



Border Security Announcement

Remarks by Gov. Jan Brewer

Thursday, April 22, 2010

Thank you all for being here today.

Almost from the day I took office, I have been asking Washington to fulfill its primary obligation to the citizens of our state.

-- To secure our southern border.

-- To enhance the rule of law.

-- And to protect Arizonans and Americans from violence committed by terrorists, organized crime syndicates, drug cartels and common criminals.

Make no mistake: The responsibility to ensure that we have an orderly, secure border – not just some imaginary line in the dirt or a rickety fence – belongs to the federal government.

They have failed.

And we, in Arizona, have for too long paid the price for those failures.

This failure has hurt our economy, stifled trade and legal travel, and pitted neighbor against neighbor.

It has been nearly 14 months since my first letter to the Obama Administration asking for their help with border security.

That request was followed by a second ... and a third ...

... and a fourth

... and a fifth.

As I stand here today, we are STILL waiting.

In the past year, while the federal government has failed to act, a half-million illegal immigrants have been apprehended within our borders.

Not a day goes by that we don't hear about high-speed chases along our highways or drop-house raids in our neighborhoods.

And, we sympathize with the Krentz family and friends, who still suffer the grief of a terrible loss.

Arizona has been patient.

We have been MORE than understanding.

We have waited for those who are 3,000 miles away to hear us -- and to help us.

We cannot afford to wait any longer.

There can be no serious attempt to solve the immigration problem inside our borders without first taking steps to secure the border itself.

Today, I am here to talk about action.

Let me take a moment to ask the members of my Security Cabinet to join me here as I review the steps we are about to take --

-- Arizona Department of Corrections Director Chuck Ryan

-- Department of Public Safety Director Bobby Halliday,

-- My Adjutant General, Major General Hugo Salazar,

-- and Homeland Security Director Gil Orrantia.

Let me take this opportunity to thank you -- a AND your staffs -- for all your hard work and dedication to the security and safety of Arizona.

I have already asked the President to approve funding for an additional 250 National Guard personnel for the Joint Counter Narco-Terrorism Task Force to support federal, state and local law enforcement drug interdiction efforts.

Using existing resources, I have directed General Salazar, to create additional "Nighthawk" ground surveillance capability within the Joint Task Force.

These teams are armed, covert, and use special night vision equipment in support of U.S. Border Patrol.

The additional personnel performing "Nighthawk" will result in an estimated 150 additional missions per year, and that number will continue to increase as federal funding becomes available.

I have also directed General Salazar to augment current helicopter aerial surveillance operations by re-allocating existing funding to increase the number of flight hours.

I am estimating we can increase our flight hours this fiscal year by 300 hours that would allow for an estimated 70-80 additional missions through September.

These missions will be coordinated with law enforcement to ensure the effectiveness and efficiency of this increased aviation support.

I will also be asking the President to provide additional helicopters, pilots, and funding to address the shortage of aviation resources relative to the challenges and length of Arizona's border with Mexico.

You will hear more from my office on this soon.

In terms of National Guard training, I am asking General Salazar to aggressively explore where appropriate opportunities for Arizona Army National Guard units to conduct annual training in southern Arizona and to conduct joint training with law enforcement agencies in border security matters.

The specific training missions would be developed in coordination with the U.S. Border Patrol, the Joint Task Force and National Guard Officials.

In addition to the above, I will also:

-- Continue pushing for additional federal funding for the National Guard and Law Enforcement.

-- We will continue to shift, Joint Task Force resources and personnel to the southern region for “Nighthawk” or sensor-camera room support of law enforcement.

We will emphasize that replacement personnel be assigned in southern Arizona, and any future growth in the Joint Task Force will also be shifted to the Border region.

As part of this effort, I have asked General Salazar to evaluate all existing Joint Task Force assets to ensure we are engaged in the best use of what we currently have.

With regard to federal policy, I am generally supportive of the plan announced recently by Senators McCain and Kyl.

I look forward to additional details on the deployment of this force, the missions to be performed by the proposed 3,000 additional personnel and the ways these additional military efforts would be coordinated with law enforcement entities.

Unlike “Operation Jump Start” from the past, it would be my clear preference to have Soldiers and Airmen in a position to support not just federal law enforcement agencies, but also state and local efforts.

I remain very concerned about attempting any major deployment of troops using only State Funds.

As I have previously mentioned, the ability to sustain a force of any size requires federal funding even in the very BEST economic times.

States have NEVER been expected to provide for NATIONAL DEFENSE.

I wholeheartedly endorse the proposal to increase Operation StoneGarden allocations for all southwestern Border States.

More needs to be done.

And, I am doing it – with every means at my disposal.

I have ordered that ten million dollars of my discretionary stimulus monies -- that I previously reserved for public safety -- be directed to local law enforcement grants on the border.

I have committed ALL of my discretionary stimulus funds to economic development and job creation -- education funding – and public safety.

I want individuals and businesses to be safer in our border region.

This grant program — which I have named the Border Security Enhancement Program — is a very flexible program designed to allow local and tribal law enforcement to propose ways to augment their existing border security efforts.

I will be hosting a meeting of officials next week to review the program and answer any questions that law enforcement personnel may have.

I have asked the Arizona Department of Public Safety Director to begin developing plans in the event that Border Counties request additional law enforcement assistance from the State.

I have also asked the Director to engage with federal law enforcement to determine how DPS can assist them in stopping the smuggling of illegal drugs, weapons and aliens across the border.

I am prepared to request the deployment of DPS personnel to areas having the greatest need.

Again, these are tough choices, but necessary ones.

No matter the cost, no matter the sacrifice, we cannot shirk government's principal responsibilities to the citizens we serve:

To provide safety and security.

Every day I have been your Governor, I've tried to emphasize the need to secure our border and promote the safety of every Arizonan.

I have done so while encouraging trade, while working to ensure the safe passage of those who would enter Arizona legally, and while demanding that we respect the constitutional rights of every Arizonan.

You have my word: I will not stop.

I will not be deterred.

I will not give ground when it comes to keeping us safe.

Securing the border might not be Arizona's principal job, but we have no choice.

We must show resolve and courage where those who have failed to protect us have shown only weakness and delay.

Thank you. God bless you and your families, and may God bless Arizona.

Now, we will take your questions ...

As a reminder to all of you, General Salazar is here to discuss the execution of missions and directives, not public policy.

As a Soldier, he has limitations on what advocacy roles he can play.

I want to respect that and I hope all of you will also.

Also, please keep in mind there are operational security concerns regarding some of our plans, so do not expect to hear details that might compromise the safety and security of our Soldiers and Airmen serving in Joint Task Force roles.