

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

**TESTIMONY OF  
JACK F. HARRIS  
PUBLIC SAFETY MANAGER, PHOENIX, ARIZONA**

**APRIL 20, 2009**

## 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 kidnappers. 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 kidnappers 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.

## Text of Gordon's testimony

Mar. 24, 2009 11:32 AM

**Testimony of Phoenix Mayor Phil Gordon before the U.S. House Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice and Science** Chairman Mollohon, Ranking Member Wolf, and distinguished Members of the Subcommittee, my name is Phil Gordon and I am the Mayor of Phoenix, Arizona - the fifth largest city in the country.

I am proud to be joined by our Public Safety Manager - Jack Harris - who has been with the Phoenix Police Department for 36 years. Chief Harris is the only major city Police Chief to have risen through the ranks and spend the entirety of his career with the same Department -- and he will be available to answer any technical or professional questions should the Subcommittee so desire.

There can be no doubt that a crisis exists at our border with Mexico. And for reasons ranging from an historically bad economy on the Mexican side of the border - to various degrees of inattention on our own side of the border - to the border itself which is vast and porous - Phoenix finds itself at the center of this Perfect Storm - a storm that is growing increasingly violent, threatening and resource-consuming.

I am a very concerned Mayor, and am here to tell you why. Yet I am also optimistic about the successful results we are achieving in Phoenix -- and am also here to talk about the partnerships Phoenix has established with federal enforcement agencies - and to **encourage the funding** to them that will allow

these effective and essential partnerships to continue.

I'll tell you something about my own City that just about any Mayor will tell you about their City: We have the finest police department in the nation. With 540 square miles to cover - which equates to about one officer, per square mile, per shift -- they arrest 40,000 criminals a year - and handle one million calls for service. My own son serves proudly - and his dad is very proud of that.

But the 3,000 dedicated men and women of the Phoenix Police Department - as good as they are - are being stretched very thin.

In Phoenix, our Officers do what police officers do in every community. (crime, across the board, was down in Phoenix last year - including a 24 percent reduction in homicides over the previous year). But due to the happenstance of geography, and a past lack of federal diligence, our officers have the additional burdens - and risks -- associated with border crimes.

They do an amazing job. But it's a job they cannot do alone - and shouldn't be expected to do alone. That's why we have been leaders


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in forming creative partnerships - and pioneering creative programs to fight these international criminals. And we've had some tremendous successes and significant results.

Partnering with DEA, the Border Patrol, FBI, ATF, the US Attorney, the US Postal Inspectors, and State and local agencies - we have disrupted serious criminal activity. We have executed thousands of warrants, won thousands of felony indictments and arrested thousands of dangerous and violent people engaging in Drug Trafficking, gun smuggling, drug smuggling, human smuggling and kidnapping.

We have kept millions of dollars from flowing from the United States to Mexico - and we have kept our focus on what Public Safety Manager Harris calls "The Worst of the Worst".

That is how we can be most effective at keeping our community and nation safe. By allocating our scarce resources where they have the greatest impact. And by partnering with others, to effectively increase the resources available to us.

Again, the federal government has been a tremendous partner. We have accomplished important things together to help keep my community - and our nation -- safe.

The Phoenix Police Department has pioneered a program that has been very effective for us. We have actually embedded ICE agents, on a full-time basis, inside our Police Department. That's where their desks are. And their presence and participation in key areas of enforcement has been invaluable.

They provide intelligence. They have access

to federal databases. They partner with us - on the street -- to go after violent criminals and reduce violent crime (which was DOWN by 6 percent last year in Phoenix) - and they are an important piece of what we do.

In addition to ICE, Phoenix has its own police officers embedded in FBI. We have embedded City Prosecutors with the US Attorney's Office, allowing us to bring and prosecute federal charges in many important cases - particularly cases involving guns.

Phoenix and its federal partners have established a task force to aggressively pursue kidnappers and those who invade homes. We share expertise and intelligence - and we share in excellent results. Again, I am so grateful to our federal partners.

Let me give you just a few short examples of the many Joint Operations that have yielded profound results in just the past year:

- Operation Blank Check, a partnership with our local federal agencies, led to the felony indictments of 183 individuals.

This year-long investigation led directly to

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the arrests of hardcore gang members from 22 different gangs who trafficked in drugs and fraudulent checking schemes - totaling more than 3 million dollars -- to fund their operations.

- Operation En Fuego, also in partnership with our local federal agencies, was responsible for the break-up of a major Phoenix-based smuggling organization and the indictment of 35 individuals on felony charges related to the human smuggling of more than 10,000 individuals.

- Operation Tumbleweed, again involving our local federal agencies, disrupted and stopped the illegal activities of 20 different organizations by following a common money trail right back to them all. Drug smuggling. Human smuggling. Money laundering. All disrupted and stopped.

Additionally, we shut down two of the largest syndicates in the nation that dealt in the tragedy of human smuggling. Each year, 15,000 people were brought into the United States, through Phoenix, illegally. And 30 million dollars went the other way. They're out of business now.

Phoenix PD is a critical participant in IIMPACT Arizona - which stands for Illegal Immigration Prevention and Apprehension Co-op Teams. It's a program that is managed by Arizona DPS - includes ICE -- and is designed to deter, disrupt and dismantle violent criminal organizations profiting from illegal immigration.

And we're a member of The FBI Violent Street Gang Task Force - which has resulted in more than 300 felony arrests in the past year alone.

So for us, and for this country, partnerships are everything. And nobody does them better - or values them more, than Phoenix, the Phoenix Police Department, federal agents and our State's Department of Public Safety.

Obviously, we need federal help to secure our borders. But we need your continuing help battling the violent crime that results from a border not yet secure. In spite of - and for that matter, because of -- our current economic struggles - I am here to ask for - to plea for - your continued support of our partnerships.

That means political support - but it also means financial support. Because of the current economic crisis we've had to cut back on our city budgets -- as has everyone has.

The City of Phoenix has just reduced our 2010 budget by \$280 million. That's about a third of our total budget. Those are serious reductions. I'd like to tell you Public Safety was spared from these reductions, but that is not the case.


Last year, I talked about the cost of law

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enforcement for a border state to a national gathering of The Police Foundation.

As you might suspect, the cost to Phoenix of border-related crime is staggering - and far beyond what most municipalities in this country are required to bear. It's the cost of intelligence. The cost of equipment. The cost of hiring new officers. The cost of overtime. The cost of undercover operations that continue for months and, sometimes, years. The cost of surveillance planes.

Fighting these dangerous, well-armed criminals is not like rounding up day laborers or chasing nickel bags. They are expensive and sophisticated operations that require an expensive and sophisticated response.

And, a quick response. People are being tortured. **People are being kidnapped.** Almost every night, Phoenix Police will get one or more calls with variations of the same story - "My wife is being held in a Phoenix drop house and they say they will torture and kill her if we don't pay them thousands of dollars".

The response to that kind of call is incredibly "labor intensive". **For each one of those calls, Phoenix will divert significant resources on the spot - as many as 60 officers -- to find, rescue and protect these kidnap victims.** Again, these intensive operations happen routinely. The overtime hours are staggering; the personnel resources diverted from preventing or solving other crimes are massive.

So again, I come to Washington today, to thank you for your partnership - and to ask your continued help in fighting the good fight - against bad guys.

**As Mayor, I respectfully urge this Subcommittee to support not just continuing - but increasing -- funding to our federal partners in Arizona** - so we can continue the partnerships we have used smartly and effectively - and so we can continue doing our part - and then some - to protect Americans.

**If you have even one dollar to invest - this is where it will have an immediate impact.** Homeland Security includes Home Town Security. And that's especially true for border communities like mine.

Mr. Chairman, as Mayor, **I will sign a contract with you guaranteeing to use every cent of every dollar in the most effective way possible.** Not to chase misdemeanants and day laborers - but to make our nation safer by taking violent felons off the streets - Murderers. **Kidnappers.** Drug Smugglers. Gang Members.


These are the Worst of the Worst. They enter this country through Arizona, but they hurt us all - in every community of every state -- with their violence, drugs, guns and criminal operations.

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Thank you for partnering with us to fight them in Phoenix. And thank you all for allowing me to appear before you today. I am here, as is Chief Harris, to answer any questions you might have.


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