

**UNITED STATES SENATE
COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY
AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS**

**TESTIMONY OF
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EFFECTS OF BORDER VIOLENCE:

Phoenix continues to be one of the safest major cities in America. In 2008, property crimes dropped by 6%, violent crime dropped 8% with homicides dropping by 24%. This drop in crime rates is significant. However, border related crime and violence is affecting our community. Kidnappings and home invasions continue to be an issue in our community. In 2007, there were 357 reported kidnappings and 317 home invasions. In 2008, there were 368 kidnappings and 337 home invasions in Phoenix and the end is not in sight. This problem has garnered the attention of the world. Just 36 hours ago at least 4 suspects forced entry into a home and held 7 victims hostage during a planned robbery. We arrested 3 suspects, having shot one of them when he pointed a gun at one of my officers. The suspects we caught told my investigators they were in this country illegally.

Phoenix is a transshipment point for illegal drugs and smuggled humans. Both come here before being shipped to other points throughout America. The majority of the victims of kidnappings and home invasions are involved directly or indirectly with drug or human smuggling. Regardless of their involvement in crime, these victims are human beings, and first and foremost, we treat them as such.

Many of the kidnapping victims are brought to Phoenix by smugglers known as "coyotes," and each victim paid \$1,500 to be brought to America. Once here, the coyotes take them to drop houses where dozens of smuggled people are kept. Their shoes and clothes are often taken so they can't escape. They are beaten and tortured while their loved ones listen on the phone in horror as often another \$2,500 is demanded from the kidnapers. Sometimes other coyotes "steal" the human cargo from the original coyotes. They then ask for more money for each victim to be released or transported. We have had shootouts in our streets during the middle of rush hour traffic between coyotes with their vans full of people and other coyotes trying to steal the load.

There have been other kidnappings, which sometimes start as home invasions, where the victims are the smugglers themselves. Groups often dressed in police type raid gear break into a home or a vehicle and kidnap the smugglers. These kidnapers know the smugglers or their family members and associates have the ability to come up with ransoms ranging from \$30,000 to \$1 million dollars. Often times the ransom demands include drugs, such as 100 pounds of marijuana or a pound of cocaine or methamphetamine.

The primary goal for investigators is to rescue the victims. But saving these lives is tremendously resource intensive. The rescue operations utilize as many as 60 officers to safely and effectively conduct, and take up to a week to solve. These officers work desperately to try and locate a victim who could be anywhere in the

550 square miles of Phoenix. And that's if the victim hasn't been taken to one of the other cities around Phoenix.

Bullets fired from one criminal at another cannot discriminate between a criminal and an innocent bystander. We cannot let these groups gain strength, perfecting their craft and spreading to other cities in our country.

LEA, PHOENIX POLICE DEPARTMENT EFFORTS IN RESPONDING:

The officers I need to assign to combat the problem of border violence are a valuable resource that I have had to pull off their regular duties throughout the department. Like other agencies, we don't have a pool of excess officers to draw from. However, we have been forced to do something, which is why we have participated with two other agencies in the creation of the Illegal Immigrant Prevention and Apprehension Co-op Team (IIMPACT). Additionally, I have authorized the development of the Phoenix Police Home Invasion and Kidnapping Enforcement Task Force (HIKE). We have great partnerships in both of these endeavors.

IIMPACT is a partnership between the Phoenix Police Department, the Arizona Department of Public Safety and the U.S. Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement. This team deals specifically with the violence associated with human smuggling and illegal immigration.

The HIKE team, which is one of the only ones like it in the country, is made up of supervisors and detectives from the Robbery, Assaults and Document Crimes Units from within the Phoenix Police Department. In addition, agents from the Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement, the U.S. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, and the Drug Enforcement Administration are part of the team. This team deals specifically with the kidnappings in Phoenix.

Home invasions and kidnappings have had an impact on local gangs in Phoenix. Gang members have been recruited to participate in these crimes. In addition, they have learned of these crimes and copied them in an effort to get financial gain. To combat this problem, the Phoenix Police department is partnered with the U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation in the FBI Violent Street Gang Task Force. As the name implies, the team deals with gang violence, which is influenced by border violence.

FEDERAL RESPONSE:

Until there is a comprehensive federal immigration policy the border violence will continue with no immediate end in sight. In the meantime we are a local law enforcement agency and we cannot deal with this problem without the help of the federal government. I have spoken of the partnerships we have developed with federal agencies such as ICE, ATF, the DEA, and the FBI. These partnerships create a synergism that is crucial to our success in combating this problem. We need you to ensure that these partnerships continue and increase. We need timely and accurate intelligence from those agencies who deal directly with Mexico to get to the root of the problem to combat it.

In addition, we need federal funding so that we can staff the squads and teams to deal with these violent and deadly crimes. We have asked for COPS funding to increase our HIKE team by 25 people. In addition, we have asked for the funding necessary to provide the equipment for these additional officers. We cannot continue to fund the fight on a national problem alone. We need the help of the federal government.

CONCLUSION:

Border violence is a national problem. We are a local agency dealing with the symptoms which are spilling into our streets. We are on the front line dealing with this problem. This problem is seeping into other cities and towns. It must be dealt with now so that it doesn't spread any further across America. We know our charge is to deal with the crime on our streets, but alone we cannot deal with border crossing kidnappers and home invaders. That is why I am here today asking for your help.