Nogales. This reduction in business and tourism has had a detrimental effect in our community, which damages commerce, tourism, and ultimately reduces our precious sales tax which is the main source of revenue for Nogales, Arizona.

6. The aforementioned factors not only affect existing businesses; but also greatly diminishes new business prospects for our border town. Produce, maquila, and other border operations which might have been thinking of relocating in Ambos Nogales are now discouraged to do so because of the fear of increased violence along the border corridor.

7. Due to the growing violence in Mexico our local Police Department is forced to spend a disproportionate amount of time assisting federal law enforcement agencies. While the effects on this side of the border are indirect, they directly affect our economy and deplete our budgetary resources which are crucial to border cities during these difficult economic times. For instance, our Police and Fire Departments levels of response to incidents at the ports of entry have greatly increased. From January 2008 the Police Department responded to 3400 calls, and as of January 2009 they have responded to 6800 calls at the port of entry.

8. Our citizens living in close proximity to the International Boundary Line, are constantly deprived of a reasonable nights rest due to the noise and disruptive activities such as emergency vehicles, surveillance aircraft, high capacity flood lights, emergency sirens, etc...

The City of Nogales is therefore requesting your assistance in seeing that greater resources are allocated to combating the potential spillover effect of the drug war in Mexico as well as increased CBP manpower to properly staff and operate the largest Port of Entry in Arizona. If we can maintain the security and operation of the Mariposa and DeConcini Ports of Entry in Nogales all of Arizona as well as this country will benefit.

The sad irony is that Nogales AZ remains one of the safest cities in the country in spite of the violence, drug and human trafficking that surrounds us.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify here today; by continuing to work together we can develop new ideas to refresh our strategies and can rise to the current challenge. I will be happy to answer any questions you might have.