

**Governor Doug Ducey's Testimony Before A Special Field Hearing Of the United States
Senate Homeland Security And Governmental Affairs Committee
"America's Heroin Epidemic at the Border: Local, State, and Federal Law Enforcement
Efforts to Combat Illicit Narcotic Trafficking"**

Monday, November 23, 2015

As prepared for delivery:

Good morning. Chairman Johnson, Senators McCain and Flake: welcome, and thank you for being here.

Commissioner Kerlikowske, Bill Montgomery, Sheriff Dannels – and everyone joining me today to give testimony – thank you for your commitment to addressing and reversing a very severe, very real problem in Arizona and in our country.

We're here today because our nation is plagued by a destructive, dangerous ... and deadly epidemic.

Heroin trafficking, use, abuse and overdose is a growing problem in American society.

It's infiltrating our children's schools. It's tearing apart families. It's spurring crime and creating criminals.

It's driving up costs related to law enforcement, courts, incarceration, treatment programs, medical care and other unseen expenses to our taxpayers. And that's nothing compared to the human toll.

There's no dollar sign on the life of a father, a mother, a sibling, a spouse or a child cut short by drug abuse. There is only anguish...and anger.

We've come face-to-face with a very sad, very scary reality: Heroin is no longer someone else's problem. It's our problem. It's America's problem. And Arizona is the front door.

It's not news to any of us that Arizona has been, and continues to be, a major smuggling corridor and distribution hub for illicit drugs being supplied to the United States.

We share roughly 370 miles of contiguous international border with Mexico. This area consists of rugged terrain that makes it extremely difficult to patrol and secure – a prime environment for trafficking activity.

Right across our border is home to the Sinaloa Cartel, a transnational drug trafficking organization with a stronghold in the region.

Unless we act – and act soon – these cartels, and the poison they're bringing to our communities, aren't going anywhere.

Let's look at the facts:

- From 2010-2014, heroin seizures increased 223% in Arizona. Why? Sadly, because prescription opiate drug abuse often leads to heroin addiction. And that's because heroin's a cheaper, quicker and a more intense high.
- In 2015, drug apprehension efforts in Arizona resulted in 5,282 drug-related arrests.
- And arrests for heroin alone increased 76 percent over the past two years – which constitutes the largest rate of heroin arrests in a decade.
- Studies have also shown heroin treatment admissions increased approximately 77 percent from 2008 to 2012.

And here's why it should matter to ALL of us. The impact of heroin reaches far beyond user and supplier.

It's having a cumulative effect on the standard of living in Arizona and throughout the country:

- More than 75 percent of inmates in Arizona's prison system have a substance abuse problem.
- There are more than 17,000 children who are wards of the state, because their parents are unfit to raise them. If we found them all homes tomorrow in foster care, there would be thousands more waiting right behind them ... unless we address the corrosive nature of drug addiction.
- Babies – newborns – exposed to substances rose from 597 cases in 2008, to 1,248 in 2014. That's a 109 percent increase in just six years.

Each one of these is a tragedy – a terrible, preventable tragedy.

There's no shortage of the harmful effects of heroin and illicit drug trafficking in our communities.

Some of these damages can't be undone. But they CAN be prevented in the future.

It's up to us – right now – to act.

And we're taking action ... by aggressively targeting the supply.

As we know, Arizona is Ground Zero in the fight against drug trafficking – a direct nexus through which these cartels are infiltrating our states and ravaging communities in every corner of our country.

That doesn't sit well with me -- which is why we are taking action, and why I've created the Arizona Border Strike Force Bureau.

Here are the highlights:

The mission of the Border Strike Force Bureau is to partner with local and federal agencies -- to deter, disrupt and dismantle criminal organizations responsible for smuggling drugs and humans into Arizona.

The success of the Bureau is founded upon the strategic partnerships we've created at all levels.

The most significant so far have been with U.S. Customs and Border Protection and the Cochise County Sheriff's Office.

I want to take a moment to acknowledge Commissioner Gil Kerlikowske and Sheriff Mark Dannels for their willingness to partner with the State of Arizona through the Border Strike Force Bureau.

In a state like Arizona, the cost of combatting the drug cartels alone would be too large to bear.

A successful long-term strategy to take the fight to the cartels requires multi-layered collaboration and cooperation. Intelligence sharing. Better communication. All of these serve as a force-multiplier that is magnifying our individual efforts.

This strike force has been in operation for little over two months – utilizing these partnerships – and our successes speak for themselves:

Since September, we've seized:

- Over \$2.2 million;
- Multiple firearms;
- Nearly 4,000 pounds of marijuana;
- 73 pounds of meth;
- Nearly 19 pounds of heroin.
 - It's important to note: in 2014, Arizona DPS seized 14 pounds of heroin. Total. And we've seized nearly 19 in just the last two months.
 - To paint a picture of how much that really is – there are 45 thousand hits to one pound of heroin.
 - We've made over 150 felony arrests and 30 misdemeanor arrests;
 - We've taken down 14 documented gang members and over 70 undocumented aliens.

And we've done it in just a short time ... with a short list of personnel, few resources, and through minimal targeted operations.

It was important to build the partnership, prove the concept, and get some wins.

Now imagine what we could do with more.

This is a significant, concrete example of what we can accomplish when we take a multi-level, collaborative and cooperative approach to dealing with public safety.

And it's also a loud wake-up call that our current strategies have fallen short. We need a plan that is robust ... that leverages resources, manpower and money from local, state and federal levels.

I've spent a lot of time meeting with ranchers, families, law enforcement and residents near the border – as I know you all have, too.

The greatest concerns among all of them are the cartels and the traffickers. In the place where they live, work, and raise their families – border-related crime is a frequent occurrence.

If there were ever a time to get serious about protecting our homeland, it's now.

In addition to the drug epidemic, I'd be remiss if I didn't mention another potential threat to our country as a result of Arizona's border.

In light of the horrific terrorist attacks in Paris ... new threats on the United States from ISIS in a video released last week ... and recent apprehensions of Middle Eastern Nationals near the southern border ... one thing's for sure: it's time to step up our game.

On behalf of the citizens and state of Arizona, I want to thank Commissioner Kerlikowske and his hardworking, talented and dedicated team who made these apprehensions last week.

After what we've seen in the past couple months with the Border Strike Force – I'm encouraged about our partnership. I believe this is the most meaningful step toward securing Arizona that we've seen in decades.

But more vigilance, collaboration, and resources are needed if we are going to be successful in keeping our state and citizens safe.

As governor of Arizona, I took an oath of office to protect Arizona and our country.

Arizona must hold the line. For the sake of every state, every community, and every family in this country ... and we intend to do so.

But we can't do it alone. Arizona can do a lot – and we will – to combat this epidemic ... to slam the door on these cartels ... and to protect the safety, security, health and quality of life for our citizens.

But we need your help. This is not just Arizona's problem. It's America's problem. And it's going to need to be met with state, local and federal resources.

More funding. More assets – more planes, helicopters, radios and equipment added to our arsenal. More personnel – troopers, analysts, pilots – people to gather intelligence on these criminals, and people to take them down.

Ask yourself: what is our primary duty – our highest priority as elected officials? The answer should be: defending our homeland and protecting our citizens.

For the first time in recent memory, we have a plan that can yield real, meaningful results in this effort. We're ready to do something about this problem, and we're ready to do it now.

This could mean the difference between saving one life or countless lives – bringing down one criminal or an entire cartel. It could mean preventing a tragedy in Arizona or somewhere else.

Data shows that, from 2012 to 2014, there were at least 458 drug seizures in 30 other states with a nexus back to Arizona.

I ask you, as federal representatives of the people, to deliver Arizona's message to Congress:

If you are serious about taking the fight to the drug cartels – and turning the tide on the drug epidemic ravaging our nation - join us. Arizona is on the front line. And we need your support. Thank you.