

**A COUNTRY WITHOUT BORDERS: HOW BIDEN-
HARRIS' OPEN-BORDERS POLICIES HAVE
UNDERMINED OUR SAFETY AND SECURITY**

HEARING

BEFORE THE

**COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

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A COUNTRY WITHOUT BORDERS: HOW BIDEN-HARRIS' OPEN-BORDERS POLICIES HAVE UNDERMINED OUR SAFETY AND SECURITY

Wednesday, September 18, 2024

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY,
WASHINGTON, DC.

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:07 a.m., in room 310, Cannon House Office Building, Hon. Mark E. Green [Chairman of the committee] presiding.

Present: Representatives Green, Higgins, Guest, Bishop, Gimenez, Greene, LaLota, Ezell, D'Esposito, Strong, Brecheen, Crane, Thompson, Correa, Thanedar, Ivey, Goldman, Garcia, Ramirez, Menendez, Suozzi, and Kennedy.

Chairman GREEN. The Committee on Homeland Security will come to order. Without objection, the Chair may declare the committee in recess at any point.

The purpose of this hearing is to receive testimony on the Biden-Harris border policies and how they have undermined the safety and security of America. I now recognize myself for an opening statement.

President Joe Biden, his appointed border czar Vice President Kamala Harris, and Department of Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas have sparked the worst border crisis in American history. Looking back over the nearly 4 years, Americans have witnessed a national security, public safety, and humanitarian disaster at our borders, and every day, we continue to feel its devastating consequences.

The flood of inadmissible aliens across our sovereign border has been unprecedented. Since Biden-Harris' first full month in office, Customs and Border Protection has recorded more than 10.3 million encounters of inadmissible aliens nationwide, compared to 3.1 million between fiscal years 2017 and 2020. In addition, there have been more than 2 million known gotaways on their watch, illegal aliens who are at large in our communities, whose intentions and backgrounds are completely unknown.

Encounters at our ports of entry have exploded from roughly 1 million between fiscal 2017 and 2020 to more than 3 million since the start of fiscal year 2021. That is largely because the Biden-Harris administration has devised a host of unlawful mass parole programs that encourage otherwise inadmissible aliens to cross at our land, sea, and airports instead of between them. This solves the terrible optics problem of overcrowded Border Patrol facilities and overwhelmed agents, but the end result is the same: tens of thou-

sands of inadmissible aliens released into the interior of the country every month against the laws passed by this institution. It is just a shell game, a sleight of hand to skew the numbers. It is like when a parent tells their children to clean their room, only to find the mess simply moved from the floor to the closet. Things might look cleaner, but the underlying problem has not been addressed. So it is with the Biden-Harris administration's border policies.

Other numbers further highlight this crisis. Tragically, tragically, roughly 200,000 Americans have died from fentanyl that has been smuggled across the Southwest Border by criminal cartels. Border Patrol arrests of illegal aliens with criminal backgrounds have more than doubled on the Biden-Harris watch, from around 22,000 to more than 53,000. Apprehensions of Chinese nationals crossing the Southwest Border illegally exceed 36,000 just this fiscal year, more than fiscal year 2007 through 2020 combined. These are major national security and public safety concerns.

This unprecedented surge across our borders was made possible by the Biden-Harris administration. In 2019 and 2020, Biden and Harris both declared they supported decriminalizing border crossings. Biden said that suspected criminal illegal aliens arrested by local law enforcement should not be handed over to ICE, contrary to the law. Harris called building more border wall systems "a stupid use of money." Biden encouraged illegal aliens to surge to our border, his word to flood our asylum system with illegitimate claims.

Their open borders and anti-enforcement rhetoric soon became a reality. Upon assuming office, Biden-Harris worked immediately to end effective border security policies and to dismantle decades of bipartisan immigration enforcement. For example, Biden and Harris have gutted detention. For example, in fiscal year 2013, the Obama administration detained 91 percent of all illegal aliens, 82 percent of them from the time they were encountered until the case was resolved. In Biden and Harris' first year in office, that 82 percent dropped to just 10 percent.

Removals have also plummeted from more than 267,000 in fiscal year 2019 to around half that number last year, and as low as 59,000 in fiscal year 2021. Even worse, removal of criminal aliens plummeted from around 173,000 in fiscal year 2019 to just 70,000 last fiscal year. Just yesterday, prominent border correspondent Ali Bradley reported exclusive ICE figures showing that since the Biden-Harris administration ended Title 42 in May 2023, the administration has only removed around 23 percent of all inadmissible aliens encountered.

Despite the limitations put on them by the leaders, the men and women of CBP and ICE have continued to perform their jobs above and beyond the call of duty, and I commend them for their unwavering service to the Nation. Yet they know it is not supposed to be this way. Today you will no doubt hear more blame shifting and excuses by my colleagues across the aisle, but all of it is meant to mislead. You will probably hear about the recent drop in illegal border crossings between ports of entry along our Southwest Border. However, this does not account for the thousands of inadmissible aliens coming in daily through the ports of entry under the

scheme I described earlier. Nor does it undo the damage done by the millions that have come in over the past 3½ years.

This evidence also suggests no connection between Biden's recent loophole-ridden Executive Order and these new numbers, but rather step up interior enforcement by Mexico. As we saw recently, that enforcement is waning with the Mexican government now busing CBP One appointment holders from the southern Mexico border straight to the southern U.S. border.

Coming almost 4 years into this self-inflicted crisis, the administration's action is much too little and far too late. For numerous families across the country, like those of Rachel Morin, Laken Riley, Jocelyn Nungaray, the damage will never be undone. You certainly won't hear how the Senate's border bill, which just a single Republican helped write, would have made the crisis worse. It would have only allowed tough restrictions once encounters passed several thousand per day, mandated mass releases through non-custodial detention, improperly expanded the use of parole, and more. It was a terrible bill, one that would roughly—that was roundly criticized by former heads of CBP and Border Patrol and ICE.

Today's hearing is about getting the unvarnished truth from Americans who have been forced to live out the Biden-Harris open borders nightmare in their own lives. This administration has completely undermined border security through a host of policies and decisions that have overwhelmed and sidelined the Border Patrol. Biden and Harris have gutted ICE's ability to conduct immigration enforcement in the interior, making it harder to detain and remove illegal aliens, including criminal illegal aliens and innocent Americans are suffering as a result. The story you will hear from Patty Morin today is sadly just one of tens of thousands of stories of pain, suffering, and preventable tragedy.

What you will hear from Jim Desmond is the account of a major American city that has been overwhelmed and overrun. It does not have to be like this. Later today, my committee will release a comprehensive report documenting an even more painful objective detail how Biden, Harris, and their administration have thrown open borders—thrown open our borders, and the chaos that has resulted. I encourage all Americans to read it at *homeland.house.gov*.

As we continue to witness Biden and Harris' resistance to doing anything meaningful about this disaster, we have to ask why? Why did they let this crisis take place and why have they let it continue? I hope this hearing provides some answers and inspires President Biden and Vice President Harris to do what they so far have refused to: end this crisis and secure our borders.

[The statement of Chairman Green follows:]

STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN MARK E. GREEN, MD

SEPTEMBER 18, 2024

President Joe Biden, his appointed "border czar", Vice President Kamala Harris, and Department of Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas have sparked the worst border crisis in American history. Looking back over nearly 4 years, Americans have witnessed a national security, public safety, and humanitarian disaster at our borders. Every day, we continue to feel its devastating consequences.

The flood of inadmissible aliens across our sovereign borders has been unprecedented. Since Biden and Harris' first full month in office, Customs and Border Pro-

tection has recorded more than 10.3 million encounters of inadmissible aliens nationwide, compared to 3.1 million between fiscal years 2017–2020. In addition, there have been more than 2 million known gotaways on their watch—illegal aliens who are at large in our communities, whose intentions and backgrounds are completely unknown.

Encounters at our ports of entry have exploded, from roughly 1 million between fiscal years 2017–2020 to more than 3 million since the start of fiscal year 2021.

That's largely because the Biden-Harris administration has devised a host of unlawful, mass-parole programs that encourage otherwise-inadmissible aliens to cross at our land, sea, and airports instead of between them.

This solves the terrible optics problem of overcrowded Border Patrol facilities and overwhelmed agents, but the end result is the same—tens of thousands of inadmissible aliens released into the interior every month. It's just a shell game—a sleight of hand to skew the numbers.

It's like when a parent tells their children to clean their room, only to find the mess simply moved from the floor to the closet. Things might look cleaner, but the underlying problem has not been addressed. So it is with the Biden-Harris administration's border policies.

Other numbers further highlight the crisis. Tragically, roughly 200,000 Americans have died from fentanyl that has been smuggled across the Southwest Border by criminal cartels. Border Patrol arrests of illegal aliens with criminal backgrounds have more than doubled on Biden and Harris' watch, from around 22,000 to more than 53,000. Apprehensions of Chinese nationals crossing the Southwest Border illegally exceed 36,000 just this fiscal year—more than fiscal year 2017–20 combined. These are major national security and public safety concerns.

This unprecedented surge across our borders was made possible by the Biden-Harris administration. In 2019 and 2020, Biden and Harris both declared they supported decriminalizing border crossings. Biden said that suspected criminal illegal aliens arrested by local law enforcement should not be handed over to ICE. Harris called building more border wall system “a stupid use of money.” Biden encouraged illegal aliens to “surge” to our border to flood our asylum system with illegitimate claims.

Their open-borders and anti-enforcement rhetoric soon became reality.

Upon assuming office, Biden and Harris worked immediately to end effective border-security policies and to dismantle decades of bipartisan immigration enforcement.

For example, Biden and Harris have gutted detention. For example, in fiscal year 2013, the Obama administration detained 91 percent of all illegal aliens—82 percent of them from the time they were encountered until their case was resolved. In Biden and Harris' first year in office, that 82 percent dropped to just 10 percent.

Removals have also plummeted, from more than 267,000 in fiscal year 2019 to around half that number last year, and as low as 59,000 in fiscal year 2021. Even worse, removals of criminal aliens plummeted from around 173,000 in fiscal year 2019 to just around 70,000 last fiscal year. And just yesterday, prominent border correspondent Ali Bradley reported exclusive ICE figures showing that since the Biden-Harris administration ended Title 42 in May 2023, the administration has only removed around 23 percent of all inadmissible aliens encountered.

Despite the limitations put on them by their leaders, the men and women of CBP and ICE have continued to perform their jobs above and beyond the call of duty, and I commend them for their unwavering service to the Nation. Yet they know it is not supposed to be this way.

Today, you will no doubt hear more blame-shifting and excuses by my colleagues across the aisle. But all of it is meant to mislead. You'll probably hear about the recent drop in illegal border crossings between ports of entry along our Southwest Border.

However, this does not account for the thousands of inadmissible aliens coming in daily through ports of entry, nor does it undo the damage done by the millions that have come in over the past 3½ years.

The evidence also suggests no connection between Biden's recent, loophole-ridden Executive Order and these new numbers, but rather, stepped-up interior enforcement by Mexico. As we saw recently, that enforcement is waning, with the Mexican government now busing CBP One appointment holders from southern Mexico to our own Southwest Border.

Coming almost 4 years into this self-inflicted crisis, the administration's action is much too little, and FAR too late. For numerous families across this country, like those of Rachel Morin, Laken Riley, and Jocelyn Nungaray, the damage will never be undone.

You certainly won't hear how the Senate's border bill, which just a single Republican helped write, would have made the crisis worse.

It would have only allowed tough restrictions once encounters passed several thousand per day, mandated mass releases through "noncustodial detention," improperly expanded the use of parole, and more. It was a terrible bill, one that was roundly criticized by the former heads of CBP, the Border Patrol, and ICE.

Today's hearing is about getting the unvarnished truth from Americans who have been forced to live out the Biden-Harris open-borders nightmare in their own lives.

This administration has completely undermined border security, through a host of policies and decisions that have overwhelmed and sidelined the Border Patrol. Biden and Harris have gutted ICE's ability to conduct immigration enforcement in the interior, making it harder to detain and remove illegal aliens, including criminals. And innocent Americans are suffering as a result. The story you will hear from Patty Morin today is sadly just one of tens of thousands of stories of pain, suffering, and preventable tragedy.

What you will hear from Jim Desmond is the account of a major American city that has been overwhelmed and overrun.

It does not have to be like this. Later today, my committee will release a comprehensive report documenting in even more painful, objective detail how Biden, Harris, and their administration have thrown open our borders, and the chaos that has resulted. I encourage all Americans to read it at homeland.house.gov.

As we continue to witness Biden and Harris' resistance to doing anything meaningful about this disaster, we have to ask—why? Why did they let this crisis take place and why have they let it continue? I hope this hearing provides some answers, and inspires President Biden and Vice President Harris to do what they so far have refused to—end this crisis and secure our borders.

Chairman GREEN. I now recognize the Ranking Member, the gentleman from Mississippi, Mr. Thompson, for his opening statement.

Mr. THOMPSON. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I welcome our witnesses this morning.

But before I start, I want to begin by expressing my appreciation to the Secret Service for their work protecting President Trump over the weekend. There is no place for political violence in our country, and I won't—I am thankful former President Trump was unharmed.

Turning to today's topic, I want to start by discussing the situation unfolding in Springfield, Ohio. In recent days, the Springfield community has received at least 33 bomb threats against schools, hospitals, and city facilities because of false rumors about Haitian immigrants abducting and eating pets in their community. Elementary schools have been evacuated. Residents are understandably shaken, and Governor Mike DeWine has developed—deployed State troopers to reassure the community. The Governor has tried to dispel the false rumors, saying, "There's no evidence at all of anyone eating a dog or a Haitian doing any of that. These Haitians that are there are legal. They work every day very, very hard". City officials have also repeatedly refuted the lies. Yet former President Trump and running mate J.D. Vance have pushed the false rumors, with the former President saying, "They're eating the dogs. The people that came in, they're eating the cats". Apparently, aware the rumors are false, J.D. Vance nonetheless tried to justify "creating stories" on the matter.

Anti-immigrant rhetoric and racist tropes should have no place in our public discourse. They are un-American, and too often they have helped fuel real-world violence against immigrants and minority communities across the country. We recently observed the fifth anniversary of the Walmart attack in El Paso, Texas. A self-described white nationalist targeted a Hispanic community along the border, shooting and killing 23 innocent people and injuring 22

more. Tragically, similar violent ideology led to deaths of 10 shoppers in a predominantly African-American community in Buffalo and 11 members of the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh. We have an obligation to be responsible with our rhetoric as we discuss border security and immigration.

Then there is, in fact, a lot to discuss. From the Biden-Harris administration's successful efforts to bring down the number of unlawful border crossings to the on-going need for Congressional action to fix our broken immigration system and provide more border security resources. While you probably won't hear it from those on the other side, border encounters are at their lowest level in years. Since the President's proclamation on June 4, encounters along the border and ports of entry have decreased by 55 percent, with Border Patrol recording the lowest number of border encounters since September 2020.

The Biden-Harris administration has also removed more than 92,000 individuals to more than 130 countries and conducted over 300 international repatriation flights. Total removals and returns over the last year exceed the total removals and returns for any year since 2010.

The administration has also decreased the number of people released from detention pending their immigration removal proceedings by 70 percent. Meanwhile, Customs and Border Protection has seized more fentanyl than in the last 5 years combined, keeping the dangerous drug from reaching our streets.

None of these administration actions are a substitute for Congressional actions to fix our immigration system and provide resources to law enforcement on the border. Only Congress can do that, and it is our responsibility to act. Unfortunately, my colleagues on the other side have refused to move legitimate border security legislation all Congress. At the direction of former President Trump, Republicans blocked the Senate bipartisan border deal, and they are refusing to move necessary border security funding. Republicans don't want border security solutions. They want a political issue. Don't believe me. Well, they themselves have admitted putting partisanship over progress. As one GOP Member of Congress said he is not willing to "do too damn much right now to help a Democrat. Why would I?" That is Washington at its worst.

Former President Trump has now called for the largest deportation program in U.S. history with so-called concepts of a plan to deport 11 million undocumented migrants "following the Eisenhower model". The Eisenhower model, more commonly known by a name that includes an ethnic slur, which I won't repeat here, was a mass deportation begun in 1954 that rounded up more than 1 million immigrants, as well as brown-skinned American citizens. The former President even suggested using the military to sweep people under his plan, which would cause chaos in border communities, destroy millions of American families, and leave critical sectors of our economy, like agriculture, without the workers they need.

Instead of partisan fear-mongering and dystopian deportation plans, we need real solutions about how we can strengthen border security, fix our immigration system, and grow our economy while upholding our American values. Sheriff Hathaway, an enforcement officer on the border, former DEA agent, and a fifth-generation Ari-

zonian, I look forward to your insights today. I know you take great pride in your beautiful, safe community and have said that the immigrants who live there are family-oriented people of faith. I want to hear about what Congress can do to support you in your work. I welcome all of our witnesses and thank you for being here today.

Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

[The statement of Ranking Member Thompson follows:]

STATEMENT OF RANKING MEMBER BENNIE G. THOMPSON

SEPTEMBER 18, 2024

A PARTY WITHOUT SHAME: REPUBLICAN CAMPAIGN SEASON STUNTS IGNORE THE BORDER AND LEAD TO THREATS ON OUR COMMUNITIES

I want to begin by expressing my appreciation to the Secret Service for their work protecting President Trump over the weekend. There is no place for political violence in our country, and I am thankful former President Trump was unharmed.

Turning to the topic of today's hearing, I want to start by discussing the situation unfolding in Springfield, Ohio. In recent days, the Springfield community has received at least 33 bomb threats against schools, hospitals, and city facilities because of false rumors about Haitian immigrants abducting and eating pets in the community. Elementary schools have been evacuated, residents are understandably shaken, and Governor Mike DeWine has deployed State troopers to reassure the community.

The Governor has tried to dispel the false rumors, saying "there is no evidence at all of anyone eating a dog or any Haitians doing any of that. These Haitians that are there are legal, and they work very, very hard." City officials have also repeatedly refuted the lies.

Yet former President Trump and running mate JD Vance have pushed the false rumors, with the former President saying, "they're eating the dogs—the people that came in—they're eating the cats." Apparently aware the rumors are false, JD Vance nonetheless tried to justify "create[ing] stories" on the matter.

Anti-immigrant rhetoric and racist tropes should have no place in our public discourse. They are un-American. And too often, they have helped fuel real-world violence against immigrant and minority communities across our country.

We recently observed the fifth anniversary of the Walmart attack in El Paso, Texas. A self-described white nationalist targeted a Hispanic community along the border, shooting and killing 23 innocent people and injuring 22 more. Tragically, similar violent ideology led to the deaths of 10 shoppers in a predominantly African American community in Buffalo and 11 members of the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh. We have an obligation to be responsible with our rhetoric as we discuss border security and immigration.

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Former President Trump has now called for the largest deportation program in U.S. history, with so-called "concepts of a plan" to deport 11 million undocumented migrants "following the Eisenhower model."

The "Eisenhower model"—more commonly known by a name that includes an ethnic slur, which I won't repeat here—was a mass deportation begun in 1954 that rounded up more than 1 million immigrants as well as brown-skinned American citizens.

The former President even suggested using the military to sweep people up under his plan, which would cause chaos in border communities, destroy millions of American families, and leave critical sectors of our economy like agriculture without the workers they need.

Instead of partisan fearmongering and dystopian deportation plans, we need real solutions about how we can strengthen border security, fix our immigration system, and grow our economy while upholding our American values.

Sheriff Hathaway, as enforcement officer on the border, former DEA agent, and a fifth-generation Arizonan, I look forward to your insights today. I know you take great pride in your beautiful, safe community and have said that the immigrants who live there are family-oriented people of faith. I want to hear about what Congress can do to support you in your work. I welcome all of our witnesses and thank you for being here today.

Chairman GREEN. Thank you, Ranking Member. Other Members of the committee are reminded that opening statements may be submitted for the record.

I am pleased to have an important panel of witnesses before us today, and I ask that our witnesses please rise and raise your right hand.

[Witnesses sworn.]

Chairman GREEN. Let the record reflect that the witnesses have answered in the affirmative. Thank you. Please be seated.

I would now like to formally introduce our great panel of witnesses. Aaron Heitke served as an agent with the United States Border Patrol for over 25 years before retiring in July 2023. During his time with the Border Patrol, he was stationed in Arizona, Minnesota, Maine, Washington, DC, Montana, North Dakota, and California. He held multiple positions to include patrol agent in charge, associate chief and deputy chief patrol agent before finishing his career as chief patrol agent of Grand Forks sector and San Diego sector. Mr. Heitke earned a bachelor of science degree in criminology from the University of Minnesota at Duluth and a juris doctorate degree from the University of North Dakota School of Law.

Ms. Patty Morin was born in New York City and has 6 children. She was a stay-at-home mom for 25 years and homeschooled her children. She returned to the work force after the oldest child graduated high school and entered the mortgage banking industry for 6 years. She then pivoted and spent 10 years in retail management until she retired. She is currently retired and works part time as an office administrator for a church while living in Maryland. She is the mother of Rachel Morin, who was tragically murdered August 2023.

Mr. Jim Desmond is a San Diego county supervisor, a U.S. Navy veteran, and a retired 33-year Delta Airlines pilot and captain. San Diego County Board of Supervisors oversees a region that spans over 4,200 square miles and includes 70 miles of Pacific coastline and shares a 60-mile international border with Mexico. With a pop-

ulation exceeding 3 million, San Diego County is the fifth-most populous populace in the United States, presenting diverse challenges and opportunities. As supervisor, Jim plays a crucial role in shaping policies impacting the county's urban and rural communities. Prior to serving as county supervisor, Mr. Desmond served for 12 years as the mayor of San Marcos, California, in San Diego County. He has served on many local communities and commissions in his roles as county supervisor and mayor.

Sheriff David Hathaway is the sheriff of Santa Cruz County, Arizona. After graduating from the University of Arizona, he started his law enforcement career as a deputy sheriff with the Santa Cruz County Sheriff's Office. He then embarked on a Federal law enforcement career and worked in multiple DEA offices in the United States and in foreign countries where he occupied various supervisory positions. His last assignment before retiring was as the head of the DEA office in Nogales.

I thank all our witnesses for being here today, and I now recognize Mr. Heitke for 5 minutes to summarize his opening statement.

STATEMENT OF AARON HEITKE, PRIVATE CITIZEN, FORMER CHIEF PATROL AGENT, SAN DIEGO SECTOR, U.S. CUSTOMS AND BORDER PROTECTION

Mr. HEITKE. Mr. Chairman, distinguished Members, thank you for this opportunity. The only true consequence we have to slow down and discourage people from coming into the United States illegally is sending them back to their country of origin. Throughout the first 3-plus years of this administration, I saw a steady decrease in the countries we could send people back to. For the first time in my 25 years and under 5 different administrations, whether through neglect or on purpose, I saw a large-scale lapse in our ability to return people to their country of origin.

The inability to send people home meant that most people being arrested for illegal entry would either have to be detained or released. The current administration, however, from Day one, made a point of decreasing the amount of detention space available nationwide. Immigration and Customs Enforcement's funding for detention has steadily been cut, and private detention eliminated.

The fact that so many illegal aliens are being released into the United States spread world-wide very quickly. As this happened, the numbers the Border Patrol encountered illegally crossing the border increased exponentially. The impact to me and my agents were significant. Sectors were ordered to take in and process all the illegal aliens encountered on the border. The Border Patrol saw groups of hundreds and thousands coming into the United States and turning themselves in. These numbers pulled 80, 90, sometimes 100 percent of the agents on duty away from the border. Border Patrol zones across Texas, Arizona, and California had no agent presence for weeks and months at a time. Those who did not want to be caught could simply walk in. We have no idea who and what entered our country over this time.

Throughout 2022 and 2023, I sent agents to Texas and Arizona to count gotaways. Those sectors could not even put enough agents in the field to see what they've missed. Simultaneously, in San Diego, we had an exponential increase in significant interest aliens.

These are aliens with significant ties to terrorism. Prior to this administration, the San Diego sector averaged 10 to 15 SIA arrests per year. Once word was out, the border was far easier to cross. San Diego went to over 100 SIAs in 2022, well over that in 2023, and even more than that registered this year. These are only the ones we caught.

At the time, I was told I could not release any information on this increase in SIAs or mention any of the arrests. The administration was trying to convince the public there was no threat at the border.

Fentanyl is another issue. The San Diego area sees between 80 and 90 percent of the methamphetamine and fentanyl seizures annually for our entire country. With little enforcement at the border, these drugs were coming through en masse. During my last year in San Diego, the price for a single pill of fentanyl, for example, went from \$10 to 25 cents. To make matters worse, during 2022 and 2023, I had to shut down San Diego traffic checkpoints, which are critical for drug interdiction, because the resources had been diverted to the process-and-release mission.

The large numbers also had, and still have a negative impact on the San Diego community. I had to release illegal aliens by the hundreds each day into communities who could not support them. To quiet the problem, 2 flights a week were provided from San Diego to Texas. These flights simply brought aliens that would have been released in San Diego over to Texas. Each flight cost approximately \$150,000. This was the administration's way to try and quiet the border-wide crisis.

Once these flights were stopped and the releases continued, California saw the true economic impact. I received calls from the Governor's office, local mayors, and hospital administrators asking me if we could keep injured aliens in custody so the Federal Government would pay the medical bills.

Through pressure from the administration, my headquarters became more interested in the fiction that was being portrayed in the media and not at all concerned with reality. Each time we asked for help in dealing with a new issue, it fell on deaf ears. At times in San Diego, we had 2,000 or more aliens sitting in between the fences asking to turn themselves in. I was told to move them out of sight of the media.

Meanwhile, Border Patrol agents are continually forgotten and neglected by the media and this administration. These agents deal with death; women and children that have been raped, abused, trafficked, bought, and sold; families that have spent months in terrible conditions; sickness and despair. If you look at the dramatic rise in the number of suicides within the Border Patrol, it is directly correlated with the migrant surge. The agents have been pushed beyond their limit and this has greatly impacted their physical and mental health.

While current numbers of aliens crossing our border are lower in comparison in recent months, there's a reason for this. After nearly 4 years, this administration finally started to ask Mexico for help in slowing down the traffic through their country. This and other actions make a difference, but why has it taken so long? All of these tactics were being used before this administration took office,

but this administration stopped or greatly limited them. I'm also concerned this will not be maintained.

The problems we are facing at the border have solutions. These solutions can be quite simple and cost far less than the mess currently occupying so much time and money. The return to a policy of enforcing the law and returning illegal aliens to their home countries is required. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Heitke follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF AARON HEITKE

Mr. Chairman, distinguished Members, thank you for this opportunity.

The only true consequence we have to slow down and discourage people from coming to the United States illegally is sending them back to their country of origin.

Throughout the first 3+ years of this administration, I saw a steady decrease in countries we could send people back to. For the first time in my 25 years and under 5 different administrations, whether through neglect or on purpose, I saw a large-scale lapse in our ability to return people to their country of origin.

The inability to send people home meant that most people being arrested for illegal entry would either have to be detained or released. The current administration, however, from Day 1, made a point of decreasing the amount of detention space available nationwide. Immigration and Customs Enforcement's funding for detention space has steadily been cut and private detention eliminated.

The fact that so many illegal aliens were being released into the United States spread world-wide very quickly. As this happened the numbers the Border Patrol encountered illegally crossing the border increased exponentially.

The impacts to me and my agents were significant. Sectors were ordered to take in and process all the illegal aliens encountered on the border. The Border Patrol saw groups of hundreds and thousands coming into the United States and turning themselves in. These numbers pulled 80-90 percent, sometimes 100 percent of the agents on duty away from the border. Border Patrol zones across Texas, Arizona, and California had no agent presence for weeks and months at a time. Those who did not want to be caught could simply walk in. We have no idea who and what entered our country over this time. Throughout 2022 and 2023 I sent agents to Texas and Arizona to count gotaways. Those sectors could not even put enough agents in the field to see what they had missed.

Simultaneously, in San Diego we had an exponential increase in Significant Interest Aliens. These are aliens with significant ties to terrorism. Prior to this administration, the San Diego sector averaged 10-15 SIAs per year. Once word was out that the border was far easier to cross, San Diego went to over 100 SIAs in 2022, way over 100 SIAs in 2023 and more than that this year. These are only the ones we caught. At the time, I was told I could not release any information on this increase in SIA's or mention any of the arrests. The administration was trying to convince the public that there was no threat at the border.

Fentanyl is another issue. The San Diego area sees between 80-90 percent of the methamphetamine and fentanyl seizures annually for our entire country. With little enforcement at the border these drugs were coming through in mass. During my last year in San Diego the price for a single fentanyl pill, for example, went from \$10 to 25 cents.

To make matters worse, during 2022 and 2023 I had to shut down the San Diego traffic checkpoints, which are critical for drug interdiction, because resources had been diverted to the process and release mission.

The large numbers also had and still have a negative impact on the San Diego community. I had to release illegal aliens by the hundreds each day into communities who couldn't support them. To quiet the problem 2 flights a week were provided from San Diego to Texas. These flights simply brought aliens that would have been released in San Diego over to Texas. Each flight cost approximately \$150,000. This was the administration's way of trying to quiet the border-wide crisis. Once these flights stopped and releases continued, California saw the true economic impact. I received calls from the Governor's office, local mayors, and hospital administrators asking if we could keep injured aliens in our custody so the Federal Government would pay the bills. Through pressure from the administration, my headquarters became more interested in the fiction being portrayed in the media and not at all concerned with reality. Each time we asked for help in dealing with a new issue it fell on deaf ears. At times in San Diego, we had 2,000 or more aliens sitting

in between the fences asking to turn themselves in. I was told to move them out of sight of the media.

Meanwhile, Border Patrol agents are continually forgotten and neglected by the media and this administration. These agents deal with death, women and children that have been raped, abused, trafficked, bought and sold, families that have spent months in terrible conditions, sickness, and despair. If you look at the dramatic rise in the number of suicides within the Border Patrol it is directly correlated with the migrant surge. The agents have been pushed beyond their limit and this has greatly impacted their physical and mental health.

While current numbers of aliens crossing our border are lower in comparison to recent months and years, there is a reason for this. After nearly 4 years this administration finally started to ask Mexico for help in slowing down traffic through their country. This and other actions make a difference but why has it taken so long? All of these tactics were being used before this administration took office, but this administration stopped or greatly limited them. I am also concerned they will not be maintained.

The problems we are facing at the border have solutions. These solutions can be quite simple and cost far less than the mess currently occupying so much time and money. The return to a policy of enforcing the law and returning illegal aliens to their home countries is required.

Chairman GREEN. Thank you, Mr. Heitke.

I now recognize Ms. Morin for 5 minutes to summarize her opening statement.

STATEMENT OF PATTY MORIN, PRIVATE CITIZEN

Ms. MORIN. Thank you, Chairman, Ranking Members, and Congressmen. I appreciate this opportunity to tell Rachel's story.

It started August 6, 2023. I was in Kentucky. We had a grandbaby that had just passed away from sudden infant death. We got the phone call and the phone call went something like this. Hello, Mom? There's somebody here that'd like to speak to you.

OK. Hello?

Hello, Mrs. Morin, this is Detective so-and-so. There's no easy way to tell you this. We found your daughter's body.

I had just learned a few hours earlier that she was missing. We didn't know she was missing. She went on a trail in our town that's very public, very small, and we've walked it for over 25 years. She grew up walking this trail. An illegal immigrant that was a gotaway from El Salvador had waited for her on the trail. I was told that they grabbed her, dragged her through the woods, raped her, strangled her, murdered her. We were told that her body was blanketed in bruises. I can tell you from looking at her when I went to the funeral home that it was probably the most graphic thing that I've ever seen. These murders are very horrendous. He then stuffed her into a drain pipe. So when the detective called and he said, Mrs. Morin, we found your daughter's body, you know that she's dead. It was such a complete shock to our whole family.

It took 10 months for them to find this suspected illegal immigrant. They used DNA because this man had attacked a 9-year-old and her mother in Los Angeles. If they had done the border protocols that were in place, but was set aside, of just a simple DNA swab they would have known that he had an INTERPOL warrant for murder in his home country. That's why he was fleeing to the United States.

They say that the borders are safe. We live 1,800 miles away from the Southern Border. They're not safe. They're not safe. If you have a sanctuary city in your State, you're not safe.

I just traveled up to New England, that's where I hail from, so I could just go get some rest. I was surprised by the amount of immigrants from the Sudan and Congo. Tens of thousands that are up there. We have them coming in our Northern Border. We're not safe. I just hope and pray that you will listen to what we have to say.

I'm trying to make my statement as short as I can so I don't cry. I just—Rachel was—when she was a little girl, she was like a little spitfire. Tiny little redhead. As an adult, she was this, like, vibrant, vivacious, outgoing person. Everybody just loved to know her. She was so compassionate and kind. She had a stammering problem, so she understood what it was like to be made fun of as a kid, so she was very compassionate toward people.

She was a mom to 5 children. She was a businesswoman. She liked to exercise. She's the American mom. She's not the only one in our cities that have been murdered. There was another murder by an illegal immigrant from El Salvador that happened a year before, and that person was—just pleaded guilty to 4 murders, 2 rapes, and numerous other crimes.

They are bringing criminals into our country. They are allowing them into our smallest towns, and our people are dying.

There is a video that we'd like to play. I'll just finish my statement. Apparently, it's not working. So I just want to take the time to thank you for allowing me to be here and to speak my daughter's story. I had planned other things, but it is what it is.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Morin follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF PATTY MORIN

Chairman, Ranking Members, and Members of Congress: Good morning!

My name is Patricia Morin. Thank you for this opportunity to speak on behalf of my family and my daughter Rachel Morin, who was brutally raped and murdered at the hands of an illegal immigrant. This is her story.

The American people need to hear, know, and understand the truth of the horrendous war zone we call the Southern Border.

President Joe Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris's open border policy is having a devastating impact across our great Nation. I live 1,800 miles from the Southern Border in a small town in northern Maryland. Yet a man who was wanted for murder in El Salvador made his way to my community . . . and ambushed my daughter on a quaint walking trail in broad daylight.

I'm here today to make sure that my daughter is remembered as more than a victim. I hope that her story will be the wake-up call that this country needs to secure its borders and protect American citizens.

As a child, Rachel was imaginative, kind, and upbeat—qualities she brought with her into adulthood. She was a loving daughter and formed strong bonds with her siblings. She was funny and exuberant, with an infectious laugh.

Life wasn't always easy for Rachel. She had a speech impediment growing up, which led to a lot of bullying. She did not let that challenge slow her down or define her worth. It made her even more sensitive and loving toward others who felt unloved.

As a mother, Rachel was playful and silly. She often laughed, joked, and played with her kids like she was a kid, too. This is pretty remarkable when you consider that Rachel was a mother of 5, which is a tremendous responsibility.

Holidays and celebrations were very important to Rachel. She went all out to decorate and create memorable and magical moments for her children. Those efforts are especially meaningful now since memories are all that her children have left of their mother.

Rachel created meaningful connections with her kids through every-day activities as well. She believed in health and movement. Walks, swimming, working out, and bike rides were always part of Rachel's routine.

She grew up walking the quaint "Ma & Pa" trail near our house. We always thought of the trail as a safe haven to get outside and find peace in nature. It never

occurred to us that a predator would target Rachel while she was jogging on that bright, sunny day in August 2023.

The circumstances of Rachel's death triggered extreme shock and denial for our family.

We felt heartbroken at the severity and cruelty of the crime.

We experienced extreme terror and nightmares for months. To this day, we still do not feel completely safe in our own homes and community.

We are grieving the loss of Rachel's life and the future that was taken from her. That trauma is different for every member of the family. I lost my daughter, and I am heartbroken for her children. Rachel's siblings are mourning the bright light that Rachel brought to our family. The most traumatic impact is on Rachel's 5 children, each of whom is struggling to figure out how to cope without their mom.

Rachel's eldest daughter is pregnant and will soon have a daughter of her own. She is navigating that path into womanhood and motherhood without her own mother. Her baby's birth is another milestone Rachel can't share with us, and that sadness underscores every life event now.

The circumstances of Rachel's death compounded our grief. It took months for investigators to find Rachel's killer. While that process played out, our family endured false accusations and assaults on our character. Instead lifting us up, some community members froze us out. Relatives lost jobs because some community members thought it was bad business to mix with a family amid a murder investigation.

We felt helpless and defeated as the months passed without an arrest. Finally, police released a sketch of the suspect, which renewed our hope. We made commercials, distributed flyers, and did countless interviews to bring attention to the case. The nationwide manhunt ultimately led police to an El Salvadoran national. This suspected gang member was arrested at a bar in Tulsa, Oklahoma, and extradited to Maryland.

We felt relieved when the suspect was finally caught. But that relief quickly turned to horror and outrage when we learned that the suspect was an illegal immigrant. This man was wanted for killing a woman in his home country when he walked into ours.

What's worse is that Border Patrol would have known that if they had followed the law and swabbed him for DNA the first 3 times he tried to get into this country. They just turned him around and allowed him to come back again and again until he finally got through the border.

Border Patrol let a man with an open interpol warrant for murder walk right into our country to continue his crime spree. The open border policy of Joe Biden and Kamala Harris caused my daughter's death. It allowed a dangerous man to flee his home country to avoid capture and bring his reign of terror to American citizens. Not only did this man brutalize my daughter. He's also accused of attacking a 9-year-old girl in California. Who knows what else he did while traveling from coast to coast?

American citizens are not safe because Joe Biden and Kamala Harris removed the policies and safeguards that keep criminals out of our country. Their failed open border policies have led to two murders by illegal immigrants in my small town alone.

I really want you to hear my words and take to heart what I and other families across America are saying. Please hear our cries for help! You each have taken an oath . . . an oath to serve our Nation and the citizens who make it great. Protect Americans by securing our borders.

We are losing American mothers, daughters, and children to criminals. These deaths are 100 percent preventable. Let's use our resources to protect Americans and welcome immigrants who choose to enter our country legally. This makes much more sense than spending taxpayer money to feed, house, and provide medical care to illegal immigrants.

The Biden/Harris administration has turned a deaf ear to the people they swore to protect. Please don't do the same. It's common sense to screen the people entering our country to ensure that they are here to contribute to our society rather debase it and harm our citizens.

Do this for Rachel. Please.





Chairman GREEN. Well, hopefully we get it. Are we close to getting it figured out here, team? We will definitely do that.

Ms. MORIN. OK. Thank you very much.

Chairman GREEN. Yes, we will get it played here. Hopefully they will figure that out.

Ms. MORIN. OK. Thank you very much.

Chairman GREEN. Yes. Thank you, Ms. Morin.

I now recognize Mr. Desmond for 5 minutes to summarize his opening statement.

STATEMENT OF JIM DESMOND, COUNTY SUPERVISOR D5, SAN DIEGO COUNTY, CALIFORNIA

Mr. DESMOND. Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman, for the opportunity to speak today.

From September 2023 to June 2024, over 155,000 adults, predominantly males between the ages of 18 to 35 who crossed our border illegally were bussed and dropped onto the streets of San Diego County. That's an average of almost 600 per day, 7 days a week for 9 months. No community, no county, no country can sustain that type of an invasion, an invasion of people crossing our borders illegally and being released into our communities without proper screening or vetting.

I saw first-hand large vans and buses driven by Border Patrol agents pull into a San Diego County transit station and unload hundreds of people at a time, people who had just hours ago illegally crossed our borders, stepped off a shuttle, and were free to go into our communities ahead of anyone legally trying to enter our country. The first question for many people that I approached at the transit stations was, where am I? How do I get to Virginia, New York, or Denver?

In Jacumba, California, a small border community about 50 miles east of San Diego, I came upon an early morning encampment of approximately 50 people who illegally crossed the border the night before. They were waiting for the Border Patrol to pick them up and process them and then potentially be dropped in our streets. One man from India traveling with his friends said he paid \$8,000 to an entity in India for the unimpeded passage across our Southern Border.

That same morning in Jacumba, a Border Patrol agent told us that a group was coming across the border within the next half an hour. Soon, a black Suburban on the Mexico side of our broken fence sped across a dirt road, stopped, and dropped off about a dozen people, and then sped away. Men, women, and children wearing backpacks and pulling luggage crossed our border illegally, merely walking through a hole in the fence, approached the Border Patrol agent, and asked for asylum.

Our Border Patrol has been reduced to processing agents standing by, watching people break our laws. One officer told me with deep frustration that his orders from the Federal Government were clear. Stand down. Do not engage, just process.

What's more alarming is what teams saw later, was dozens of Chinese nationals dragging luggage down dirt roads at night. This is not an isolated incident. This is a daily reality in San Diego County. Border Patrol has become their Uber driver from the bor-

der into the city of San Diego, and San Diego County has become their nationwide travel agents at the taxpayers' expense.

San Diego County itself, we spent \$6 million to set up a migrant receiving center to assist those dropped here to move them more quickly to other parts of the country. These were local dollars that could have been spent on roads, infrastructure, and parks. Migrants slept in San Diego Airport. They stay in our homeless shelters, and our hospital and health care systems are strained.

But what concerns me even more is our safety as a community and a country. Border Patrol agents do not have the time or resources or the ability to properly vet millions coming across our borders. I have witnessed and have brought samples of torn and shredded legal ID cards and passports that Mexico requires, and we do not. These remnants and ID cards are left on the ground within the first few steps into the United States. With no documentation our agents cannot be sure of their countries of origin, restricting background checks and jeopardizing our safety.

What really keeps me up at night are the gotaways, the one who illegally cross our borders, who don't ask for asylum. They bypass our Border Patrol. They come onto our shores smuggling children and drugs by jet skis and boats. Boats are literally driven onto our beaches, abandoned, and the occupants run into our communities unimpeded because we are a sanctuary State. We have no idea who they are, where they're going, what their intentions are. They come and, poof, disappear, making our county and our country unsafe.

I want to close with a warning for those here today. Most of the people crossing the border illegally do not stay in San Diego County. We're the doormat. They disperse across the country. They are headed to States and cities across the United States with potentially very dangerous nationwide implications. The Biden-Harris administration created this mess, and they refuse to acknowledge it. The administration is not properly vetting the millions of people led into our communities, and they are making our border counties and our Nation unsafe.

Thank you.

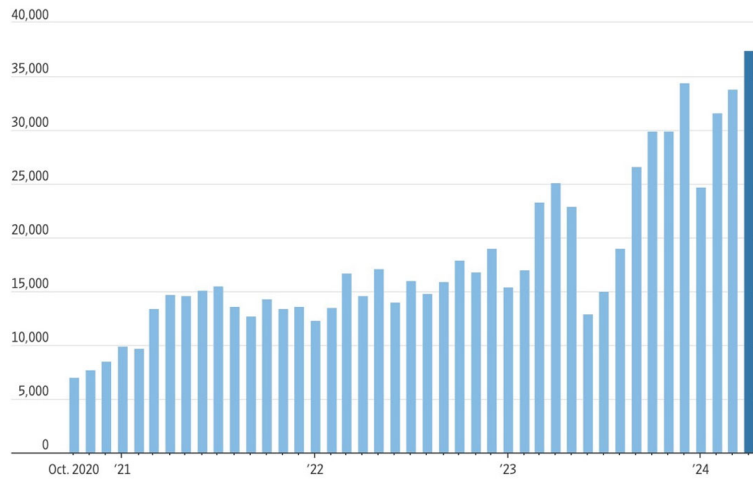
[The prepared statement of Mr. Desmond follows:]

SEPTEMBER 18, 2024

PREPARED STATEMENT OF JIM DESMOND

On December 24, 2022, San Diego was caught off guard by the news that Border Patrol, overwhelmed by the surge of migrants, would begin releasing them at transit stops across the county. This unexpected decision required an immediate response to prevent our transit hubs and homeless shelters from being overwhelmed by the influx of people seeking refuge.

U.S. Border Patrol apprehensions along the San Diego sector of the southwest border, monthly



Source: U.S. Customs and Border Protection

This marked the beginning of a broken immigration system playing out in San Diego County. From September 2023 to June 2024, more than 155,000 adults, predominantly males between the ages of 18 to 35, illegally crossed our border and were bused into the streets of San Diego County. That averages 17,000 per month—almost 600 per day. No community, county, or country can sustain this kind of on-going influx.



I witnessed, first-hand, large vans and buses, driven by Border Patrol agents, pulling up to San Diego transit stops and unloading hundreds of migrants at a time. Many of these individuals, with nothing more than a small backpack, had no idea where they were or what to do next. The first question many asked me when I approached them was, "Where am I?" This level of disorganization exemplifies the lack of competence and control at our border.



The process essentially goes like this: “Welcome to America. Here are papers that allow you to stay. Show up to your court hearing—scheduled for 2030—in whichever city you claim you are headed to. In the mean time, we’re dropping you at a trolley stop.”

The situation extends beyond the city limits. In Jacumba, CA, a small border community 50 miles east of downtown San Diego, I encountered an early morning encampment of around 50 migrants who had crossed the border the previous night. They were waiting for Border Patrol to pick them up, process them, and then release them onto our streets. One man from India told me he paid \$8,000, in his home country, for passage across our Southern Border.

That same morning, a Border Patrol agent informed me that another group was crossing the border within the next 30 minutes. Soon enough, a black SUV sped down a dirt road on the Mexican side, dropped off a dozen migrants, and sped away. These men, women, and children, carrying backpacks and luggage, walked through the gaping hole in the fence, approached Border Patrol, and asked for asylum.



Even more alarming was what my team witnessed later: dozens of Chinese nationals, dragging luggage down dirt roads at night. This isn't a one-off occurrence; this is a daily reality for San Diego County. Border Patrol has essentially become an Uber service for migrants, and San Diego County has become their travel agent.

Our Border Patrol agents have been reduced to mere processing agents, standing by as our laws are broken. One officer, speaking with deep frustration, shared that their orders from the Federal Government were explicit: "Stand down."

San Diego County spent \$6 million in local funds to establish a migrant receiving center to assist in quickly relocating these individuals to other parts of the country. That's \$6 million that could have been used for roads, infrastructure, and parks.

Migrants now sleep in the San Diego Airport and occupy homeless shelters, while our hospital and health care systems are stretched to their limits. Dr. Jay Doucet, division chief of trauma and surgical care at UC San Diego Health, described the

situation as a public health crisis. “People are being severely injured or dying at the border, and this is impacting trauma care availability for San Diegans.”



The local financial toll is staggering, but the national security threat is even more concerning. Our Border Patrol agents don't have the time or resources to properly vet the individuals crossing. Many countries don't share criminal databases with the United States, leaving us in the dark about who we are admitting.

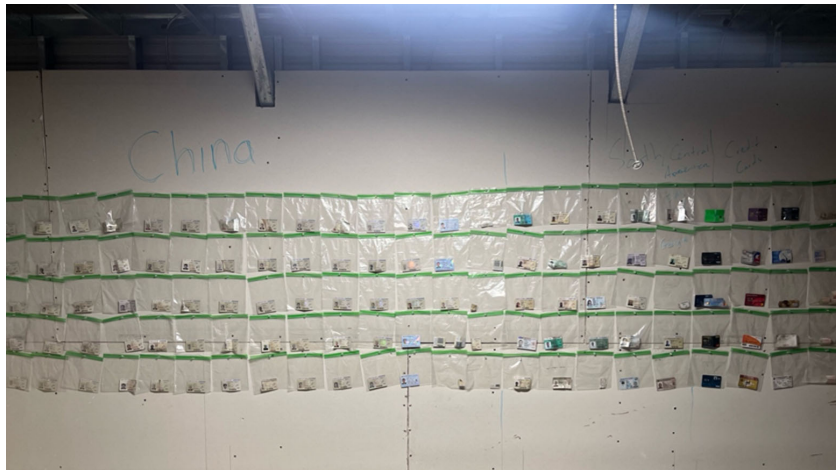
This is not just a broken system—it's a threat to our national security.

San Diego now accounts for 85 percent of all “Special Interest Aliens”—individuals with known ties to terrorism. And over the past year, we've seen an unprecedented number of 30,000 Chinese nationals enter our region.

California has become a magnet for illegal immigration, incentivized by free health care, in-State tuition, and now efforts to provide home loans and taxpayer-funded legal services for deportation cases. But make no mistake—San Diego County is just the doorstep.

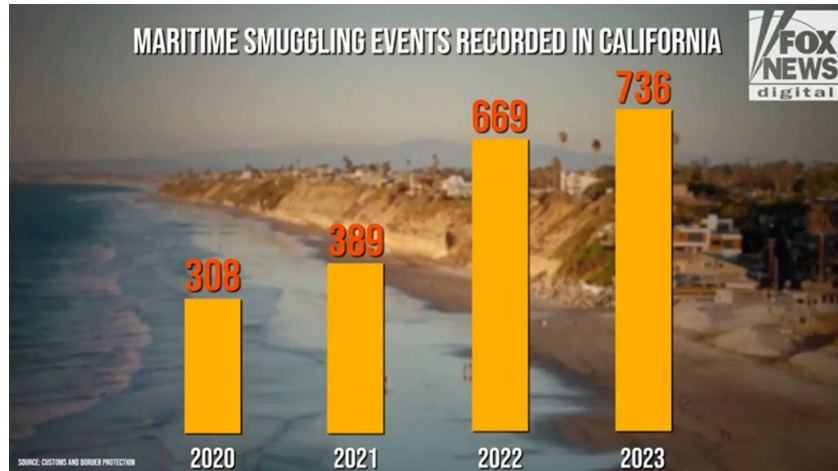
In fact, local law enforcement cannot cooperate with Federal officials in California. California maintains Sanctuary State laws that, for example, forbid local law enforcement from communicating and cooperating with Federal Immigration agents.

I have witnessed and brought samples of torn and ripped legal documents, that Mexico requires, but the United States does not, left on the ground as they cross our borders. With no documentation, our agents can't be sure of countries of origin, and certainly can't do proper background checks.



What's worse are the "got-aways"—those who bypass Border Patrol entirely. Whether they come ashore by boat or cross the border by other means, they vanish without a trace. On April 13, 2024, in broad daylight, a boat carrying a dozen migrants washed ashore in Carlsbad, North County San Diego. They ran into affluent beach neighborhoods, where black SUVs waited to take them further into the country. These individuals chose to evade Border Patrol altogether, leaving us with no information about their identities or intentions.





Even though the street releases have stopped, the chaos at the border continues. Border Patrol facilities remain over capacity, forcing the Federal Government to fly illegal immigrants from San Diego to McAllen, Texas.





For decades, the focus has been on Arizona and Texas, but San Diego has now become the epicenter of illegal immigration, placing an unsustainable burden on our local communities and endangering neighborhoods. However, this is not just a San Diego problem. Most illegal immigrants don't stay in border towns; they disperse across the country. This is a national crisis.

The Biden-Harris administration created this mess, and now they refuse to acknowledge it. In the end, it's counties like San Diego, and the entire Nation, that are left dealing with the fallout.





Chairman GREEN. Thank you, Mr. Desmond.

I now recognize Sheriff Hathaway for 5 minutes to summarize his opening statement.

STATEMENT OF DAVID HATHAWAY, SHERIFF, SANTA CRUZ COUNTY, ARIZONA

Mr. HATHAWAY. Thank you, Chairman Green and Ranking Member Thompson, for inviting me to testify to your committee.

I am the sheriff of a county in Arizona, a border county. My county has the largest ports of entry with Mexico of all the border counties in Arizona: a large commercial port of entry, 2 large pedestrian ports of entry, a passenger vehicle port of entry, a railroad port of entry. So we have the largest volume of movement of any border county in Arizona. Our community is very safe. Crime rates are low. Crime rates are lower than the average for the State of Arizona, lower than Tucson, lower than Phoenix.

But I do have concern over the growing police state and surveillance state in the United States. The Border Patrol has what is called extended border search authority. We call this the Constitution-free zone. Any area within 100 miles of the international border, Border Patrol does not need to have probable cause to search, to detain you, to interrogate you. This includes two-thirds of the population of the United States, cities like San Francisco, Los Angeles, New York, Seattle, Washington, DC, Miami, Houston.

But, you know, our border community is safe. But there are things that Congress can do, and you need to act. If you don't act, Presidential administrations will use Executive action to solve these problems. In the current and the former administration, the Executive branch is incentivized to come up with solutions because Congress has not acted. We have talked for years about comprehensive, you know, immigration reform. There are things that can be done.

First of all, we need to have a robust guest worker program. You know, Title 8 needs to be revamped. Title 8 is the umbrella United States Code that covers all aspects of immigration, asylum, visas.

I have empathy for our Federal partners because they don't know what they're allowed to do. They don't know, do we still have work visas, student visas, you know, tourist visas? All the protocols with everything to do with the border are unclear. This is something Congress needs to define, make these hard decisions.

The asylum program is not the answer. Asylum was meant to be a little piece of the pie of Title 8, you know, for rare circumstances. You know, asylum, it's become the de facto way of issuing work permits. But asylum seekers can't even work for the first 6 months they're in the country. Canada is smart and they've realized, hey, they've imported tens of thousands of cleared asylum seekers into Canada to work there because they can't work here. They have the same problem we do. They have an aging population. They lack younger workers, and they've taken advantage of this kind of broken system to get more workers into their countries.

So I want to keep my 5 minutes simple here. Two things, 2 clear takeaways that I think Congress needs to do so that the Executive branch isn't incentivized to take action.

One is a guest worker program. Make that clear. Articulate that. Figure that out. Consider things like the Farm Modernization Act that has languished for years. There has been pressure from the business community on both sides of the aisle, Republican and Democrat, to pass the Farm Modernization Act that would allow more H-2A agricultural visas. My family is a ranching family. We've been on the border of Arizona for 5 generations. It was a lot easier for my grandfather to hire somebody from Mexico if American workers weren't available. But now it's unclear what the protocols are for getting work permits.

Another thing that's needed, and this was in the bipartisan border bill that wasn't passed, is immigration judges right at the border. This was in the bill. There were some things in that bill I did not agree with. But if we're going to be, you know, infatuated with the idea, everyone needs a piece of paper approved before they can do a voluntary interaction with an American, well, get the officials right at the border that can make those decisions. The bipartisan border bill actually had in it the paralegals, the immigration judges, and the staff, so that people can come up to the border, present their piece of paper, make their claim, and if the answer is yes, it's yes; if the answer is no, it's no.

This is not a Democrat versus Republican issue. In the 1980's, 1990's, and 2000's, you had record years, over a million. This included Democrat and Republican administrations. Then there was a 14-year lull after that that included all 8 years of Obama, last 2 years of Bush Junior, and all 4 years of Trump. So this is a cyclical thing, and I think it's disingenuous to try to paint it as a Democrat versus Republican thing.

My time's up. So thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Hathaway follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF DAVID HATHAWAY

Both political parties share the blame for the lack of coherent policies when the United States interacts with visitors or immigrants from foreign countries. The resultant chaos can then be packaged and described as a crisis for the benefit of political actors. The blame lies with Congress as the branch of Government tasked with making laws. This is not an area that should be left to the Executive branch which

then tries to fabricate solutions through ad hoc Executive action. The reality is simple. Border areas are safe and we, the residents of border areas, don't want to turn them into a police state or a war zone. My wife and I live near the border and we walk every night along the border. My county has the largest ports of entry with Mexico of all Arizona border counties. It is peaceful and safe. The vast majority of people coming to the United States are coming to work. It is disingenuous to conflate people coming to work with drug dealers or criminals. They come to improve their lives. Statistically, it has been shown that migrants are less likely to commit crimes than native-born Americans. They are also less likely to go on welfare or to receive public assistance than native-born Americans. They often pay in to systems like Social Security and never take out benefits. They contribute productivity to the economy which reduces price inflation. We have an aging population in the United States and we need younger workers. It makes me laugh when people talk about "fighting-age males" coming to the United States as if they are staging an army here. Throughout time, men have gone to where the jobs are and have sent money back to their families. There are "help wanted" signs everywhere. There needs to be an easier way for people to come here to work.

Asylum seekers that are granted entry while awaiting a future hearing are not allowed to work for 6 months. We need to stop looking to the asylum process as a solution for the lack of workers. And many countries, such as our neighboring Mexico, are largely ineligible for asylum claims since the United States does not recognize political persecution as a factor in certain countries, like Mexico. Yet, Mexico is a very important trading partner with 80 percent of its external GDP involving trade with the United States and its geographically accessible work force. It is ridiculous to make a requirement for a migrant to express "credible fear" before they can come to the United States to work. But, that is the system we have created, so migrants learn that they must articulate fear in order to come to the United States to work. We need to re-establish a robust guest worker program as existed in the past. My family has lived for 5 generations on the U.S./Mexico border in Arizona coming in the 1800's before Arizona became a State. It used to be much easier for my grandfather to hire workers from Mexico if needed. Ranchers and farmers have been clamoring for years for the passage of The Farm Workforce Modernization Act which would allow American employers to hire needed agricultural workers via H-2A visas, but that Act has languished despite pressures on Congress from the business community.

If anyone from Washington ever asks me what we need on the border . . . First of all, I say we don't need more "photo ops" from politicians who want to get their "street cred" by posing next to the wall so they can say, "been there, done that." What we really need is something that was in the Border Bill that was killed for obvious political reasons. There was a provision in there for immigration judges and staff to be placed right on the border where decisions need to be made. We need the judges that can make those decisions at the border. Then, people wanting to come into the United States can present their documents and if the answer is yes, it's yes. If it's no, it's no. It is not working to avoid these issues and to kick the can down the road forever. Congress needs to make decisions to update Title 8 to allow decisions to be made at the border that benefit our country with workers and foreign trade that we need.

This is not a Democrat versus Republican thing. Southwest Border numbers were high under both Democrats and Republicans for a 24-year period in the 80's, 90's, and 2000's including the administrations of Reagan, Bush Sr., Clinton, and Bush Jr. Then, there was a 14-year lull in Southwest Border encounters under both Democrats and Republicans that included all 8 years of Obama, the Trump years, and the last 2 years of Bush, Jr. with none of those years approaching a million and most of them under half a million.

And certain policies smack of racism. For example, a wall was never suggested for the Canadian/U.S. border. Title 42, a COVID policy, was never implemented aggressively at the Northern Border to keep foreigners from making claims. And it is odd to me that it has become fashionable to talk of walls, tariffs, and isolationism. Reagan was not a fan of walls. When the Soviet Union suggested that they were embracing freedom in the late 1980's and early 1990's, Reagan told them to prove it by tearing down the Berlin Wall. Reagan was also not a fan of tariffs. And yet now, we have outbound inspections of Americans by U.S. officials at our borders as Americans leave the country. This is happening in my town now as standard policy. Americans are now being searched and having their money seized as they leave the United States! This really smacks of totalitarianism and is reminiscent of East Germany. I don't think Ronald Reagan would have ever anticipated that we would reach a point in time when we would be in a wall-building frenzy and a tariff frenzy and when we would search and interrogate our own citizens at internal checkpoints

and as they leave the country. When I grew up, I was told that we don't do that in America. Well, we do now. We might as well tear down the Statue of Liberty and throw it into the ocean.

Chairman GREEN. Thank you. Members will be recognized by order of seniority, with an exception granted due to some scheduling issues today, as necessary for their 5 minutes of questioning. An additional round of questioning may be called after all Members have been recognized. I now recognize myself for 5 minutes of questioning.

Mr. Heitke, you served as, the last job, you were the sector chief of 1 of our 9 Southwest Border sectors. I think you said you worked for 25 years in the Border Patrol under 5 different administrations. Looking at your statement, you said, "This was the first time under 5 administrations, whether through neglect or on purpose, I saw large-scale lapses in our ability to return people to their country of origin." You then went on and talked about detention and how detention bed space was intentionally decreased and private detention was essentially done away with. You said that that word got out and then the masses came essentially. I am paraphrasing you.

But I want to go back to your comment about whether it was neglectful or purposeful, because if you intentionally stop returning people, that is not something you just, oh, well, you neglect, and you intentionally decrease detention, those things that actually decrease the incentive for people to come here, that sounds purposeful to me. So would you answer? I mean, do you think it is neglect or do you think it is this was purposeful, designed to be this way?

Mr. HEITKE. I believe that the actions were purposeful, yes, sir. Many people don't understand that we can't simply fill a plane full of nationals from a certain country and fly them home. It takes agreements with that country. It takes diplomacy with the State Department to make those arrangements, and they're long-term arrangements. It takes diplomacy over months and years.

Chairman GREEN. But purposeful.

Mr. HEITKE. But purposeful.

Chairman GREEN. Purposeful. OK. So you mentioned, too, that there were massive periods of time when the border was just left completely open because the agents had to be pulled and you were directed to do this. How long were those agents just completely off the border and miles of the border wide open?

Mr. HEITKE. There were weeks and even months at a time between Texas and parts of Arizona and California.

Chairman GREEN. I assume that is—you know, we want to look at these 8 ISIS folks that were caught in New York. I guess some of them actually crossed at a crossing. They filled up the CBP One app, 3 of them, and came into the country and were going to blow up an LGBTQ place in Philadelphia. But, I mean, those people that crossed during that time, any guarantees that they are not out there to do harm to the country?

Mr. HEITKE. No, sir, no guarantees.

Chairman GREEN. Yes. You agree with the FBI director then.

You mentioned twice in your testimony, too, I find it fascinating, that because it was overwhelming, San Diego, the administration actually created, for the cost of \$150,000, plane flights to Texas of all these people as a way to keep it quiet. Then you mentioned, too,

there was one point where you had, like, 2,000 aliens, and the administration directed you to, like, move them out of sight of the media. Can you kind-of clarify that a little bit?

Mr. HEITKE. Yes. So groups were coming in to turn themselves over faster than we could keep up. We only had so much space. We keep people within our stations. There's no other place to put them while they're being processed. They were building up, the media was showing them sitting in between the fences, and it looked bad and they wanted them moved. I had no place to put them. So they simply told me—

Chairman GREEN. Why would they want to hide that? Why wouldn't they want the world to know what is going on? Why would they want to hide that? Why would they want to spend \$150,000 to fly them to Texas to keep people from seeing the mass waves? Why?

Mr. HEITKE. It looks bad. I was—when I asked about the flights to Texas, I was very specifically told, there's a problem in Texas. There isn't a problem in California.

Chairman GREEN. Wow. So purposeful policies wreaking havoc on the community, and we will just hide it. Perfect. Thank you.

Ms. Morin, you have previously said that President Biden hasn't really showed any concern for anything the American people have voiced on this issue. It is like he is sitting in an ivory tower and we are just down here. He is not connected with the every-day person. Can you talk more about your frustrations with the administration and their handling of the border?

Ms. MORIN. Yes. Since my daughter's death, but also since we learned that it was an illegal immigrant that they've accused of murdering her, the Biden-Harris administration has not reached out to our family to offer condolences. I've noticed that when speaking about the border policy, they would rather look in the other direction. Kind-of like a little kid, you know, if I don't see you, you don't see me. I think that they are trying to avoid admitting that there is an issue even though tens of thousands of people a day, women and children are being attacked. Not all of them are in the news because some of them are not being murdered, they're just being attacked.

I have people come up to me all the time because I know I'm Rachel's mom and they'll say, you know, a guy came up from behind me, grabbed me around the neck, and tried to pull me down to the ground. But I got away and I went to the police and I told the police. When they arrested the person, they found out that he had already attacked several other women. So it's happening on a daily basis. Not all of it is in the news. So this issue is bigger than people think.

It's not just the Southern Border, because we're almost 2,000 miles from the Southern Border. It's every State, every county, every city. People are living in fear. Just because you ignore it and don't acknowledge it doesn't mean that it's not true.

Chairman GREEN. Thank you. I yield to the Ranking Member for his 5 minutes of questioning.

Mr. THOMPSON. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Sheriff Hathaway, can you expound a little more on how you see the use of people coming to this country being integrated into the

economy of our country and whether or not you have seen a positive impact from their coming to this country?

Mr. HATHAWAY. Yes, definitely, I'd be glad to. The people coming across are coming across to work. They're not coming as an invasion, to import an army, to have a secret army embedded in the United States to attack America and attack American values. They're coming here to work. They're people of faith. You know, a lot of them that I see are from Latin America, very family-oriented people.

They actually reduce price inflation. When you add productivity to the economy, you see Help Wanted signs all over the United States. If you add productivity to the economy, it makes the economy more productive and price inflation is reduced.

So it is definitely a benefit, overall net benefit to our country. I hate to say that—you know, I hate to use the R word, but it's the 800-pound gorilla in the room, the racism word. There's a xenophobic aspect to this. There was never a proposal to build a wall on the Northern Border, on the Canadian border. There was never any intent to aggressively enforce Title 42 on the Canadian border. So, you know, there is this kind-of racist component to it that we kind-of all ignore, but it's there smoldering in the background.

Mr. THOMPSON. So I represent an agricultural district, and if it were not for immigrant labor in that district, we would have difficult times. The majority of the farmers who utilize that labor, law-abiding citizens, but they will tell you that we can't gin the cotton, we can't harvest the potatoes, we can't plant the seedlings for trees. They are just tough labor. My contractors tell me that the labor necessary to do roofing and other carpentry kind of skills, it is difficult to get regular people. So I think we have to put some kind of comprehensive immigration package together.

In the interim, we have to protect our citizens, and I agree with that. The Senate took the leadership to try to fashion a bill that I referenced in my opening statement. We didn't even get a chance to consider it. That is so unfortunate. The legislative process says you agree, disagree, and somewhere in the middle is an agreement. We didn't get to that point.

Just for the record, let me say that in the last appropriation bill, we had 22,000 Border Patrol agents in there. A majority of the Democrats on this committee voted to support that. However, my Republican colleagues didn't have. I just think that if we want to help, let's give the men and women who work the border every day the resources they need. We continue to do that. We continue to support it.

All of us have been adversely impacted by the criminal element. I was a county supervisor before I came to Congress. I understand the burdens you have, but I also understand that Federal, State, and locals working together can overcome it. Immigration is primarily a Federal responsibility, and we have to do what we need to do to make that happen. Some of us vote to put the resources there at every opportunity, but the politics override reality, and that is the challenge that a lot of us have.

So I look forward to legislation being put forward to this body that we can continue to address the fentanyl challenges that come.

My sheriffs talked to me about it, but we have to put things in place to offset it.

Mr. Heitke, the challenge for removal is we are a nation of laws, as you know. You work in the department. You just can't stop people and send them back. You got to give them that. We sent back more people during this administration than in recent memory, so we are trying. But if there are some things we can do, I look forward to working with my Republican colleagues on trying to make it happen.

I yield back.

Chairman GREEN. The gentlemen yields.

I now recognize Mr. D'Esposito, out of order by request, due to his time constraints, for 5 minutes of questioning.

Mr. D'ESPOSITO. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. If I may, I think the video that Ms. Morin wanted to play is available. I would like to yield her 30 seconds of my time.

[Video shown.]

Chairman GREEN. Reset the clock to 5 minutes. That was really the committee's fault for not allowing her to play that.

Mr. D'Esposito, I don't expect you to yield that. That was our failure. You are now recognized.

Mr. D'ESPOSITO. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chief, I know that was mentioned in your opening statement about human tragedies that have been experienced by migrants on their journey to the border. I would like to specifically talk about those, especially the female migrants, the ones that have been taken over by gangs and others trying to get them across the Southern Border. You said that, quote, "It's very common that female migrants are raped during the process. Most of them believe it's just part of the payment as they go up. It's unfortunately very regular within the population."

Can you describe to the committee your interactions with migrants over the past 3½ years and share with us some of the most shocking things that you have learned or are willing to share?

Mr. HEITKE. There's a number of them that I would. One of the key ones from San Diego is that when we had a large amount of undocumented minors coming into the country, we started to see recruiters in Mexico that would go around within the Tijuana area because the migrants would stage in Mexico before they came into the United States. Recruiters would go around within Tijuana and recruit teenage women to come to the United States, and then they would leave their families. Oftentimes they had traveled to Tijuana with their families, they would leave their families behind, come to the United States, claim they were unaccompanied minors, and they would be put up in the facilities that the charities had set aside for them in San Diego.

Once they had been put up, they're not held in detention. It's just a room. They were given a phone number to call, and then a recruiter would come down, often from Oakland or Los Angeles, and pick them up. These young women were then brought up and forced into prostitution, oftentimes in the Oakland and Los Angeles area and other places within the country.

We had active cases going on, but because we did not have the resources, because we were inundated with so many people, we

couldn't follow up. This was actively going on within our area during the time frame.

Mr. D'ESPOSITO. How many years did you spend in the Customs and Border Patrol?

Mr. HEITKE. Over 25.

Mr. D'ESPOSITO. In those 25 years, is this the worst that you have seen in the last 3½ years?

Mr. HEITKE. Yes.

Mr. D'ESPOSITO. So it is safe to say that the disastrous policies that were implemented by both Joe Biden and Kamala Harris have led to some of the really most disgusting actions against women migrants along our Southern Border?

Mr. HEITKE. It has taken so much time away from the agents that they can't deal with those issues.

Mr. D'ESPOSITO. Obviously, there is a negative impact to the agents when they are dealing with situations like this as well?

Mr. HEITKE. Yes, dealing with the absolute despair and the misery. The vast majority of the people coming are good, normal people that have gone through extremely bad situations.

Mr. D'ESPOSITO. So Ms. Morin mentioned in her opening statement that she lives 1,800 miles from the Southern Border, and she said that in the country that we live in right now, if your city is a sanctuary city, these are her words, not mine, but I agree with them, that you are not safe. She said that if a city is a sanctuary city, you are not safe. Eighteen hundred miles she lives from the border. We have heard the terrible story of the murder of her daughter. Every State a border State. Every city a border city.

We just commemorated the 23rd anniversary of the September 11 attacks. You mentioned, Chief, in your statement, the Border Patrol zones across Texas, Arizona, California had no agent present for weeks and months at a time. Those who did not want to be caught could simply walk in. We have no idea who and what entered our country over this time. Throughout 2022 and 2023, I sent agents to Texas and Arizona to count gotaways. Those sectors could not even put agents in the field to see what they missed.

What information do we have on the millions of known gotaways that have entered this country?

Mr. HEITKE. None.

Mr. D'ESPOSITO. Zero information of millions of people, some of which have found to be on the terror watch list. We have zero information.

Mr. HEITKE. Correct.

Mr. D'ESPOSITO. Thank you, Chief. Thank you all for being here.

Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

Chairman GREEN. The gentleman yields.

I now recognize Mr. Correa, the gentleman from California, for his 5 minutes of questions.

Mr. CORREA. I want to thank our witnesses for being here today. Mr. Chairman, I want to take a moment to also thank our Secret Service for protecting former President Trump. I serve on the select committee investigating the assassination attempt. I can tell you right now that I want to make sure that all candidates running for Presidency are well-protected.

According to the FBI and DHS, the biggest issue right now is domestic terrorism in this country. I have a chart here that shows all of the domestic terrorism attacks in this country today.


For the record, Mr. Chairman, I also have a couple of articles. One, just think today from the *New York Times* saying, "Second Apparent Assassination Attempt on Trump Prompts Alarm Abroad." People around the world are concerned that our American democracy is at a breaking point. Another one here from *Politico* this morning, "Russian Election Interference Targeting Harris Campaign."


Chairman GREEN. So ordered.
[The information follows:]

NEWS ANALYSIS

Second Apparent Assassination Attempt on Trump Prompts Alarm Abroad

There is widespread concern that the November election will not end well and that American democracy has frayed to the breaking point.

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 **By Roger Cohen**
Reporting from Paris

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In the nine years since Donald J. Trump entered American politics, the global perception of the United States has been shaken by the image of a fractured, unpredictable nation. First one, then a second apparent attempt on the former president's life have accentuated international concerns, raising fears of violent turmoil spiraling toward civil war.

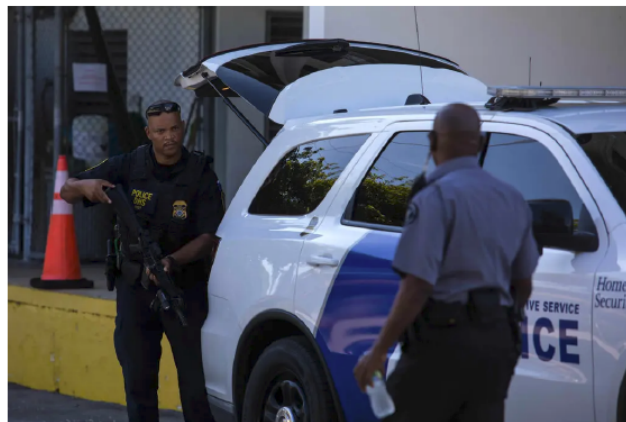
Keir Starmer, the British prime minister, has said he is "very worried" and "deeply troubled" by what the F.B.I. said was an attempt to kill Mr. Trump at his Florida golf course, fewer than 50 days before the presidential election and two months after a bullet bloodied the ear of Mr. Trump during a campaign rally in Pennsylvania.

"Violence has no part to play at all in any political process," Mr. Starmer said.

Yet, violence has played a core part in this stormy, lurching American political campaign, and not only in the two apparent assassination attempts. There is now widespread concern across the globe that the November election will not end well and that American democracy, once a beacon to the world, has frayed to the breaking point.

In Mexico, where elections this year were the most violent in the country's recent history, with 41 candidates and aspirants for public office assassinated, President Andrés Manuel López Obrador said in a post on X, formerly Twitter: "Even though what happened is still unclear, we regret the violence against former President Donald Trump. The path is democracy and peace."

At a time of wars in Europe and the Middle East and widespread global insecurity as China and Russia assert the superiority of their autocratic models, American precariousness weighs heavily.



Police officers gathered around the West Palm Beach Federal Courthouse after a man with a gun was found near a Trump golf course in West Palm Beach, Fla., on Sept. 16.
Saul Martinez for The New York Times

Corentin Sellin, a French history professor, said the “brutalization of American politics” had left France “wondering whether the presidential campaign will finish peacefully.”

France was stunned, he said, by the Jan. 6, 2021, storming of the U.S. Capitol by Trump supporters, and “there is this notion that the story that started with that insurrection has not yet ended,” and that the Nov. 5 election will determine how it does.

The threat of violence — at times, even the need for it — has been a core part of Mr. Trump’s message.

He has already cast doubt on the credibility of the coming November election results. He has persistently laced his language with calls to “fight” and used incendiary terms to insult immigrants. Just before the Jan. 6 assault on the Capitol, he urged followers to “fight like hell” or they would not “have a country any more.” In general, he has shown an ironclad incapacity to accept many truths, including the result of the 2020 election.

Democrats have responded by depicting Mr. Trump as a direct menace to American democracy, a “weird” would-be autocrat of fascist tendencies and a “threat to our freedoms,” in the words of Vice President Kamala Harris, the Democratic presidential nominee. The left-leaning New Republic magazine portrayed Mr. Trump as Hitler on a recent cover, expressing the view that a second Trump term is likely to lead to some form of American tyranny.

Some Europeans see things in a very different light.



Representative Pat Fallon questioning Kimberly Cheatle, then director of the Secret Service, on Capitol Hill in July on the attempted assassination of Mr. Trump earlier that month. Kenny Holston/The New York Times

“They tried to do everything,” said Andrea Di Giuseppe, a lawmaker with Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni’s right-wing Brothers of Italy party. “They tried to bring Trump down with trials, they tried to bring him down with insinuations, they tried to bring him down by scaring people that ‘if Trump arrives democracy ends.’ Then, since all these attempts did not work, they tried to kill him.”

The authorities have identified a suspect in the Florida episode, Ryan W. Routh, a 58-year-old building contractor with a criminal history and a passionate embrace of the Ukrainian cause. He was charged in federal court with two firearms counts. More charges may follow.

Responding to the apparent assassination attempt, Carsten Luther, an online editor for international affairs, gave voice to deep concerns about the survival of American democracy in the respected German weekly *Die Zeit*. “The warnings of a civil war can be heard and no longer sound completely unrealistic,” he wrote. “It seems almost banal, as if it was bound to happen at some point.”

Of course, other Western societies, including France and Germany, are also viscerally divided and have seen the rise of xenophobic, far-right parties with many of the same messages as Mr. Trump. In May, an assassination attempt on Prime Minister Robert Fico of Slovakia left him critically injured.

But a far more restrictive European gun culture has curbed the extent of political violence while leaving Europeans alarmed and incredulous at the ease with which Americans are able to obtain weapons.



Trump supporters storming the Capitol in Washington on Jan. 6, 2021. Ashley Gilbertson for The New York Times

Félix Maradiaga, a former Nicaraguan presidential candidate and political prisoner who is now a fellow at the University of Virginia, said that polarization, intolerance and the widespread availability of high-caliber weapons in the United States had led to a “perfect storm.”

“The world is watching, and the stakes could not be higher,” he added. “Russia and China are undoubtedly taking satisfaction in this deterioration of democracy.”

Lebohang Pheko, a senior research fellow at South Africa's Trade Collective, an economics research institute, said that she perceived "a militarization of everyday life in the United States, and this essentially seems to be spilling into these elections."

Mr. Trump has often appeared to seek this very militarization of which he has narrowly escaped being a victim. The multimillionaire son of a real-estate developer from Queens, he has positioned himself as the defender of the gun-toting, God-fearing American frontier against what he portrays as the Democrats' politically correct socialist takeover.

Alluding to his Democratic opponents, he has blamed "the things that they say about me" for the first assassination attempt and the second episode, not the easy access to guns that he defends.

The question now is how violent will this political confrontation in America prove. For many around the world, it seems to contain the seeds of rampant conflict.

"There is a sort of reciprocal delegitimization, where the political opponent is no longer a normal political competitor, but also an existential enemy," said Mario Del Pero, a professor of United States and International History at Sciences Po University in Paris. He called this process "a degradation of political and public discourse."

In the United States, this has been a degradation compounded by guns, as much of the world sees it.



In this handout photograph released by the Hungarian Prime Minister's Office on July 11, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, left, visited Mr. Trump at Mar-a-Lago in Palm Beach, Fla. Zoltan Fischer/Agence France-Presse, via X Account of Hungary's Prime Minister

“Style over substance. Image over issues. Lies over facts. Distractions over policy. Repeated violence,” said Tomasz Pludowski, the deputy dean of the School of Social Science, AEH, in Warsaw. “That seems to be the contemporary American reality.”

The core confrontation in Western societies is no longer over internal issues. It is global vs. national, the connected living in the “somewhere” of the knowledge economy vs. the forgotten living “nowhere” in industrial wastelands and rural areas.

There lies the frustration, even fury, on which a Trump or a Marine Le Pen, leader of the far-right French National Rally, or Ms. Meloni in Italy have been able to build.

The perceived vulnerability of American democracy has already provoked many reactions around the world, from Russian gloating and interference to European anxiety about its security. Few countries in the developing world want American lessons in how to run their societies these days.

Yet, a fascination with the United States endures, and the checks and balances of its institutions have proved resilient, including through the first Trump term.

Mr. Trump often cites the template of Prime Minister Viktor Orban of Hungary: neutralizing an independent judiciary, subjugating much of the media, demonizing migrants and creating loyal new elites through crony capitalism. But it would not be easy to impose in America.

Still, the world is anxious. The 48 days to the election feel like a long time.

“In the end, the only real final word is for the American people,” said Mr. Di Giuseppe, the Italian lawmaker. “And if you want to defeat a person whom you think is not fit to govern the United States of America, you have to defeat him in a democratic system with elections, not with justice or Kalashnikovs.”

Reporting was contributed by Natalie Kitroeff, Emiliano Rodríguez Mega, Aurelien Breeden, Stephen Castle, Christopher F. Schuetze, John Eligon, Elisabetta Povoledo, Frances Robles, Emma Bubola, Jenny Gross, Vjosa Isai, Jorge Valencia and Tolek Magdziarz.

Roger Cohen is the Paris Bureau chief for The Times, covering France and beyond. He has reported on wars in Lebanon, Bosnia and Ukraine, and between Israel and Gaza, in more than four decades as a journalist. At The Times, he has been a correspondent, foreign editor and columnist. More about Roger Cohen

ARTICLE SUBMITTED BY HON. J. LUIS CORREA

RUSSIAN ELECTION INTERFERENCE EFFORTS TARGETING HARRIS CAMPAIGN, MICROSOFT FINDS

Story by Maggie Miller, Politico

Russian government-linked efforts to interfere in the upcoming U.S. Presidential election have increasingly shifted to target the Presidential campaign of Vice President Kamala Harris, Microsoft reported in findings published Tuesday.

The new effort, which involves spreading fake videos discrediting Harris and her campaign, is the latest foreign interference linked to Russia in recent weeks, and shows a speedy pivot by foreign adversaries to targeting the Harris campaign after she replaced President Joe Biden on the ticket.

Microsoft found evidence that two “Kremlin-aligned” groups have in recent weeks spread videos including those showing Harris supporters attacking supporters of former President Donald Trump, and another video that used an actor to pose as Harris in a fictitious hit-and-run incident. Each of these videos received millions of views, according to Microsoft, and one of the videos was put out through a fake San Francisco news outlet, in an attempt to give the video more credibility.

The groups also posted videos to social media platforms X and Telegram showing a fake New York City billboard with false Harris policies. Microsoft found that this video received more than 100,000 views on X in the first hours after being posted.

The findings from Microsoft were announced 2 weeks after the Justice Department removed more than 30 websites linked to Russian election influence efforts. Microsoft experts said Tuesday that they’ve already seen efforts by this influence operation to create new sites, and move content there.

“The shift to focusing on the Harris-Walz campaign reflects a strategic move by Russian actors aimed at exploiting any perceived vulnerabilities in the new candidates,” wrote Clint Watts, general manager of Microsoft’s Threat Analysis Center, in a blog post on the findings.

Russia is not alone in its activity. Microsoft also saw efforts by a China-linked group, known as Storm-1852, spreading content on social media critical of both Harris and Biden. However, Microsoft found that many of the individuals posting for the group went silent after this content was spotted. Chinese influence groups were identified earlier this month spreading content exploiting divisive issues in U.S. society.

Microsoft warned that this type of activity is likely to continue ahead of November, particularly from Russia, with the company predicting that Moscow will use hacking groups to boost its messages online, which may include propaganda created by artificial intelligence.

This is the latest threat report released by Microsoft in regards to the upcoming U.S. elections. The company last month blamed Iran for targeting a U.S. Presidential campaign, which POLITICO reported was Trump's campaign.

Mr. CORREA. Again, we thank the Secret Service, and I think our priorities has to be protecting our democracy here in this country.

Ms. Morin, thank you for being here. I heard your testimony in Judiciary Committee and I mentioned to you then, as I will repeat now, that in my district we had a young man, an American citizen, that we caught. His MO was raping undocumented women in the local apartment complex. He raped probably 20 women that reported being raped before he was caught.

You know, I am about to say something I have never said in public, but my spouse, my wife used to be a marathoner. A good 5, 6 years ago, she went out for a jog at local riverbed and was attacked by an SOB. I got a phone call about 9:15 in the morning by local police saying she had been attacked. I don't know how she did it, but she broke loose from his strangle on her, on her neck, before she passed out, just enough to scream for help.

Your story is one that should not be forgotten and should be remembered by all of us. Because when these heinous crimes against women, rape, murder, are perpetrated, I don't care which side of the party you are on, I don't care which side of the immigration issue you are on. We have to stop this. With or without documents, these individuals deserve a special place in hell. So thank you for being here, for sharing your story.

Ms. MORIN. Are you asking for a response?

Mr. CORREA. No. But you can if you wish. I open it up to you.

Ms. MORIN. Thank you. I just wanted to say at the last hearing, when I shared about my past, it was because I wanted people to understand that I know what it's like to be a victim of violent crime that survived. So I understand, probably more than anybody in this room, some of the things that my daughter endured.

I also said in that statement that my grandparents immigrated here from Europe. My husband, his parents immigrated here from Europe. I don't believe that the American people are against immigration. We are against illegal immigration. People should stay in their own countries, go through the process, and then be allowed into this country the way that my grandparents and my husband's grandparents.

Mr. CORREA. I am going to put all my notes aside that I wanted to talk about today. I have less than a minute left. But suffice it to say that I am with you. I hope we can figure out how to address legal immigration to this country.

Mr. Desmond, you represent an area in San Diego as a county. I was also a county board of supervisor in Orange County. We have a lot of people that have been in this country 20, 30 years and can't find the front door. We need to come up with a way of processing people to make sure that the MS-13 individuals from El Salvador don't get in. When they are deported, they go back to jail in El Salvador, not only in the United States, but that takes work from both sides of the aisle.

In my opinion, there is basically 3 buckets of individuals right now: you have the new asylum refugees; you have people that have been here 20, 30 years, Dreamers, people in the military; and then you have people that do concern us when it comes to terrorism. But under the existing legal framework, we are not solving any of those problems.

Mr. Heitke, I just met with the president of your local Border Patrol union just 2 hours ago. You know what he told me? He said they don't even have enough resources at the Border Patrol to fix their vehicles when they break down. We have a lot of challenges and fighting here is not going to solve them.

Mr. Chairman, my time is up. But thank the Chair. I thank all of you being here today. Thank you very much.

Chairman GREEN. The gentlemen yields.

I now recognize Mr. Bishop, the gentleman from North Carolina, for his 5 minutes questioning.

Mr. BISHOP. Mr. Heitke, you are now able to say what you are saying here today because you are no longer on official duty, right?

Mr. HEITKE. Correct.

Mr. BISHOP. You couldn't have made these statements when you were sector chief, could you?

Mr. HEITKE. If asked a question, I would answer it.

Mr. BISHOP. Right. But you wouldn't be at liberty to say whatever you wanted to? You would have to answer questions.

Mr. HEITKE. Right.

Mr. BISHOP. Mr. Hathaway, you are a sheriff, is that correct?

Mr. HATHAWAY. Yes, sir, that's correct.

Mr. BISHOP. Do you consider yourself a law enforcer or a law-maker?

Mr. HATHAWAY. A law enforcement officer or a lawman? In Arizona we're called peace officers. The certification is peace officers. I retired, like Mr. Heitke, as the agent in charge of a Federal agency. But yes, now I am the elected sheriff.

Mr. BISHOP. Did you say that if Arizonans passed their ballot initiative making border crossing a State law violation, that you wouldn't enforce it?

Mr. HATHAWAY. That is correct. There's a issue ballot proposal on the November ballot, Proposition 314.

Mr. BISHOP. Do you consider your role as a law enforcer to be to decide which laws you are going to enforce and which ones you are not going to?

Mr. HATHAWAY. In my county, 95 percent of the people are Hispanic. It would be——

Mr. BISHOP. I didn't ask you that.

Mr. HATHAWAY [continuing]. Disingenuous of me to go through their documents and see, like——

Mr. BISHOP. I asked you about you, what you regard your role to be as a law enforcer. Do you believe you get to pick and choose which laws to enforce?

Mr. HATHAWAY. A similar law was found unconstitutional in Arizona Senate Bill 1070. I know I would get sued——

Mr. BISHOP. Are you a judge?

Mr. HATHAWAY [continuing]. For racial profiling.

Mr. BISHOP. Are you a judge?

Mr. HATHAWAY. I know the history of the laws in Arizona and there was——

Mr. BISHOP. I see.

Mr. HATHAWAY [continuing]. A similar law thrown out.

Mr. BISHOP. So you do believe you can pick and choose, even though you are not a judge?

Mr. HATHAWAY. You have discretion. You have discretion on what to enforce.

Mr. BISHOP. Let me ask you this. You joined in the debate that I have heard the rhetoric from my Democrat colleagues quite a lot, and their witnesses here, who frequently assert that the problem with the border is that we should have enacted the Lankford-Mayorkas bill. Now, you said you liked some parts of it. You liked the fact that it would have immigration judges and other staff at the border to make asylum decisions. Right?

Mr. HATHAWAY. Right.

Mr. BISHOP. But you also said in your testimony just now, if you are going to be infatuated with the idea that everybody needs a piece of paper, then those things would be good. So you don't think we should be infatuated with the idea that people need a piece of paper. Is that correct?

Mr. HATHAWAY. I think what matters is voluntary transactions, no coerced transactions. If you're——

Mr. BISHOP. So, the ultimate of that would be just to let everybody who wants to come in come in. Isn't that right? In other words, why do you need a—you say we need a guest worker program. That is what you think is necessary. Why do we need a guest worker program? Why not just let everyone come in who wants to come in?

Mr. HATHAWAY. Because the asylum program is not working.

Mr. BISHOP. Well, no. OK. So you are saying you don't want to be infatuated with a piece of paper at all. You want to just let them come in. Isn't that right?

Mr. HATHAWAY. If we're going to have people doing processing, they should address the need before it gets worse.

Mr. BISHOP. Well, you are saying "if". You don't think we should have anybody doing processing?

Mr. HATHAWAY. No. If we're going to have people doing processing, they should issue work permits. That's what people are coming in here for, is to work.

Mr. BISHOP. Ms. Morin, I am just wondering, as you sit there next to—the sheriff said that his community is safe. Well, let me ask you one more question, Sheriff. You don't think we have a border crisis?

Mr. HATHAWAY. No. I'm investigating 3 homicides now. They all involve U.S. citizens are the suspects.

Mr. BISHOP. I see.

Mr. HATHAWAY. My city is 95 percent Hispanic. Migrants, according to FBI statistics, are less likely to commit crimes than native-born Americans. They're less likely to go on welfare than native-born Americans.

Mr. BISHOP. Ms. Morin, do you agree with what the sheriff just said? He said that migrants are less likely to commit crimes than Americans. Do you believe that to be true?

Ms. MORIN. No, sir. I think it depends on where the migrants are coming from.

Mr. BISHOP. If a migrant comes from a country where a hostile or chaotic regime has recognized that the United States has no effective border control whatsoever by intentional act of the Presidential administration, and that regime decides to release a prison population or criminal population so that they will leave and go to the United States, do you think past statistics about the criminal disposition of migrants is likely to remain static, remain the same? Doesn't it make sense that there are going to be more criminals if those populations are being released because of the recognition of what the administration has done to border security, Ms. Morin?

Ms. MORIN. Yes.

Mr. BISHOP. I think that's common sense. I understand the argument is always made that we needed that Lankford-Mayorkas border bill. Well, here is President Trump's favorite chart, as he said, because as he turned his head, the assassin's bullet passed by looking at this. But what you see on the left is what President Trump accomplished, and what you see from 2021 forward is what the current administration accomplished. I would suggest that anyone who says that that border bill that wasn't passed is cause and effect should learn what the idea of cause and effect means, because you can accomplish either one of these results with our existing law. The result of accomplishing what is on the right as opposed to what is on the left is a matter of will and a matter of people who think they are not law enforcers but lawmakers.

I yield.

Chairman GREEN. The gentlemen yields.

I now recognize Mr. Ivey for 5 minutes of questioning.

Mr. IVEY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am not sure where to start.

Wait, leave the chart there, please. I appreciate my friend, Mr. Bishop from North Carolina. I appreciate the passion and the intellect he brings to these sorts of debates and discussions.

I did want to say this, though. I represent a district in Maryland. Ms. Moran, you and I saw each other last week, and I will come back to you in a moment. But a lot of my immigrants are from El Salvador, and I mean, thousands of them. Our population has grown very dramatically in Prince George's County with El Salvadoran immigrants. I want to challenge the suggestion that there are more criminal elements within the El Salvador immigrant community than the people who are already here in the United States. That has been the exact opposite of my experience in Prince George's County. I was the State's attorney there for 8 years. I mean, I prosecuted these cases.

Ms. Morin, you may recall I talked about a RICO case I did jointly with Rod Rosenstein, who was a Republican U.S. attorney. In fact, he ended up being Donald Trump's deputy and then he was the acting attorney general in the Department of Justice. You know, there is an issue there for sure of crime that is committed. But I don't think it is fair to say that the people who are coming by and large are here to commit crimes.

I think I recall Chip Roy saying at one of the Judiciary Committee hearings that his sense of it was pretty much the same. Peo-

ple are coming here to work. They are not coming for asylum reasons necessarily, but they are coming here to work and be part of the American dream and live that experience.

So thank you for the chart. I appreciate it. But I did want to say this, too, the lower parts of the numbers there, and I don't know what the colors mean or that sort of deal, but I was State's attorney during the previous stretch, so not during the Biden-Harris administration, but during the previous period. We had to address criminal prosecutions during those times, too. Ms. Morin, you may recall, and this committee knows because I read Justice Kavanaugh's opinion over and over when we do these hearings, and that is that this system has been broken down for the past 5 Presidential administrations, for over 30 years. In fact, these issues predate the existence of this committee.

But I do want to say this, and my colleague from North Carolina has left at this point, but he did raise the issue of the Lankford bill, and I don't think it was a cure-all by any stretch. I think at the last hearing when we discussed this, I want to say it was Chairman Jordan that raised H.R. 2. The problem with both of those bills is that they are not going anywhere. I think we have a recognition, in fact, your testimony of everybody on the panel is that there is a problem with immigration that we need to address. The problem that I am having with this hearing and the last hearing is that we are not addressing through legislation any of those concerns.

Now, Ms. Morin, you may recall last week I said that that legislative hearing wasn't a legislative hearing because there was no legislation connected to it that was going to move and address the problem. I will say the same thing here.

I want to just make this point that I didn't know last week. The Judiciary Committee is going to have a markup tomorrow on legislation that we want to move to the floor to address current problems. None of those bills are going to deal with this particular issue. I think this committee is going to have a markup in the near future as well, and I think the same is going to be true there. If you don't like the Lankford bill, you still have the power to bring it up and amend it and you can change it. As we saw with H.R. 2 when that came through, and H.R. 2 was the Republican bill and the fact that it is No. 2 shows that it is one of the highest priorities for the House Republicans, they marked it up. They didn't accept any of the amendments that we offered here in the committee, even though I think, you know, a lot of them would have made the bill actually better and helped to address the problem.

But I do want to end with this. As I said last week, I think that there are challenges and issues on both sides' positions. I think the way to address the issue is to find a compromise in the middle that actually moves legislation through. For example, at the table you are sitting at, a number of the witnesses said, we need more Border Patrol agents, we need more judges, we need more officials to process these things. We are not moving those things through.

Ms. Morin, I want to, again, thank you for being the voice that you are being. I would like to actually meet with you and discuss some of these issues. I think, as I said last week, you have got a moral authority based on what you suffered through. I know you

would change it in a second to get your daughter back. But I would like to see us get something done, and we are not doing it with these kind of stage performances like this. But you are in a position, unfortunately, where you have the voice that can help move things forward. I appreciate the work that you have done and will continue to do. I want to thank you for being here again today.

Mr. Chairman, I apologize for running over, but I want to thank the panel as well. I thank the committee as well for raising this issue and continuing to look at it. But I hope we will be able to find a way to address it with legislation that is actually going to get passed and do something.

With that, I yield back.

Chairman GREEN. The gentlemen yields.

I now recognize Mr. Gimenez, the gentleman from Florida, for his 5 minutes of questioning.

Mr. GIMENEZ. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. This, the chart here on my left shows the abject—the lies that are coming from the Biden-Harris administration as to the cause of the immigration issue here in the United States. It is their policy. You can see very clearly when policies changed, that is what happened to the border. There was no difference in resources, there were no any differences in the number of personnel. It was the policies, 94 different Executive Orders from the Biden administration that caused what is happening at the U.S. border.

I want to turn my attention to you, Sheriff Hathaway. I believe, I actually agree with you that most of the people coming through the Southern Border are here to work, try to make a better life. But I disagree in one sense that you can't tell me that along with those hard-working people, there are a number of them that are actually hardened criminals, that there are a number of them that are actually terrorists. Do you disagree with that?

Mr. HATHAWAY. No, I do not disagree.

Mr. GIMENEZ. OK. So if you allow more criminals into the United States, you are going to have more crime in the United States. Correct? Because they are criminals. That is what they are doing. I mean, we have seen it. I have seen it in my community.

Tren de Aragua. You know who Tren de Aragua is? You know who they are? The Tren de Aragua, do you know who they are? You don't. Really? You are a sheriff? You don't know what the Tren de Aragua is? That is one of the most violent gangs that is coming out of Venezuela. It is coming through your town. Those folks are here in the United States right now. They are terrorizing people or they actually kidnapped a former Venezuelan police officer in my town and killed him. So, yes, we have a problem coming through the Southern Border.

Now, I also, you know, I also find it interesting that you run to the racist argument. I believe that immigration should be legal immigration. I disagree with illegal immigration. Do you think I am a racist?

Mr. HATHAWAY. No. When we talk about the ballot proposition, if I was to enforce—

Mr. GIMENEZ. I am sorry, I am asking you about—

Mr. HATHAWAY [continuing]. Ninety-five percent of them—

Mr. GIMENEZ. I am asking about me. Do you think I am a racist because I believe——

Mr. HATHAWAY [continuing]. Are Hispanic. They——

Mr. GIMENEZ [continuing]. In legal immigration and not illegal immigration?

Mr. HATHAWAY [continuing]. Speak Spanish. They speak Spanish, Hispanic last names, Hispanic characteristics. It has been that way for hundreds of years.

Mr. GIMENEZ. OK. So do you believe I am a racist? Because I believe it should be legal immigration? Do you know who I am? Do you know what my name is? Do you know where I come from? I come from Cuba. I am an immigrant. I am probably the only immigrant in this entire committee. Are you an immigrant, too? Congratulations. OK. All right.

So what if I were to tell you that—oh, I am sorry, you are, too. Oh, there you go. OK.

Chairman GREEN. Order. Order. Order. Continue.

Mr. GIMENEZ. I am sorry. What if I were to tell you that 53 percent of registered Hispanics believe in mass deportation? Are they racist, too?

Mr. HATHAWAY. No.

Mr. GIMENEZ. OK. So what I find offensive is that anytime that we disagree, you turn to the racist card. No, we just disagree. We believe in the rule of law. Actually, Hispanics do believe in the rule of law. We believe, the majority of us believe in legal immigration. We don't believe in illegal immigration.

I am an immigrant myself. I love this country.

Mr. HATHAWAY. Nobody proposes a wall on the Canadian border. Ninety-two percent of the land borders in the world don't have any kind of a structure.

Mr. GIMENEZ. Oh, so you are still saying that we are racist. You are still—you are doubling down on it, that we are racist.

Mr. HATHAWAY. Certain policies have a racist——

Mr. GIMENEZ. I love it. Go ahead. Go ahead. Tell me I am a racist.

Mr. HATHAWAY. Certain policies have a racist element to them.

Mr. GIMENEZ. Tell me I am a racist. Go ahead.

Mr. HATHAWAY. Certain suggested policies have a racist——

Mr. GIMENEZ. Oh, yes, of course, because we don't agree with what you think. That is what disturbs you.

Mr. HATHAWAY. No, we don't propose a wall on the Canadian border.

Mr. GIMENEZ. Well, yes, you don't, but you think——

Mr. HATHAWAY. They're a white country.

Mr. GIMENEZ. You are still calling me a racist.

Mr. HATHAWAY. We're talking about policy——

Mr. GIMENEZ. Oh, we are?

Mr. HATHAWAY [continuing]. That is racist.

Mr. GIMENEZ. I am Hispanic. You are not.

Mr. HATHAWAY. I didn't say anything——

Mr. GIMENEZ. You are not.

Mr. HATHAWAY [continuing]. To disparage you.

Mr. GIMENEZ. You are not. So I take offense to that. You know what? Is my time up? No, not yet, but, you know, I think I've had enough. Thank you.

Chairman GREEN. The gentleman yields.

I now recognize another immigrant to this country who obtained a Ph.D. and is a great, great American. But legally, right?

Mr. THANEDAR. Yes.

Chairman GREEN. So, Mr. Thanedar, you are recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. THANEDAR. Thank you, Chair. Thank you, Ranking Member.

Sheriff Hathaway, in your testimony, you talked about your family's long history of ranching in Arizona and the importance of seasonal farm workers to sustaining America's farms and ranches. Yet Trump's Project 2025 calls for limiting seasonal workers' visas and the number of legal immigrants eligible for work authorization. This is exactly the opposite direction we need to go at a time when grocery store bills are a struggle for many Americans. We need to support our farmers, ranchers to make sure they have the work force they need to get their food into stores at a reasonable price.

What do you want Congress to know about the work force shortage that Arizona ranchers and farmers are facing?

Mr. HATHAWAY. I have heard directly from the farmers and ranchers, and bear in mind, a lot of these are Republicans and Democrats, that are frustrated that the Farm Modernization Act has not passed. It has sat there for years. It would allow more of the visas you are talking about, the H-2A agricultural visas. It hurts productivity. It raised costs. If the costs go up to the supplier, they go up to the retailer, the prices in the grocery stores are higher.

So, as I said in my opening remarks, it helps price inflation to have a guest worker program, to have seasonal workers be able to come into the United States and help the farms with productivity. You know, obviously, it would be great if they could hire Americans, if they could find enough Americans to do the seasonal work.

If that's not the case, you know, there's—you know, we have a border with Mexico. Mexico, for the most part, is not eligible for the asylum program because it is designated by countries. There's nothing considered to be political persecution in Mexico, as there is in other countries like Venezuela. So they're not designated for the asylum program, and yet we share a land border with them. Eighty percent of their external GDP involves trade with the United States. It would just make sense to focus on a guest worker program to help reduce cost in the United States, make the cost of living more affordable for all of us.

Mr. THANEDAR. Let me ask you, you know, if we create proper legal pathways for immigration, what would that do to the issues currently we are facing at border security?

Mr. HATHAWAY. Well, I think it would be less pressure on the asylum program. There would be parameters set by Congress. You would have less tendency for Presidents, the Executive branch, to try to dictate policy to the Congress. I think Congress should take control of this issue, decide whatever they decide. You're the law-making body. Don't just leave it to the Executive branch to make ad hoc decisions on what should be done along the border.

So I think this is in the hands of Congress. You should move with it. The time is right. We've been talking for years about comprehensive immigration reform. It's in the news. It's the No. 1 issue. When you poll Americans, what do they care about the most? The immigration issues. This is something that Congress needs to handle. It's you're the boss, you run the policy, and you should tell the President what to do in these areas.

Mr. THANEDAR. So we, the Congress, has the ability to do the comprehensive immigration reform that is badly needed. You know, this is something that we need to act on a bipartisan way.

Mr. HATHAWAY. That's correct.

Mr. THANEDAR. Yes. Thank you. I yield back.

Mr. HIGGINS [presiding]. The gentleman yields.

The young lady representative from Georgia, Ms. Greene, the gentlelady recognized for question.

Ms. GREENE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I really like this chart. As a matter of fact, it has become one of my favorite charts because not only does it speak to the truth of the serious daily and yearly border invasion into our country, this chart also saved President Trump's life when he was almost assassinated in a rally in Butler, Pennsylvania, when a would-be assassin fired at President Trump. Bullets flying into the crowd, killing Corey Comperatore, but also grazing President Trump's ear as he turned his head to look at this chart and inform the American people about the invasion our country has been under. But the American people suffering it every single day.

Sheriff Hathaway, I thoroughly read and listened to your statement, and you have such an important job as a sheriff in a county that borders the United States and Mexico. I read where you said, "My wife and I live near the border and we walk every night along the border. My county has the largest ports of entry with Mexico of all of Arizona border counties. It is peaceful and safe."

Ms. Morin, do you feel safe and peaceful?

Ms. MORIN. No. I actually have nightmares even still.

Ms. GREENE. I am sorry, and I am so sorry for your loss.

Ms. MORIN. Thank you.

Ms. GREENE. We mourn with you. I was appalled when I read that, especially given the fact with your port of entry that is in your county, by the way, Sheriff, let's talk about what that CBP One app has done. It was introduced in January 2023, and approximately 813 illegal aliens have been paroled into American communities in all 50 States, with 96 percent of the aliens, they are released in, 96 percent of the ones that come to ports of entry, by making a handy-dandy appointment on an app that the Biden administration has provided to anyone all over the world, by the way.

We can carry on and talk about the other outrageous thing that helps maybe you feel peaceful at night as you and your wife walk along. People aren't coming across maybe on your land, because they are able to go to ports of entry.

Another way they are able to get into our country is by flying in from other countries: 530,000 inadmissible aliens have flown directly into U.S. airports. Maybe that is why you don't see a giant flow across your land, Sheriff.

You also said, "It makes me laugh when people talk about fighting-age males coming into the United States." It is appalling that you said that, because I would have you know there have been at least 73,000 special interest aliens arrested at our border. Seventy-three thousand special interest aliens are from nations that promote terrorist activity, harbors terrorists, and pose a security threat to the United States. Terrorists. That is fighting-age males. Terrorists. Those are armies. Terrorists. Those are the same people that want Israel wiped off the map and would like to destroy America. Seventy-three thousand. Yes, Americans have a right to fear that. Don't laugh about that. That is extremely serious.

Jobs. Let's talk about jobs. You were saying jobs. They want to come in, and they are pursuing jobs. Oh, the cartels are getting jobs, all right. Cartels and coyotes are currently making around 13 billion a year in human trafficking. Our wide-open border is definitely providing jobs, 26 times more than that of the previous administration under President Trump. The Mexican cartels employ an estimated 175,000 members and have associates, facilitators, and brokers in all 50 States in our country. Yes, we are having jobs provided for these people.

You said certain policies smack of racism, for example, walls. I would have you know, Sheriff, there are 77 major border walls around the world; 45 countries are planning and building more. Walls are not racist. Walls keep people safe, and this country is not safe. People are being murdered every day. The woman you are sitting next to's daughter was raped and brutally murdered. That is not funny. Walls are not racist.

Just within the past 2 weeks, there was an illegal alien driving his car over 100 miles per hour in my home town, struck another car, critically injuring a baby, killing the baby's mother and the passenger in the car. That happens almost every day in our country because of illegal aliens coming in. It is not funny. It is not racist. The American people have every right to be fed up, just like they are fed up and disgusted that our country is not keeping them safe. Guess what? They freaking pay for it. Their tax dollars pay for it.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I yield.

Chairman GREEN. The gentlelady yields.

Mr. Goldman, the gentleman from New York, is recognized for questioning for 5 minutes.

Mr. GOLDMAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have got a lot to get through because we have got about 4 years to walk through.

That chart, of course, mischaracterizes when Mr. Trump took—left office, but there is no question that the problems at our border have significantly increased over the last several years. We can debate the cause of that and we have debated the cause of that. There is unquestionably a lot more climate migration. There is unquestionably a lot more authoritarianism in Central and South America that is leading to political persecution and to people wanting to flee. But there is a problem.

What happened is the administration began to address that problem as it was increasing. But Republican attorneys general all around the country filed lawsuit after lawsuit after lawsuit to stop administrative action. So in response to that, the Biden-Harris ad-

ministration went to Congress to say, let's work on bipartisan legislation to try to solve our border crisis. Senator Lankford, the second-most conservative Republican in the Senate, negotiated for months with an Independent and a Democrat and with the administration to come to some sort of bipartisan resolution, which they did, miraculously, because this has notoriously been a very difficult issue.

Now, that deal was the most conservative border security immigration bill that has ever been agreed to by any Democratic administration. It had a number of different provisions, but I think most importantly would have dramatically streamlined the asylum process.

Let me just say something about the asylum process because there is a lot of talk about legal immigration and illegal immigration. Asylum is legal immigration. It is not illegal immigration. It is part of our laws that you may seek asylum under certain circumstances. The problem we have at the border and the problem we have with our asylum process is that only 20 to 25 percent of people who apply for asylum ultimately get asylum. But it takes 7 to 10 years for that process to play out. This border security bill would have dramatically shortened the asylum process such that it would be over in 6 months. The incentive for someone who knows that they do not qualify for asylum to come across the border would be eliminated. Many of those 75 to 80 percent of people who are not eligible for asylum would not come here and would not be granted work permits.

The other thing it does is it would increase visas because we do have a work shortage. We have a job shortage for agriculture, for construction, for restaurant workers, hotel workers, home care, nurses, doctors, scientists. This is all what I hear in my district. We need to increase those quotas. That bill would have done it.

We need, as Mr. Heitke said, to increase personnel at the border, to deal with the problems, so that we can address the women who are being raped, so we can address the cartels that are fueled by American made guns. We need more personnel. We need more resources. This bill would have done it.

But what happened? Donald Trump killed the deal. He is open about it. You know why he killed the deal that would have dramatically solved our problems at the border? Because he cares more about his own election than he does about the problems facing the American people. He wanted chaos at the border so that he could run on it. When you watch him at the debate, he answers every single question, it doesn't matter what the topic is, by going back to immigration. That is what he wants to do.

I want to put up, finally, this last quote here from James Lankford, who was the author of this bill and was understandably very frustrated that it did not pass. "It is a very, very clear that the Republicans do not want to solve the problem at the border."

So what has happened since Donald Trump killed this bill that would have dramatically addressed the solutions at the border? President Biden and Vice President Harris have had no choice but to implement Executive actions to streamline this process, so that people coming in have to come in through ports of entry, so that those 73,000 people who are stopped at the border, they are not

getting in, they are stopped at the border, have to go through the points of entry so that we can vet them and check them for their criminal history. That has reduced border crossings to a level not seen since 2019, more than 55 percent. But that is not the solution. The solution is legislation, and the Republicans will not meet in the middle.

I yield back.

Mr. HIGGINS. The gentlemen yields.

My, my, my. So here we are, a hearing reflecting upon 3½ years of incredible injury that has been brought upon our country because of Southern Border policies enacted by the Biden administration White House. We had this thing under control, man. Two-thousand-seventeen, 2018, 2019, we learned a lot of lessons. But let me tell you, by the time we were deep into 2019, I was here, I was on this committee, before COVID, don't talk about COVID. In 2020—we will set that year aside—in 2019, we had this thing under control, America, Sheriff. It is the policies of the Biden and Harris administration that have flipped this thing.

With no additional laws—let me say I am going to address the cartels who are watching. Pay attention. I am talking to you now. With no additional laws within 2 weeks of the inauguration 2025, on January 20, 2025, if President Trump is inaugurated, within 2 weeks, you are shut down. You will bring no drugs into our country. You will traffic no human beings into our country. You are going to have to revisit your business model. Take some of those billions of dollars you have sucked out of our country like the lifeblood of our people, and go build a few more mansions on the beach, because you will not be running human beings and drugs into our country within 2 weeks of President Trump's inauguration next year.

If things don't go that way, we will see. If a different President is inaugurated. Very likely, you will be able to continue your business model. Won't that be tragic for my country? But she will still have the issues of me and men like me. Because I will be living on your 1-yard line. But if things go right, you are done. This will be your last Christmas sucking the life out of our country, dumping illegals across our border that you control, and flooding our Nation with the poisons that are killing our children to the rate of 100,000 a year.

Chief Heitke, man, it is good to see you. You know, I made it a point in the years I have been on this committee to get to the border, I learned very quickly that I would have my most productive CODELs on my own. One afternoon a few years ago, I knocked on your gate, just a Congressman with a backpack, and you were kind enough to let me in at the San Diego sector and you spent several hours with me. That was one of the most informative days I had ever had at the border of many.

So can you, sir, would you share with America, talk about the impact of the policies that were enacted beginning in January 2021 on the men and women of Border Patrol that were under your command in your own words? I will yield sufficient time to you, sir, just please talk about the impact of the policies that you felt, that your men and women felt, boots on the ground, on the border.

Mr. HEITKE. Ultimately, and as I mentioned earlier, with the detention and then sending—repatriating people back to their nations caused a continual release of illegal aliens into our country. As more and more people were released, more and more people came. Basically it turns the agents, the Border Patrol agents, into transport and care and feeding as all the agents have had time to do. They're well aware of what they miss: the zones that have been empty, the vast areas across the border that don't have a presence because they are sitting in detention processing or they are taking care of feeding people in processing, that constant awareness of what they're not able to do.

They're not able to complete their national security mission. That mission is why they signed on to the job. That mission is what they do. They're not allowed to get out into the field and do that. That is what is destroying the morale across the Border Patrol.

Mr. HIGGINS. Chief, thank you for being here today. I thank all the panelists. Ms. Morin, God bless you, ma'am. We are sorry for your pain. We feel it with you. Sheriff, thank you for your service.

Gentlemen. My time has expired, but my love for my country has not.

I recognize the gentleman from California, our colleague, Mr. Garcia, for 5 minutes for questioning.

Mr. GARCIA. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want to thank all of our witnesses for being here. Appreciate your time.

Mr. Chairman, I am wondering if I am able to see your chart for a minute? Do you mind if I borrow your chart for a quick second, Mr. Chairman? Do you mind if I borrow your chart for just a quick second?

Mr. HIGGINS. I apologize, I had not heard you, my colleague. But of course, yes, sir.

Mr. GARCIA. Thank you. If I can just—

Mr. HIGGINS. I only used the chart because Mr. Goldman said he didn't like it, so.

Mr. GARCIA. Thank you. So I just want to clarify this chart. I know that this chart has also been discussed by a few of my colleagues and Ms. Greene and the Chairman and others. But I just think this chart is important for us to actually look at this and actually be accurate.

Right now it says that Trump left office at this point in the chart. That is actually not when Donald Trump left office. Donald Trump actually left office right here on this chart. So, you know, we are talking about charts, we should be very accurate when Donald Trump actually left office. You can see that the actual immigration and what was happening with border crossings was already going up by the time Donald Trump left office. So I think it is important that when we have charts, and I appreciate being allowed to use this one, that we are accurate about actually when this actually happened. So facts are really important.

But I want to also add one more thing as we are talking about facts and things that are being said that are truthful is we are having a conversation about immigration and the border. I want to go back to what happened last week during the Presidential debate between former President Trump and the Vice President. When he was asked about his role, which was brought up today, about kill-

ing the bipartisan border deal in front of the Congress, and instead of actually discussing that, of course, he went, the former President, on a—what I consider a kind-of strange rant about Haitian immigrants in Springfield, Ohio. I want to repeat what actually Donald Trump said. This is a quote, “They’re eating the dogs. The people that came in, they’re eating the cats.” Continuing, “They’re eating the pets of the people that live here. And this is what’s happening in our country and it’s shame.”

Now, I am a cat owner and an immigrant. I take the safety and security of our pets very seriously. But this notion that Haitian immigrants are eating pets is not only xenophobic, in my opinion, but has caused real harm to the people of Springfield, Ohio. Now, the Republican Governor of the State, the Republican mayor of Springfield have testified about it, and they agree that the story was not true. Even the woman who created the original Facebook post which started the rumor has disavowed and made up the story. In fact, today it was reported that she is actually apologizing for what she said. Now, Governor DeWine and the mayor of the city and the city manager of the city have all said there is no evidence for the story that Donald Trump discussed at the debate about immigrants eating cats and pets.

Now, a better use of our committee’s time would be to investigate the right-wing extremism in bomb threats which have closed middle, element,—and elementary schools in Springfield and targeted local officials. People are scared in this town because of these threats and these attacks against immigrants.

Now, there is a real threat directly linked to the extremist rhetoric we are hearing. We know this to be true. We know that Donald Trump is not the only Republican that is amplifying these claims about Haitian immigrants. J.D. Vance claimed, and I quote, this is just a real quote, “Reports showed that people had their pets abducted and eaten”. That is from Senator Vance.

He also claimed that there has been a rise of infectious diseases, even though the county health commissioner said, and I quote, “If you look at all reportable communicable diseases together for the year ending 2023, you will see that we are at the lowest rate since 2016.”

Now, on CNN this weekend, J.D. Vance said, again, “If I have to create stories that the American media actually pay attention to the suffering of the American people, then that’s what I’m going to do.” I want to repeat that, “If I have to create stories so that the American media actually pay attention, that’s what I’m going to do.” We are creating stories about immigrants eating animals, which is quite a shame. There are folks on this committee that continue to also peddle some of these, in my opinion, mistruths and attacks immigrants.

Now, Donald Trump and his allies, I believe, are trying to make the American people think that immigrants are strange or harmful or dangerous. I believe this to be truly un-American as an immigrant myself.

I want to also close by just saying something that a CEO in Springfield actually said. The CEO said, “I wish I had 30 more,” in speaking about the Haitian immigrants. “Our Haitian associates come to work every day. They stay at their machines. They achieve

their numbers, and they are here to work.” That is the American story. Immigrants come here to work and to contribute. I wish we would stop attacking this important part of what our country is.

With that, Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

Mr. GUEST [presiding]. The Chair now recognizes my good friend and the gentleman from Mississippi, Mike Ezell.

Mr. EZELL. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate your leadership in highlighting the Biden-Harris administration’s failure to secure our border.

Thank you also to the witnesses who are here today for your time and, Ms. Morin, for sharing your story and your daughter’s tragic attack and murder. My condolences to you and your family. Unfortunately, there is a growing list of women and children attacked and murdered, and the current administration sits idly by. I agree with you that these deaths are 100 percent able to stop.

Chief Heitke, we have heard in each testimony today that border agents who fearlessly defend and support our country do not feel supported or equipped to do their jobs they were hired to do. You said in your testimony, our Border Patrol agents have been reduced to mere processing agents, standing by as our laws are broken. Can you please share some more examples of how our law enforcement is undermined by this administration?

Mr. HEITKE. There’s, if you want, trafficking, for example, within San Diego sector. San Diego itself sits obviously within California. California has State Bill 54 which makes it illegal for local—State and local law enforcement to have really anything to do with us, whether it be immigration or to assist us on the border.

I mentioned an earlier trafficking situation. Trafficking within California, coming through California, is a serious, significant issue that goes throughout our country. But because of State Bill 54, State and locals are not allowed to call us when they run into these young ladies, if they’re in Oakland or Los Angeles, when they’re trafficked up off of the border or if they’re run into as being transported through the State.

On top of that, when all of the agents within the Border Patrol are inundated with processing, they’re not—they don’t have the chance to actually talk to the people that they’re dealing with for more than seconds at a time. We run into rapes, abuses that go throughout the journey when people come to the United States. We have the opportunity to talk to them, to get them help once they arrive here. The agents don’t have time to do that.

They don’t have time to do DNA testing, for example. The Border Patrol is under a court order to do DNA testing on people who are brought into custody. We did not have the time or the resources through 2022 or 2023 to complete that at all in San Diego. The equipment didn’t even arrive.

Often cases, the money that comes from the soft-sided facilities is another—all of this extra funding comes out of the Border Patrol budget. So our computer refreshes, our cameras, our software systems are becoming older and older. As one of the representatives mentioned, money to fix vehicles is limited because so much money is going to care and feeding of masses of people. This all impacts the agents’ ability to do their job. It all impacts their ability to complete their national security mission.

On another note, many people don't realize how impactful Border Patrol agents are across all of the Federal and State and local agencies. We send tax task force officers out through DEA task force, Safe Streets Task Force with the FBI. In my time in San Diego, I had to pull all the task force agents back in order to complete our processing mission. They're not there.

Spanish speakers, Spanish is required within Border Patrol agents. Many agencies across the Southern Border do not have Spanish-speaking officers. They rely on us for Spanish speakers, especially in task forces, to further their missions, whether it be drugs, even stolen vehicle task forces in San Diego, things like that. Those are all hampered because we've had to pull the agents back.

Mr. EZELL. What's this doing to morale?

Mr. HEITKE. It destroys morale, the impact of not being able to do the mission that they were hired to do. Then they sit behind a desk in the office. Border Patrol agents come to the mission to be outside. It's outside, it's active, and they're actively completing a national security mission when now they sit at a desk and type.

Mr. EZELL. Ms. Morin, how does that make you feel that our Border Patrol agents are not being allowed to do their job and the morale is low after what you've been through?

Ms. MORIN. It makes me feel very sad, sad that our Government, you folks that have taken an oath to protect the American people, to protect our right to liberty and freedom, and you're not, not pointing fingers, but you're not allowed to do that because so much money is tied up doing all these other things, that the things that are really necessary, protecting the American people, isn't being done. It gives the American people a feeling of hopelessness that we don't matter and that you folks are just going to continue with your partisan politics and not really take to heart the lives of the American people that put you in office to begin with.

Mr. EZELL. Thank you for that. Again, I am very sorry for your loss. As a former law enforcement officer myself, my No. 1 priority was protect my county and my citizens. I think our Border Patrol agents should be allowed to do the same thing. Thank you.

With that, Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

Chairman GREEN. The gentlemen yields.

I now recognize Mrs. Ramirez from the State of Illinois.

Mrs. RAMIREZ. The State of Illinois and a daughter of immigrants, yes. So thank you, Chairman.

Over the last few months, my Republican colleagues, you could tell when it happened, have transitioned from using Secretary Mayorkas as a scapegoat for a global migration crisis to now Vice President Harris, who they have wrongfully labeled the border czar. They claim that they want today's hearing to be about policies. So I want to spend time talking about policies, certainly not charts, because we get the dates and the charts wrong here.

At the taxpayers' expense, Republicans want to use mass deportation to rip families apart. They want to unconstitutionally strip citizenship from U.S. citizens who have immigrant parents. They want to expand this border wall that has already cost about \$45 million per mile. Folks, we have been talking about this in the last almost 2 hours here. None of this will fix our outdated immigration

system that we haven't fixed since 1986 when I was 3 years old or increase our ability to stop fentanyl trafficking, stem the unlawful flow of weapons across our border, and certainly it won't dismantle these cartels that we should be dismantling.

Talking about immigration specifically, we have more than 30 years of data on enforcement-only proposals and policies based on deterrence work, and they simply don't work. Even these cruel actions of the former administration didn't actually reduce migration or improve order at the border. Instead of they have resulted in chaos and people forced to wait in unsafe places and women and children going through the worst cases and experiences, much like my own mother experienced when she crossed the border.

So folks, we should be talking about creating legal pathways. I understand that is Committee on Judiciary and I wish that you and I were working on that. That is actually what we should be doing together, creating legal pathways. But it doesn't seem like that is what we want to do because vilifying immigrants seems to be the only priority in this committee and certainly with most of my colleagues on the other side.

So, Sheriff Hathaway, I want to hear from you in the next minute or so. What should Congress be focusing on to secure the border and support border communities like yours?

Mr. HATHAWAY. Well, specifically, there is a dividing line between Federal and State law enforcement. You know, the Federal agencies in my town, Federal officers outnumber 30 to 1. There's 30 Federal officers for every 1 local officer. So that includes one of the largest Border Patrol stations in the United States and the third-largest that are both in my county; large contingents of CBP, OFO, those are the guys in the blue uniforms on the border that do the inspections at the ports of entry. You know, frankly, I don't want to do their job and they don't want to do my job.

I do the same job as the 3,000 other sheriffs in the United States. There's about 3,000 counties and 3,000 elected sheriffs in the United States. I treat everybody the same. Our focus is violent crime and property crime.

So, you know, as far as it's up to you what you decide on the Federal issues that have to do with the border. But to me, I don't see a bigger impact of, you know, crime or property damage with anything to do related to the border.

So financially, I don't need more support. I don't need more legal support. But I do think you need, Congress needs to solve the issues on the border to create legal pathways for workers.

Mrs. RAMIREZ. So, Sheriff, you think that this Congress should be focused on creating legal pathways, yes or no?

Mr. HATHAWAY. That's correct.

Mrs. RAMIREZ. You think that this Congress should do the thing it hasn't done in almost 40 years, which is actually fix the immigration system, is that yes?

Mr. HATHAWAY. Fix immigration. Look at the Farm Modernization Act, and consider getting these agricultural visas in place.

Mrs. RAMIREZ. Got it. Well, I agree with those two things here, and I think that vilifying immigrants is really dangerous. It actually reminds me that it reveals to me that we have a short memory here. In the 18- and early 1900's, Italians, Irish, Germans, and oth-

ers from parts of Europe, who are the ancestors of many of the people in this room, whom you carry their last name now with pride, were treated as less than human. If our country today were to suddenly face increased migration from that region, I would be with you protecting them like hell.

So it is really hard for me to watch the very same grandchildren of these people who were harmed, who were neglected, who were abandoned and starved, doing the same thing to others that were done to their grandparents. Which is why every single chance that I am in this committee, I am going to remind you of your roots, and I am going to remind you that our job is to create a kind of policy so that we create legal pathways, so that people that come to this country from Europe or from Latin America are able to come here, yes, the legal way, without experiencing the things they do at the border.

With that, Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

Chairman GREEN. The gentlelady yields.

I now recognize Mr. Strong, a gentleman from Alabama, for 5 minutes.

Mr. STRONG. Thank you, Chairman Green.

Chairman GREEN. Two, maybe 2.

Mr. STRONG. We will go quick.

Chairman GREEN. Five minutes for his questioning.

Mr. STRONG. We will go quick.

Mr. Desmond, you recently wrote that millions of local taxpayer dollars have been diverted to cover the cost associated with the massed immigration of asylum-seeking immigrants, money that could have been better spent on our residents and vital services. Like you, I have serious concerns about the burden communities face as a consequence of this administration's border crisis, especially small and rural communities.

News outlets in Alabama have reported that several communities have expressed concern over a steady increase in Haitian immigrants, especially in rural areas which stretch thin resources. I have heard this very sentiment myself. There are countless examples of this administration's policies and failures that have gotten us to this point. One that has come to the forefront, and, of course, it is Cuba, Haiti, Nicaragua, and Venezuela, which at the end of July this year had paroled over a half a million migrants into the United States. I sent my concerns about the CHNV to Secretary Mayorkas over a month ago. I wish I had an answer to share here today, but I have yet to receive a response from the Secretary.

Barring that, Mr. Desmond, you, unfortunately, have first-hand experience with the border crisis this administration has brought on all of us. Can you speak to the cost your community has incurred as a result of the surge of migrants and how it has impacted the services provided to your residents?

Mr. DESMOND. Well, thank you. The cost is kind-of hard to monetize because there's so many different agencies and so many different elements to it. But I can tell you specifically the San Diego County itself, we spent \$6 million to set up a migrant receiving center for those being dropped here. We only had it open for 4 months because we ran out of money. Yes, that money could have been spent on our roads, infrastructure, and parks.

But we also have our hospital systems. Many people come across the border, they're injured because of their long journey. I'm sure most of you have seen in graphic, you know, YouTube videos of people dropping their children or their loved ones over the fence. Many people have broken limbs, things like that. So we have many paramedic calls that actually go to the border.

We also have fire calls. When people come over in the cold of night, they'll burn just about anything they can get their hands on to stay warm, which is, you know, I understand, but we all have fire calls and potentially fires and structures that catch fire along the border. Also, you know, just kind-of the fear factor itself of people driving boats up onto our beaches and just walking unimpeded into our communities.

So monetarily, you know, also our San Diego Airport has migrants sleeping and staying there. So that hurts—you know, we're a tourist town. That hurts our tourism when you see migrants sleeping in the airport coming and going.

So there's many, many factors. I don't have an exact number, but I know it's in the several millions of dollars that is costing our local taxpayers and that that money should be staying in San Diego County, not being spent on migrant and immigration issues. That's the purview of the Federal Government.

Mr. STRONG. I understand what you are talking about. I served 26 years in local government, 40 years as a firefighter EMT. I know first-hand what you are talking about, and I appreciate you being here.

I also find it ironic that those responsible for this situation that you are in today, Vice President Harris, Secretary Mayorkas, are 2 of California's finest. It sends a clear message to every American that if they had allowed this to happen in their own communities, if they don't care about what is happening in their own backyards, why would they care, care about what is happening in Alabama? I think the evidence is obvious.

Mr. Desmond, you also mentioned witnessing mass street releases, which buses dropped off hundreds and thousands of illegal aliens at a time in your communities, many of whom have no idea where they are or where they are going. It is not just happening in California. What advice would you give to other communities, local leaders, county commissioners, mayors, city councils, facing this exact situation throughout our country?

Mr. DESMOND. Well, please speak up and stop it from happening. I mean, there's not much we can do because we actually—when they started the drop-offs back in 2022, it was like 3 days before Christmas. We got a heads-up that the Border Patrol was there. We're at capacity and we're going to be dropping migrants at our transit stations. We had to make sure that, you know, our shelters nearby were not going to be impacted. We had to make sure local police was there. One of the drop-off stations didn't even have a bathroom. So we had to make sure all those types of facilities were there and available. Local communities, small business—small cities and communities don't have the resources to immediately write those kinds of checks. So beg and plead and ask, you know, the Federal Government to stop this.

We all want to have an immigration system that works. I take offense to the sheriff's racist comments made earlier, but we need a system that works. I really think the focus should be on vetting the people that come across the border. Most people want to be here and they want to work here. I get that. But we got to be able to vet and make sure we keep the bad people out.

Mr. STRONG. Thank you. Would it be fair to say that the Biden-Harris administration's policies have better served the interests of criminal cartels than the American people?

Mr. DESMOND. Yes.

Mr. STRONG. Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

Chairman GREEN. The gentlemen yields.

I now recognize Mr. Suozzi, the gentleman from New York, for 5 minutes of questioning.

Mr. SUOZZI. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Ms. Morin, I am so sorry. What you have been through. Nobody knows how you feel. Appreciate you being here and coming to talk to us like this. Sheriff Hathaway, thank you for your service. Mr. Desmond, I can only imagine how frustrated you are as a local official. I was a mayor, I was a county executive. This is all out of your control and it is being dumped on you and it is really frustrating. Mr. Heitke, thank you for your service for so many years. I know you have devoted your life to your job and your public service. It must be so frustrating to you as well to see these things happening beyond your control.

We talk about the border crisis, but it is really a Washington, DC, crisis, because this is not a new phenomenon. This has been going on for decades. We can go back and forth about the numbers going up and down. You know, a big impact on those charts is COVID. When COVID is over, it started going back up again. You know, now the numbers are down. Mexico is enforcing its border because the President did his Executive Order.

So we got to figure out how to get Democrats and Republicans to work together to address the very real concerns that every one of you have and that America—what you see in this room is what is happening all over America every day. People are just like, what the hell are you guys doing? We are sick of hearing you just attack each other instead of solving the problem.

So it is not one thing. It is not one or the other. It is both sides. We got to secure the border. We have to fix the broken asylum system, and we got to treat people like human beings. I mean, those—everybody wants that. I don't care whether you are the Republican witness, the Democratic witness. Everybody wants those 3 things. Secure the border. We need more agents. We need more judges. We can build more wall. We can do more technology. We can do all the things we have heard the back and forth here today. We have got to secure the border. That is a very real thing that has to be done.

No. 2, we got to fix the asylum system. You know, asylum used to be like, you know, we were happy when the Soviets sought asylum in America. That was like, yes, they are coming to us. They are not going to the other guys. Asylum, you know, you came from Cuba or from Soviet Union. Like, yes, asylum. Now it is being abused by the cartels and by the organized crime and the coyotes and teaching people—you know, these people are all coming here

because they want a better life, but we can't just let everybody in. But people are abusing the asylum system, and they are gaming the system, saying the right keywords so they can get into this bureaucratic mess that takes 6 or 7 years to resolve. Eighty-five percent of the people get denied, ultimately, but people are abusing the system.

We got to fix the asylum system. We got to change the standards with asylum. We got to stop allowing asylum in between the ports of entry, which is what the President did in his Executive Order. It is what the Lankford bill that we have heard about today, the Lankford-Murphy bill would have done, but they had these—you had to get 4,500 people and then the President's Executive Order is 2,500 people. Got to say no, just no, no asylum in between the ports of entry. Just stop it. Make you go to a port of entry or make you go to a safe mobility office somewhere else in the world.

No. 3, you got to treat people like human beings. I think, I don't know your politics or you know, but most people think the Dreamers who have been here 20, 30 years, we came as little kids, you know, they should have a pathway, at least to legalization. TPS recipients, we invited them here after an earthquake or a civil war. Give them a pathway to citizenship or don't even give them citizenship. Give them legalization so they don't have to worry about being deported tomorrow so they can go to work.

The Farm Worker Modernization Act, it has been negotiated bipartisan. Let's make the deal. We got both sides worked it out.

The Afghan Readjustment Act. There is so many things that we have worked out to say, yes, let's treat people like human beings. Well, we got to put these 3 things together.

We have to stop. Every problem we face in America, and certainly this issue, is complicated. Nothing is simple. But you cannot solve complicated problems in an environment of fear and anger when everybody is just yelling and screaming at each other. You can only solve complicated problems when you get people on one side and people on the other side to say, I think this; well, I think that. Well, how about we do this? Well, how about we do that? You try and find a compromise somewhere in the middle. That is what I know all of you want to see happen. That is what I think most people up here want to happen.

I heard Mr. Heitke. Nobody paid attention to what he said before. He said most of the people are coming over are good people. You know, most of them just want to go to work. So let's fix this broken system that we have had for decades. Stop the BS and try and find common ground so that people like yourselves who are sitting there and saying to yourselves I am so sick of these guys going back and forth, can't they just work it out? That I know you are all thinking in the back of your heads, like everybody in America is thinking, let's work it out. Let's work together, let's get it done. I am prepared to do it. I know lots of Republicans are. Let's try and get that—make that happen.

Thank you very much. I yield back.

I am sorry I didn't ask any questions, but I had to just say that. Thank you.

Chairman GREEN. Thanks. The gentleman yields.

I now recognize the Vice Chair of the committee, Mr. Guest, for his 5 minutes of questioning.

Mr. GUEST. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Sheriff, I want to thank you for being with us today and start a couple questions with you. I see in the statement that you have prepared, you talk about the fact that you not only are an elected official there in Arizona, but live very close to the border, that you and your wife will often go out at night and walk there along the U.S.-Mexican border.

I have before me from the CBP website some recent statistics about addressing border encounters along the Southwest Border and then breaking those border statistics down into certain sectors. It shows that overall, over the last 12 months, that in many sectors we have begun to see a brief decrease in the number of border encounters. But the statistics put out by CBP show that in the Tucson sector, which encompasses a large portion of the Arizona border, we have seen a dramatic increase in the last year. The numbers for fiscal year 2023 were 322,000; for fiscal year 2024, it is 452,000. So a 40 percent increase in that sector as we have seen the numbers decrease in the other sector.

So since that is an area of your State, wanted to see if you can shed any light before the committee as to why we have seen such a substantial increase. Again, that is one of the only 2 sectors that we have seen increased numbers over the last year. So do you have any insight as to why there in the Tucson sector we've seen a 40-plus percent increase in encounters within the last 12 months?

Mr. HATHAWAY. Yes. As Ms. Taylor Greene alluded to, Nogales, which is in the Tucson sector, is the designated reporting accumulation area for the CBP One app. So it's the only place, the primary place for people who are claiming asylum. They're told to go to Nogales. Whether they show up in Ciudad Juárez and El Paso or Tijuana, they're told apply via the CBP One app and go to Nogales. So a lot of people go there, then they can't get their appointment. The appointment system is full. They walk across and they self surrender to Border Patrol. So to me, that's been the main reason for the steady numbers in that sector.

Mr. GUEST. So they are being directed there by the administration, is that correct?

Mr. HATHAWAY. By the administration. The CBP One app, which is a smartphone app for asylum seekers, is not available along the border, but in Nogales it is. So they're all directed there, whether they start out making contact in Texas or Southern California, they're directed to that sector.

Mr. GUEST. The testimony of Chief Heitke, he stated that one of the things that he thought that one of the things that had driven some of the surge in immigration was the decrease in detention beds. I know that you had mentioned in your testimony, Sheriff, about the need for additional immigration judges, which I support. I support additional immigration judges because I know the statistics show that in some parts of the country that there's a 4-5-year backlog. Individuals, once they come across their country, their first court date at times can be as long as 4 or 5 years. There is a substantial need for immigration judges. So I don't disagree with that assessment.

But I also agree with Chief Heitke that detention beds are an important part of that solution, that as we have immigrants who are coming across the country, particularly many of which we are not, in my opinion, properly vetting, and I think that we have case after case of immigrants who have not been properly vetted, who have been allowed in the country that never should have been in. If we had detention beds available so that we could properly vet those immigrants and then have a process for those claims to rapidly be heard, that some of the situations that we see would not have occurred.

So what are your thoughts on additional detention beds? Is that—and I am not saying that is the only solution. I am not saying that there is one silver bullet, because I don't believe that. I believe that there are a multitude of factors that Congress must take into play if we are going to try to solve this problem. But do you support additional detention beds for the proper vetting and to expedite those individuals who are incarcerated and in those detention beds to be quickly brought before an immigration judge?

Mr. HATHAWAY. Yes. If I can speak a little bit on behalf on the current sector chief and the Tucson Sector Chief Modlin, he has properly stated that, you know, look, my officers aren't trained to be detention officers and babysitters, and they've had to do this detention function. They've also been moved oftentimes on TDYs to the Rio Grande Valley and to different areas. So it's not really a function that Border Patrol was trained for. I'm sure Chief Heitke could attest to the same thing. It really should be handled by another agency.

Yes, that is a valid concern, but it's not something that Border Patrol is trained for. Like Secretary Chief Modlin has always told me, I want my officers back on the line, not sitting here functioning as detention officers.

Mr. GUEST. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am out of time and now yield back.

Chairman GREEN. The gentlemen yields.

I now recognize Mr. Brecheen for 5 minutes of questioning.

Mr. BRECHEEN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Ms. Morin, did I pronounce your name correctly? Is it Marin?

Ms. MORIN. Morin. It's French.

Mr. BRECHEEN. Morin. Thank you very much for being here. The fact that your daughter was killed by an illegal alien, sexually assaulted, do you think that the media is paying attention to these stories to the level that they need to?

Ms. MORIN. I do not. The reason why I say that is because there's been 4 or 5 that have really hit the media and it's because there are mothers that are speaking out and not stopping. But there are a lot of women that are assaulted every day. I think because they're assaulted, but maybe perhaps because of shame or fear, they're not reporting the assault, or it's a local police matter that doesn't necessarily hit national news, so it might just be local news, and/or they don't have DNA because they're not able to track these immigrants that have come into the country. Because they don't know their name, they don't know where they're from, they don't—they collect DNA from the crime, but then they don't know where else to go with it, that they just kind-of, like, hang in limbo.

But there are women that are being attacked every day. I get letters from across the country. Just in my own, you know, city, we had 2 murders by illegal immigrants from El Salvador.

I do realize the man that was here earlier that said he was from Prince George's County, he was a State prosecutor during Trump's time in office. So he may have seen lower numbers, but that's not necessarily the state of the country at this moment. I think that—I'm trying not to take up your time.

Mr. BRECHEEN. No, I appreciate your response. You know, no one would want to find themselves in a situation that you have experienced and, you know, genuine heartfelt condolences being extended to you. We are so sorry. This committee is so sorry.

Ms. MORIN. Can I just say one more thing?

Mr. BRECHEEN. Of course you can.

Ms. MORIN. I think that they hear us speak as mothers, and they think because we're mothers, you know, that we're emotional, yes, and we're more attached. But if you actually saw the bodies and the crimes that are actually being committed against a human being, it's like an animal dragging a prey into the woods and attacking them. If they could see how violent these crimes are. I'm not saying that all immigrants are like this, but if people are willing to come into the country illegally, there's something that they're hiding because an upstanding person would come legally.

Mr. BRECHEEN. Mr. Heitke, you—San Diego sectors, former Border Patrol chief there, several decades of experience. Do you think the American family, the average American family who hears these stories, has a right to feel less safe? You think it is justified the feeling across America, of just regular people sending their sons or daughters into a public space, a public sphere, where they are not present with that child, that this validates a heightened concern for their children's safety?

Mr. HEITKE. I do.

Mr. BRECHEEN. Is this something that you experienced in your decades of experience, this heightened level of concern? Was it experienced under the Trump administration at this level? Or is there something to be said, direct correlation to this current administration's position on the border?

Mr. HEITKE. In my time with the Border Patrol, I have never seen entire zones that were left without agent presence. I've never seen that before.

Mr. BRECHEEN. Mr. Desmond, you are over the San Diego sector. What is interesting is in 2023, with 1,200 miles of border wall, of a 2,000-mile border wall, Texas has more than the majority of the border wall. We know by reports of what Texas is doing to secure their border, they went from being 60 percent of the encounters to last—first half of this year, 40 percent, even though they have more than half. So that is being shifted. We know San Diego is being one of the areas that population is going because Texas is having to do what the Federal Government should be doing. You all are seeing this.

Are people—the feel of the average American who feels less safe, are they misinformed?

Mr. DESMOND. No, they are not misinformed. Many of them see, you know, the effects of it, particularly our beach communities. We

get 3 or 4 boats every week that just beach themselves and people walking into the communities, without law enforcement even able to do anything.

Unfortunately, California is a sanctuary State, and our law enforcement, as the chief had mentioned, is prohibited from enforcing any immigration law. They're actually prohibited from even asking someone what their immigration status is. So even though somebody just jumped off a boat and is walking through your neighborhood and you know is there illegally, our local law enforcement can't do a thing and people are upset about it.

Mr. BRECHEEN. Thank you. Mr. Chairman, I yield.

Chairman GREEN. The gentlemen yields.

I now recognize Mr. Crane, the gentleman from Arizona.

Mr. CRANE. Thank you.

Chairman GREEN. From a border State, for his 5 minutes.

Mr. CRANE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Ms. Morin, thank you so much for coming here. I want to thank the panelists for coming as well.

Ms. Morin, in your opinion, how many more beautiful young Americans must be brutalized, raped, and killed by people who weren't supposed to be here in the first place before this administration does anything about it?

Ms. MORIN. There should be none. They should have—my goodness. When, in February 2023, media blasted all over national TV stations, all over the United States, pictures of hundreds of thousands of immigrants swarming toward our Southern Border, Harris—the Biden and Harris administration could have stopped it before they even reached the border. They could have said, stay in your country or stay in Mexico, and then vet them one by one. So they saw them coming and they opened the doors and just allowed everyone to come in.

Mr. CRANE. Thank you. Sheriff, why do you believe that border walls are racist?

Mr. HATHAWAY. Well, Reagan was against border walls. He told Mikhail Gorbachev, tear down this wall. The Soviet Union said they were emerging into an era of freedom, and he said, prove it, tear down the walls. Only 8 percent of the world's land borders have any structure at all. Not a wall, not a fence, not even a line of rocks. If you go through Europe, Asia, Africa, Latin America, even the Canadian border.

Mr. CRANE. That is not what I asked you, Sheriff. I said, why do you believe they are racist? You said in your written testimony, "and certain policies smack of racism. For example, a wall was never suggestion suggested for the Canadian border."

Mr. HATHAWAY. Well, yes, the Canadian border is known as a—generally a white population, whereas the Southwestern Border is generally a brown population. So it smacks of racism. Title 42 was never—

Mr. CRANE. Sheriff?

Mr. HATHAWAY [continuing]. Aggressively enforced on the Canadian border.

Mr. CRANE. Sheriff, do you think that if the mass majority of illegal immigration coming into the United States of America was

coming from the Northern Border, that Americans would demand the same thing?

Mr. HATHAWAY. I don't know.

Mr. CRANE. I think you probably do know that, sir, because it is not about race with the American people. Matter of fact, most American people support legal immigration. It is the illegal immigration. It has nothing to do with race.

Sheriff, do you have a wall at your house?

Mr. HATHAWAY. A what?

Mr. CRANE. Do you have a wall at your house, Sheriff?

Mr. HATHAWAY. No, I do not.

Mr. CRANE. Do you have a front door on your house?

Mr. HATHAWAY. Yes, I do.

Mr. CRANE. Why not just leave it open, Sheriff?

Mr. HATHAWAY. I leave it unlocked, but, you know, I do have a door.

Mr. CRANE. Yes, most people have walls and doors on their house not because they hate the other people on the outside. It is because they love the people on the inside.

Sheriff, what about prison? What about prisons, Sheriff? They have walls around them as well. Are those racist?

Mr. HATHAWAY. No, I would say they're not.

Mr. CRANE. Yes, they are not. What about the White House? It has a wall around it too, as well, doesn't it? Do you think that is racist? Do you think—

Mr. HATHAWAY. I didn't say that walls are generically racist.

Mr. CRANE. OK. Well, you said, "and certain policies smack of racism."

Mr. HATHAWAY. Yes, it does. Proposing a wall on the Southern Border and not the Canadian border, that's racist.

Mr. CRANE. Well, I just told you. Where's the majority of illegal immigration coming into the United States, sir? Northern or Southern Border? Go ahead.

Mr. HATHAWAY. Probably the Southern Border.

Mr. CRANE. Yes, you know it is. OK. Thank you. All right.

Sheriff, did you have to swear an oath to the Constitution of the United States to become sheriff?

Mr. HATHAWAY. Yes, I have, multiple times.

Mr. CRANE. Are you familiar with Article IV, Section 4 of the Constitution, Sheriff?

Mr. HATHAWAY. Can you remind me what it says?

Mr. CRANE. It is often known as the invasion clause. U.S. Government guarantees the protection of our States from invasion and domestic violence.

Mr. HATHAWAY. Yes, I've heard that.

Mr. CRANE. OK. So could it be, Sheriff, that part of the reason we suggested a border wall because anybody that knows security understands that a wall is just one part of a security system designed to keep our citizens safe of all races? Could that be it, Sheriff, and maybe not racism?

Mr. HATHAWAY. No, I don't think there's an invasion. There's not a clause been activated in the Constitution that, you know, suggests that this is an invasion. It's not an invasion.

Mr. CRANE. OK. Yes, well—

Mr. HATHAWAY. It's the same thing I've seen my whole life.

Mr. CRANE. Yes, well, I think Ms. Morin and other moms who have lost their children, brutally raped, murdered, dragged off into the woods, would highly disagree with that comment. If you looked at the data in the graph that has been presented here today, it is obviously an invasion.

Mr. HATHAWAY. It's not a matter of—

Mr. CRANE. So much so—hold on, I am not done yet. So much so that Kamala Harris has actually changed her position now on border security because she realizes what a complete catastrophe it is.

Mr. Heitke, you have been a Border Patrol chief. Do you agree with Sheriff Hathaway here that implementing a wall as part of a security system is racist?

Mr. HEITKE. No, I do not.

Mr. CRANE. Have you ever seen a wall that stopped one race of people from getting in and allowed other races of people to come into the country? Have you ever seen that?

Mr. HEITKE. No.

Mr. CRANE. Didn't think so.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I yield back.

Chairman GREEN. The gentlemen yields. I now recognize the gentleman from New Jersey, Mr. Menendez, for 5 minutes of questioning.

Mr. MENENDEZ. Thank you, Chairman. Thank you, Ranking Member. Thank you to our panelists.

This is my first term in office and I represent a district where over 40 percent of the people that live there were born outside the country. So I care deeply about our immigration policy. The first trip I took as a Member was to our Southern Border because I care that we get it right there as well for our border communities and for communities throughout the country. I care about both parts of this conversation.

The other week, we remembered those who were lost in 9/11. This was a select committee after 9/11 to make sure that we protect the homeland from threats, domestic and foreign. I had great hopes this committee would be a place that we could engage with our colleagues in a meaningful way to take on these challenges. I feel like I have tried in my individual capacity to do that work.

But there is a long history on this committee, this Congress, of opportunities to come together where we have not been met halfway. We marked up H.R. 2, the Republican priority bill on the border, which would have caused the loss of human life on American soil because of the handcuffs that they would have put on NGO's that operate along the border to help other human beings.

We have talked about the funding request the President has made for more CBP officers to ensure that we have the latest technology for fentanyl detection. It was ignored.

I know other colleagues have talked about the Senate border deal that was negotiated with Republicans, one of the most conservative Republicans in the Senate. Never even got to the House.

We had and we consumed this committee's staff with an impeachment of Secretary Mayorkas. I think there were 5 impeachment reports that they put together to try to make the case. They

didn't call 1 constitutional expert to come talk about high crimes and misdemeanors.

I mean, so when we as Democrats are frustrated, we share the frustration with the American people who look to us and want us to get things done. We know we have to work across the aisle because we are the Minority party. That is what we came here to do. Every step along the way, we have been frustrated, even on H.R. 2.

Blue Lotus, an administrative operation to combat fentanyl, I introduced an amendment to give legislative authority for future administrations through the same program. Not a Republican voted for it. On their own bill, a single amendment that dealt with fentanyl, not one Republican voted for it. Show me where the good faith effort is. Just show me, because we have done the work. You have listened to all of our colleagues who are frustrated. People in the Senate who negotiated a deal, didn't even get a vote on it.

So we are frustrated. It is not partisan, it is not political games. It is not political theater. It is not what we came here to do. I almost didn't even come down to this meeting because I am so frustrated. I am so sorry. Especially so sorry for your loss and for so many like you who have experienced such devastating loss. I am sorry. That is why I signed up for this job, to try to fix the things that are broken in this country.

Our immigration system is broken. We feel that no matter where we live. We have an obligation to do something about it. I want to do something about it.

I believe we have folks who have worked in CBP. We have folks who are sheriffs. Do you look to Congress and us as legislators for solutions to some of the challenges that you're all facing?

Mr. HEITKE. Yes.

Mr. MENENDEZ. Sir?

Mr. HATHAWAY. Yes, definitely. I consider that to be your job.

Mr. MENENDEZ. It is. If I were a resident where you are a sheriff, I would look for you to make sure that our communities are safe. This is a two-way street. We listen. We show up to these committee hearings and listen to all the things that you are facing, that Border Patrol agents are facing, that border communities are facing. We listen and I just wish we were doing more.

So just know that I am committed to trying to take on these challenges. So many of us really are. You may not see that here in this committee. You may not see that today. Rest assured, we are going to keep trying, and we are going to try to get to better places for all residents, both of our districts and throughout the country. So thank you all for being here today. Thank you for all that you do to advocate for these issues.

I yield back.

Chairman GREEN. The gentlemen yields.

I now recognize the Ranking Member, the acting Ranking Member, for his closing statement.

Mr. CORREA. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Again, I want to thank the witnesses for being here today.

Ms. Morin, again, my condolences to you and your family. We are doing everything we can to make sure that we go after those ani-

mals that would do the things that were done to your children—to your daughter. One is way too many victims.

Mr. Chairman, as I look at this committee, I think today is the last full committee hearing before the election. I cannot but say that I am disappointed with today's hearing because we are 50, 60 days away from an election and a lot of the stuff I heard today was really focused on the election. Their fault, our fault. Statistics. Back home, people want solutions from us. I don't hear a lot of solutions today.

Mr. Heitke, I started talking to you a little bit, just a little bit, about the resources. You talked about many places along the border that don't have the personnel. As I told you, earlier today, I met with the president of one of your local organizations on the border. We discussed the fact that in about 2 or 3 years, you are going to have a tsunami of border agents retiring because most of them were hired after 9/11. There is a mandatory retirement age. I have not heard any discussion about how to replace them, how to hire them. We talked about the fact that this country has a massive debt. What are we going to do to increase the funding for our border security when we have a national debt? No solutions discussed.

Mr. Desmond, you are a San Diego County Board of Supervisors. I was the Orange County Board. A lot of ag in your area, I think. Should we deport all those undocumented workers out there? The answer is probably not. But we should give them a pathway to citizenship or just a pathway to be able to work in this country because they are the ones that produce our food. I have not heard of any solutions to fixing the problem for those that have been waiting in line 20, 30 years. A lot of them are my constituents as well as they are yours. We haven't given you a solution.

Mr. Hathaway—Sheriff Hathaway, man, I can only imagine what you go through at your town, 80, 90 percent Latino. I will give you a little secret. I know racism doesn't exist, but I can't tell you how many times I have been pulled over by ICE to demand what, you know, my citizenship was. That is OK, I will comply. But it is only folks that kind-of look like me that have that treatment. I know it is national security. It is nothing but that.

But you, my friend, are responding to your constituents, to your taxpayers, to your voters that say we expect certain respect from the Government, from the sheriff. We want streets that are safe. We want to make sure there is a—policies that enable us to live like human beings and not have to fear police officers. We spent 20 years in the county of Orange trying to make sure that the people that lived in the shadows didn't fear reporting crimes to police. That is good policing. We are not a police state. The United States is not a police state. We have to have cooperation from our population to make sure we have safe streets.

You, Sheriff, have a tough job, but you are not alone. The numbers, that beautiful chart out there, speaks volumes. But what is not on that chart is the story behind a lot of those numbers.

We didn't talk about the COVID pandemic that devastated not only the United States, half the countries in Latin America are nonfunctional right now. You go to Honduras, that economy is on life line. Other countries in Latin America, Colombia right now has

about 4 million Venezuelan refugees. Costa Rica, ditto Mexico, trying to figure out a handle to the problem.

By the way, the other issue nobody talked about today is Mexico's cooperation with the United States today. They are our biggest trading partner and they are stepping up to the plate. It is never enough. But, you know, we want to work on a solution. For example, safe pathways to the United States to work and also databases that track those criminals, so Ms. Morin's situation is not repeated. Those are real solutions that we are working on and we can continue to work on.

Dreamers. OK? That population of kids who are here, now adults, some of them that actually have made the ultimate sacrifice in the military for our country and whose families are still living in the shadows, it is not an issue for Homeland Security, but it is connected to Homeland Security.

You know, former Secretary of Homeland Security General Kelly, who used to be President Trump's chief of staff, would say border security does not start or end at the border. If anything negative gets to the border, you are already too late. He was in charge of SouthCom, which is the Southern Command, U.S. military in Latin America. He understood that it wasn't about the border, but it was about the region. I didn't hear any discussion about these issues today.

Mr. Chairman, we have got a lot of work to do. It is not your fault. It is not their fault. It is our job to fix these problems. The American taxpayers are asking us to be practical and do it. Sixty days out and we are talking essentially political rhetoric here about the election.

You know, Senator Lankford, he's a guy I talk to a lot. He put his neck out in the line as an elected official to come up with an immigration solution. He really worked hard. I looked at his—and I said, Jim, you are really going to go out on the limb here, man? Nobody has been able to succeed for 30 years. He said, this is the right thing to do, an immigration solution, a border solution. Then former President Trump came out and said, kill it. He is a conservative Republican from Oklahoma trying to do the right thing for America, and that is what his reward is.

We have to change the rhetoric. We are all Americans. We are all expecting our Federal Government, the U.S. Congress, to solve the problems. You know, most of us here are married. Do you ever go home and say, I get 100 percent on the decisions with my wife, your spouse? Of course not. You negotiate the deal, and if you get most of it, you have cut a good deal. You don't agree 100 percent with your wife, with your spouse when you are cutting the deals. Why do we expect to come to Congress and agree 100 percent with the other side?

Hope you can move forward. Homeland Security was designed, this committee, that agency was designed after 9/11 to work together, not as a partisan committee, but as a committee that worked across the aisle to protect Americans from foreign and domestic terrorism. We have to get back to doing our job and doing it right.

We have got the Secret Service that is also under our jurisdiction, and they are having a hell of a time protecting our Presi-

dential candidates. Those 2 articles I submitted for the record today are a glimpse that the rest of the world is scared to death because they see our American democracy on the brink of failure. That does not speak well of the job we are doing here in Congress. Put partisanship aside and start working to stabilize this country and do what our taxpayers expect us to do.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I yield.

Chairman GREEN. The gentlemen yields. I now recognize myself for a closing statement.

I want to thank you all for attending today. A very important hearing, and I especially thank our witnesses: Chief Heitke, Supervisor Desmond, Ms. Morin, Sheriff Hathaway, your testimonies, they have certainly stuck with me and I know will continue to deeply affect the American people.

Ms. Morin, my heart is with you and your family. I want to thank you for your courage today to tell Rachel's story. What happened is unimaginable. You are right, it was completely preventable. There are tons of stories like yours. Thousands of American families. We have to put a stop to this. To hear today from you that the person who did this to your daughter walked across our Southern Border, a policy that had been in place to do DNA testing would have identified him as a murderer fleeing his own country, a policy that was done away with by this administration, led to the death of your daughter. It will be real hard to convince me otherwise.

Mr. Heitke, thank you for your valuable testimony. I want to thank you for your years of service to the country. You have kept our Nation safe through 5 administrations. You have got first-hand experience. What you said today in your 5 minutes, to me, is devastating to the policy decisions that this administration has made. You were very clear that they decreased returning people to other countries. They decreased detention. It was purposeful policy changes, intentional. It led to massive increases in migration to our country. Then you were told to hide it so the media couldn't see it.

You shared stories of human trafficking, sex trafficking of little girls. Secondary to this wave because you are overwhelmed with resources, which was secondary to the policy changes. You told us today of the incredible tragic increases in suicides amongst Border Patrol. Your exact words in your testimony correlated directly to the increase in migration caused by those failed policies and the removal of policies.

You know, Mr. Correa, I love this gentleman. He is a great man. He talked about resources is the problem. Many, many people here have talked about, well, we got to have—

Mr. CORREA. I am one of them.

Chairman GREEN. One of many, but OK. But if you implement policies and refuse to let people do their job, more people aren't going to solve the problem. Oh, by the way, H.R. 2, the bill we passed, increased the number of Border Patrol agents, but, you know.

Mr. Desmond, we appreciate you being here with us today as well. San Diego County has seen some of the worst of this border crisis. It does start at the top. It starts with President Biden and

Vice President Harris. I want to thank you for shedding some light on the situation in California and the realities of this crisis.

I really appreciated you talking about the fact that your State has ordered Federal people and other people not to ask certain legal questions that are in the laws passed by this body. Ignore the laws. That is like saying, you know that Constitution that says this body writes the law, this body executes the law, this body adjudicates the law? We don't care about that. We are just going to pick and choose which laws we enforce. You don't like a law, you change it. That is a threat to democracy as far as I am concerned.

Sheriff Hathaway, I want to thank you for coming and for your service to your community. I totally disagree with you that the border wall is racist. I think that is absurd. I really appreciate the question Mr. Crane had. Is a wall going to pick and choose which person it blocks? I will tell you, the last time I was at the border, it was a group, a huge group of Russians coming in. They are more white than I am. Stupid actually, it is absolutely stupid to suggest that walls and the attempt to enforce our laws is somehow racist. But I do appreciate you coming.

The truth is there are 2 competing visions for our country. That is it. On the one hand, some of us are fighting like hell to enforce the laws of our country, to go back to that Constitution that says this group writes the laws, this group enforces the laws, and we are prioritizing the well-being and the safety of American citizens. Yet, on the other hand, we have an administration led by President Joe Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris that couldn't care less about those laws as evidenced by their actions, pure and simple. It is inescapably clear that the Biden administration, and Harris along with him, ended effective border policies with no alternatives in place to secure our border. They implemented an unlawful policy of mass catch and release, and they gutted interior enforcement, casting aside their responsibility to enforce the laws that they swore to uphold. They have continued to deceive the American people about it. Let's hide these people. Let's fly them to Texas.

The truth is Americans no longer feel safe in their communities. A little baby crawling on a floor in a VRBO in Florida is dead because of the fentanyl brought across our porous, open Southern Border that a witness today said has been left wide open so we can process more people into the country. Millions of Americans have lost loved ones to fentanyl. Americans who can't afford housing, whose insurance premiums have shot up, forced to watch as lawbreakers have been rewarded with free housing and benefits.

One of our—I think it was you, Sheriff Hathaway, earlier, talked about not impacting inflation. I am sorry. If 12 million people walk into the country, we can't just suddenly make a dairy for milk. There is this thing called the supply-demand curve. Basic economics. If you increase the demand without a change in supply, the price is going to go up. It is just basic economics.

You know, I thought spending almost 2 years investigating this border crisis would have more of an impact on the other side of the aisle. I thought laying out the human cost of this crisis, bringing in people like Ms. Morin, especially the cost of innocent women, children being trafficked, would have an impact. I thought telling the stories of those who have been victimized by criminal illegal

aliens would weigh on their conscience. I thought bringing recognition to the memorandum written by the Secretary telling his people to ignore the laws passed by Congress and let felons into the country instead of detaining them would make a difference. I thought laying out the financial cost of this crisis to the American communities would make them think twice. I thought explaining how the crisis is overwhelming law enforcement officers would garner a little sympathy. I thought laying out in painstaking detail how this crisis is compromising our national security. Eight ISIS guys caught in New York, Jordanians trying to storm military installation, and the ISIS guys used the CBP One app. I thought it would be a wake-up call to the administration. I was wrong.

Instead, we have been ignored and we have been maligned. This administration is just as unwilling to end this border crisis as it was when we began these investigations. That crappy bill put together in the Senate to give them justification, that didn't pass the Senate, by the way. So we talk about how, you know, we should have—it didn't even pass the Senate.

Of course they bring up the cat story. You know, I don't care about that. I care about Laken Riley, who is dead. I care about your daughter, who is dead. Let's talk about that. Instead, they are talking about all this other stuff that just doesn't matter.

It is clear to me, to this committee, to Congress, and the American people that Biden-Harris administration is hell-bent on keeping our borders wide open. This deception with the CBP One app just—it is not decreasing the flow. It is characterizing them in another way. All we are being told is that the crisis is somehow over because a couple of months of low crossing numbers, a shell game, as if that fixes the damage of the past 3½ years, and ignores the objective reality that the numbers are still at crisis levels. Millions continue to enter our country through illegitimate means, like these mass parole programs.

From Day 1, this administration has refused to enforce the laws of our Nation and eliminated effective border policies. As a result, we have members of the most dangerous criminal cartels streaming into our country, linking up with gangs, creating a crime nexus, bringing drugs and crime with them. It is unsustainable. To say, well, we need guest workers, so open borders are OK, is absurd.

It is also absurd, or at the very least contradictory, the claim that most of these immigrants are coming to work, when in reality, most are attempting to claim asylum. So which one is it? If they come and say, hey, I am here to work, well, cool, we have this legal pathway. No, they are saying, I am claiming asylum. So which is it? Are they coming out of credible fear for their life and safety or are they coming as economic migrants? You can't have it both ways.

I honestly don't know how anyone can listen to the stories we have heard today and still stand by Biden-Harris administration's reckless policies, policies that are killing Americans and compromising our national security. Exactly 1 week ago, Members of this committee went to Ground Zero, the World Trade Center, to remember Americans killed on 9/11 and to honor the first responders who gave their lives. Nineteen men, that all took—that is all it took to take the lives of nearly 3,000 Americans. Yet our Border

Patrol has stopped 384 suspected terrorists trying to get in. How many more of them are in the 2 million gotaways? Known gotaways, not even the ones that walked across while chief of the border sector said there was nobody there watching.

Last, let me just point out how intentional this plan is. Its expansion of the CBP One app funneled hundreds of thousands of inadmissible aliens to ports of entry and then into the interior of this country. This is a major end-around to our lawful immigration system. As *NBC News* recently reported, even individuals with terrorist connections have been allowed in through this program. Well, we know who those are. Some of them, anyway.

Additionally, massive fraud was discovered in the Cuban, Haitian, Nicaragua, and Venezuelan mass parole program which allowed 30,000 inadmissible aliens into the country each month. Yet it is back up and running even after reports from the folks at DHS claim they knew it is against the law and after reports that the CHNV parolees have committed grave sexual crimes since arriving here.

Simultaneously, this administration allows border wall materials to rust in the desert instead of choosing to build the wall we have already paid for. In short, the Biden administration, Biden-Harris administration is doing everything in its power to perpetuate this border crisis. Any claims to the contrary is misleading at its least.

The truth is that even President Biden—even if President Biden shuts the border down tomorrow, it will not undo the damage this administration has caused over the last 3½ years. Rachel Morin's death can't be undone. Laken Riley can't be brought back. The heartbreak felt by those who have lost a loved one because of this border crisis cannot be fixed. How many times have we sat here and held hearings over the lawlessness of this administration and its refusal to obey the laws and secure our borders?

We have passed legislation only to be ignored by Democrats. We have held Cabinet officials accountable. Again, ignored by Democrats. It was brought up today by one of my colleagues about this impeachment. I am sorry, if you have a Cabinet Secretary who just gets to do whatever they want and not follow the laws of Congress, why do we have a Congress in the first place? But I guess Congress shouldn't feel—don't feel offended, right? Because the President was told by the Supreme Court he can't pay off student loans. He said, I don't care. I am going to do it anyway. I guess we don't need a Supreme Court either. We should just have a king.

It doesn't have to be like this. It cannot continue to be like this. I am going to fight as long as I have the strength to ensure that we return to some form of law and order and sanity on this issue. There has to be change. Something has got to give. We need to secure our border and we need to do it now.

I thank the witnesses for their valuable testimony and the Members for their questions on both sides. The Members of the subcommittee may have some additional questions for the witnesses. We would like to ask the witnesses to respond to those in writing. Pursuant to committee rule VII(D), the hearing record will be held open for 10 days for those.

Without objection, this committee stands adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 1:05 p.m., the committee was adjourned.]

APPENDIX

SUPPLEMENTAL PREPARED STATEMENT OF AARON HEITKE

SEPTEMBER 18, 2024

The only true consequence we have to slow down and discourage people from coming to the United States illegally is sending them back to their country of origin. Sending them all the way back to their country of origin not only brings them back to their country of citizenship but places an enormous financial, physical, and mental impact on them. They will have to start all over again. That impact does deter people from trying again and deters those that are thinking about making the trip. As we have seen over the past 3+ years, releasing people into the United States regardless of what status they are released on, has the opposite effect. It encourages people to come and there is no end to the number of people who want to come here.

Throughout the first 3+ years of this admin, I saw a steady decrease in countries we could send people back to. As I am sure most of you know, we cannot simply fill a plane up with citizens from X country and send them back. We must have an agreement with that country. This requires coordination with the State Department and the country involved. Whether purposeful or through neglect these agreements were allowed to lapse and few to no new agreements were made. Many different excuses were given for why the numbers of these agreements continued to decline but this was the first time in my 25 years and 5 different administrations that I saw this large-scale lapse in our ability to return people to their country of origin.

The inability to send people home meant that most people being arrested at the border for illegal entry would either have to be detained or released. The current administration has, from Day 1, made a point of decreasing the amount of Federal detention space available nationwide. Immigration and Customs Enforcement's funding for detention space has steadily been cut. Regardless of the reasons for the cuts in detention space, these losses meant that more people would have to be released into the United States. This administration also cut private detention centers that held Federal prisoners. This not only impacted Customs and Border Protection, but it also impacted every Federal law enforcement agency. Throughout my time in San Diego, I had regular meetings with the U.S. Attorney along with the heads of all the Federal law enforcement agencies. Our main topic of discussion was jail space. Cases would not be taken for prosecution because we could not hold the suspects and/or witnesses for hearings. Again, this wasn't just immigration cases. It had a dramatic impact on narcotics smuggling cases. Individuals smuggling substantial amounts of methamphetamine and even fentanyl were cited and released for lack of jail space.

Information travels faster in our world now than ever before. The fact that so many illegal aliens were being released into the United States spread world-wide very quickly. As this happened the numbers the Border Patrol encountered illegally crossing the border increased exponentially. It started in Texas and spread across the entire Southern Border and to some extent to the Northern Border.

With the policies put in place by this administration along with the systematic decrease in detention and the ability to return illegal aliens to their countries of origin, Border Patrol Sectors across the Nation were overwhelmed. To add to this problem this administration, along with the Border Patrol leadership, made a colossal mistake. Sectors were ordered to take in and process all the illegal aliens encountered on the border. Since there was no detention available, makeshift tents or soft-sided facilities were set up across the border to temporarily house the masses coming in. Border Patrol saw groups of hundreds and thousands coming into the United States and turning themselves in since they knew they would be released. These numbers pulled 80-90 percent, sometimes 100 percent of the agents on duty away from the field. All they had time to do was transport people from the border, care

and feed them in detention, process them for release and finally release them. This went on for years and is still happening today.

The major problem with this is that there is no one at the border trying to arrest those people who really do not want to be caught. Obviously, the narcotic smugglers, terrorists, cartel affiliates and other people with serious criminal histories do not turn themselves in. They know that if arrested they will go to prison. However, because most agents were now otherwise occupied, these criminals had free passage into the United States. Nationwide Border Patrol zones across Texas, Arizona, and California had no agent presence. Those who did not want to be caught could simply walk in. We have no idea who and what entered our country over this time. We did our best to count gotaways nationwide, but this is little more than an educated guess. I was ordered to send agents from California to Texas and Arizona to help count gotaways. Those sectors simply had no one to even go to the field and try and figure out what they missed. This occurred throughout 2022 and 2023.

To make things even worse, this administration ordered the Border Patrol to stop using force of any kind to keep aliens from entering the United States. This was the first time in Border Patrol history that force could not be used on the border to keep people out. This meant that agents had to stand aside and watch as thousands of people illegally crossed the border. The administration knew that once the aliens were in the United States they would have to be taken into custody. This blew open the already overflowing border.

Another significant impact of having all the Border Patrol Agents transporting and providing care and feeding to the masses of illegal aliens is that secondary operations are not possible. One example of this is DNA testing. The Border Patrol has a court order requiring DNA testing among those arrested. Because of the mass amounts of people, no resources and Headquarters leadership being more concerned with media reports and idle complaints, DNA testing has not been accomplished and still is not today. There simply is not time, space, or money to do it. I sent requests for additional support and relayed that under the circumstances we could not test. My requests were ignored. DNA testing was not performed throughout 2022 and 2023, not because we did not want to but because we were not provided the necessary resources to accomplish it. The masses of aliens and lack of resources also prevented agents from being able to properly talk to people in custody to find out if trafficking was occurring or if they had suffered abuse along their journey. We were pushed to move them as fast as possible for release, which prevented agents from being able to find other problems and provide help to those suffering.

While all of this was happening in San Diego we had an exponential increase in Significant Interest Aliens. This trend continues to this day. These people have potential ties to terrorism or other forms of organized crime or espionage. Prior to this administration, the San Diego sector averaged 10–15 SIAs per year. Once word was out that the border was far easier to cross, San Diego went to just over 100 SIAs in 2022 and way over 100 SIAs in 2023 and more than that this year. These are only the ones we caught. The SIA's arrested in San Diego were significant people in the criminal world. They were not recruiters or fundraisers for terrorism, they were actual operators with histories of doing bad things and extensive ties to very dangerous people and organizations. These people were from Pakistan, Iran, Iraq, Syria, Turkey, Afghanistan, China, and Russia just to name a few.

At this time, I was told I could not release any information on this increase in SIA's or mention any of the arrests. At the time, the administration was trying to convince the public that there was no threat at the border. To further this problem, although we continued to ask for help in questioning and looking more into why these people were coming, we received no help. As of today, this trend continues and as of today no help has been sent. No additional assets from the CIA, FBI, or any other agency. Again, this administration and current Border Patrol leadership would rather ignore the problem and keep it from the public rather than admit their mistakes.

Many people think this is only a Border Patrol problem, that the other law enforcement agencies in these areas, whether local, State, or Federal, can pick up the slack. What they do not realize is that the Border Patrol provides detailed agents to task force operations across the country. This includes State and Federal gang task forces, DEA drug task forces, FBI safe streets and terrorism task forces, just to name a few. During my time in San Diego, I had to recall all the detailed agents. We were overwhelmed with sheer numbers and needed everyone we had. This impacted all of our partners' ability to perform their missions successfully. To add to this, the extra immigration traffic took up more of the limited detention space which meant other Federal agencies couldn't prosecute as many cases. Finally, the sheer numbers of people moving through the border area in San Diego and being released

in San Diego itself brought with it more calls for service for the State and local agencies, taxing their ability to perform their mission.

During my last year in San Diego, the prices of methamphetamine and fentanyl on the street decreased drastically. A single fentanyl pill, for example, went from \$10 to 25 cents. This meant that the market was completely saturated with drugs. With most agents out of the field and the border being open in many areas the amount of narcotics entering the country skyrocketed. During my time in San Diego, I hosted United States Attorneys, Sheriffs, Chiefs of Police, and countless others who came to our area to see where the narcotics coming into their regions were crossing the border. San Diego has been the main crossing point for hard narcotics coming into the United States for many years; however, with few to no agents able to work the field, the amounts crossing skyrocketed and leaders across the West and Midwest noticed the difference. The San Diego area, between OFO and BP, seize between 80–90 percent of the methamphetamine and fentanyl annually in the United States.

The large numbers of aliens at the border are not only an impact to Border Patrol. The Office of Field Operations was inundated at San Ysidro and was forced to limit their inspections of both people and cargo while they dealt and continued to deal with the influx. OFO also provided support to us with help processing and holding extra people again limiting the amount of inspections they could do and further increasing the amounts of narcotics entering the country.

To make matters worse, during 2022 and 2023 I had to shut the San Diego traffic checkpoints down because of lack of resources. I needed every agent to handle care and feeding. These checkpoints are the only second layer of defense to detect what is missed at the border.

Those moving narcotics took advantage of the lack of security which was shown by the substantial increase in the size of the narcotic loads. When the smugglers feel they may lose loads they run smaller amounts to alleviate the risk. When they are confident, they run copious amounts. In San Diego and San Ysidro, we started seeing multiple thousand-pound loads of methamphetamine and multiple 100-pound+ loads of fentanyl. The smugglers have become confident because the enforcement is otherwise occupied.

The large numbers also had and still have a negative impact on the San Diego community. When we were arresting thousands of illegal aliens a day I had to release them by the hundreds each day into San Diego. When I was releasing thousands of people into San Diego the local community could not handle the volume. I received calls from the Governor's office, local mayors, and law enforcement leaders as well as the heads of local charities that were trying to find accommodations for all these people. They all asked that I stop releasing people into the community. I told them I could not.

Once a person is processed and determined to be a release it is a 4th Amendment violation to keep them in detention. Also, because of appropriations law, I could not spend any Government funds to house, transport, or feed them once they were set for release. I then received calls from my headquarters telling me to stop releasing into the city. Again, I told them I could not for the same reasons and told them if they wanted to order me not to, I needed it in writing. That order never came. I was then told to process the aliens to 99 percent just leave 1 signature off so the aliens were not completely set for release, and we could still hold them. Again, I told them if this was an order, I needed it in writing. Again, that order never came as it would have been illegal. Since they could not make me stop releasing people into San Diego they started 2 flights a week from San Diego to Texas. These flights simply brought aliens that would have been released in San Diego over to Texas where they were released. Each flight cost approximately \$150,000. When I questioned the waste of time and money I was told because there is a problem in Texas but there is not a problem in California. It was the administration's way of trying to quiet the border-wide crisis.

Once the large numbers started to impact Texas, I started asking my headquarters why we could not identify each individual as a threat or not and then simply move on. As Border Patrol we have no obligation to process each alien encountered. The job of a Border Patrol agent is to identify and stop threats. If we wanted to keep doing that, we had to alleviate the time spent with the masses. I suggested that we easily could, and we would still be well within policy and law. Those aliens not deemed a threat would move onto ICE and Citizen and Immigration Services who are responsible for this portion of the process. This is where the Border Patrol made a huge mistake. It was decided that Border Patrol could handle the processing and maintain operations. The attitude was if not us who? I continued to press the issue as the numbers came across the entire border and San Diego in particular. I was told that if the aliens were not processed, they could not travel or apply for

benefits. This pressure came down from the administration. Finally, as I pressed the issue with my headquarters, I was told that I could easily be replaced. My headquarters simply did not want to hear any alternative idea and preferred to claim they had things under control. Once the numbers of aliens being released in San Diego became more than the area could deal with the State of California and the Federal Government rented hotels in San Diego to house the people. One hotel was set up to be the intake center. At this point aliens being released were given rooms, money, cell phones, and put in contact with charitable organizations to help them. Those working the hotel refer to it as the “migrant experience.” A one-stop shop for everything the aliens could need. All at taxpayer expense.

The need for the aliens to be given some kind of United States paperwork to help them receive assistance was so great that State and local agencies called me to ask if they could bring illegal aliens into our stations so they could be processed and given their “travel document.” This obviously violated SB54 but that was brushed under the rug because the people asking to bring in the aliens were the ones supporting the law.

The financial cost for health care of all these illegal aliens was so high I received calls from State and local political offices and hospital administrators asking if they could bring patients into our stations so they could turn themselves in and be in our custody so the Federal Government would pay the bills. We were also asked to keep those people we brought to the hospital for medical treatment in our custody again so the Government would pay the bill.

Through pressure from the administration my headquarters became more interested in the fiction being portrayed in the media and not at all concerned with reality. At times in San Diego, we had 2,000 or more aliens sitting in between the fences asking to turn themselves in. We were running every vehicle we had and every agent available to transport and process. Yet I received calls from my HQ saying that no alien should have to sit in the desert for more than 2 hours. This was not based in reality, as every available resource was being used, but my headquarters wanted to stem the news reports to make it look better, not actually make anything better. Knowing they were actually making things worse for all the agents in San Diego, they pushed to simply move people and completely disregard the border security operations. This also extended to our checkpoints. As I mentioned earlier, I had the checkpoints shut down in 2022 and 2023. As narcotics became more of a focus in the media and in California I was told to open our checkpoints. The narcotics flooding the West, and the country was in great part due to the overwhelming numbers of aliens at the border. I told them no, either we continue to transport and process the vast numbers of aliens and keep the checkpoints closed or I pull agents, open the checkpoints, and have thousands of aliens sitting in the desert and dying in the desert because agents were not there triaging the scene. However, to save face with the administration, my headquarters went around me and spoke to my station leadership. They asked my station leadership; do you have agents at the checkpoints? This answer was yes since we were using the checkpoints as processing and holding centers. Headquarters then passed word up the chain to CBP, DHS, and the administration that the checkpoints were open. This gave them the ability to make it look like they had fixed the problem to their bosses when in fact it was a complete fallacy.

Border Patrol agents went above and beyond through all this chaos. They are also the ones continually forgotten, put out and neglected by the media, this administration, and Border Patrol leadership in Washington DC. These agents deal with death, women and children that have been raped, abused, trafficked, bought, and sold, families that have spent months in terrible conditions traveling here, sickness, despair and the agents are given no relief. The opposite has been the case. The media villainizes them; their own leadership pushes more overtime and guilts them into not taking vacation for the benefit of the leadership, not the agency, the country, the aliens, or the agents themselves. If you look at the numbers of suicides within the Border Patrol it is directly correlated with the migrant surge. The agents have been pushed beyond their limit and this has impacted their mental health. The Border Patrol attitude of if not us who is a fallacy pushed by a few Border Patrol leaders for their own benefit and the detriment of the agents.

Each time we asked for help in dealing with a new issue it was ignored. When we did not have enough vehicles to transport aliens out of the field, we received nothing. When we did not have enough agents to process and patrol the border, we were required to send detailed agents to Texas to count gotaways. When the NGO's complained that aliens were sitting in the desert too long, rather than send buses Border Patrol leadership and the administration formed oversight committees and hired hundreds of extra contractors to come down to San Diego and look at how they might improve the situation. Simply providing vehicles and allowing us to keep our

agents would have helped but instead they spent millions of dollars on committees which simply came down and suggested nothing, made things more difficult and overall, more costly and less efficient.

When Border Patrol leadership refused to take responsibility for their mistake in taking on the complete care and feeding of the masses, they decided to put up more tents across the country to house the people. Hundreds of millions of dollars have been wasted on these facilities and they have done no good, on the contrary they have only caused more problems. I fought against these facilities from the beginning and pushed especially hard against them in San Diego. Eventually I was overruled, and San Diego received a large tent at the cost of over \$1 million per month. This facility is still in use today. Each one of these facilities is a gross waste of taxpayer money; they are unnecessary and make things more difficult for the agents in the field.

First, the Border Patrol is not responsible for the care and feeding or even the processing of these aliens. That burden was taken on voluntarily by Border Patrol leadership. There are many other agencies, both government and private, that specialize in handling mass movements of people particularly in cases of disasters. The Red Cross and FEMA are just two examples. However, Border Patrol leadership took on this task to try and win favor with the administration, to the detriment of the agents and the country as a whole.

Second, the cost. These facilities are sold as being full wrap, meaning they come with staff to run them. This could not be further from the truth. The facilities have staff to run them, keep the lights on and the air conditioning working but little more. The staff are not allowed to interact at all with aliens, help with security or any other movement or care and feeding of the aliens. This means the taxpayer is spending a million dollars a month on a nice tent completely staffed by Border Patrol agents. The companies running these tents are making millions and providing little. I strongly suggest you look at who owns and runs these companies. They are mostly former DHS employees, from top to bottom. It is disgraceful to see those who once worked to secure our country using their former positions to make millions at the taxpayer expense especially when they are providing little to nothing to fix the problem. The hundreds of millions of dollars wasted on these tents could have been used for countless other more effective measures that would have helped solve the issue rather than pad the bank accounts of former DHS employees.

This administration has not only neglected and vilified Border Patrol agents, but they have actively worked against them as well as the rest of law enforcement within the Federal system. As an example, I mention the former CBP Commissioner Chris Magnus. I hold no grudge against him in any way, as a person or a former commissioner of CBP. He was given a mission by this administration when he was hired, and he worked hard to complete it. My problem is what that mission was. Chris Magnus is and was an activist working to adversely change how law enforcement does their job. His goal was to remove the use of force from law enforcement.

As part of completing this mission, CBP's Office of Personnel Responsibility was weaponized against the law enforcement employees within CBP. We were continually warned in meetings, OPR is looking into personal social media accounts, employee backgrounds to find anything they could to discredit the employees to make examples of them. Changes were made to the use of force review board. Instead of having 2 LE and 1 civilian member on the review board it was changed to 1 law enforcement and 2 civilians. Use of force in the field can only truly be judged by someone who has walked in those shoes. Someone who sits behind a computer cannot understand or judge what level of force was reasonable. Civilian employees are not familiar with the training or policies of their law enforcement counterparts and aside from personal experience, have no background in the actual rules. This change was done to discipline more agents for using force and pressure the rest within CBP not to use force.

Although from the outside looking in, this seems like a reasonable method, as is often the case, the reality of it is quite different. What this caused, and continues to cause to this day, is agents second-guessing themselves in the field. Use of force incidents happen without warning. The agent must decide in a millisecond. If they second-guess themselves, they get hurt or killed. Having those unfamiliar with what happens every day in the field take weeks to second-guess what an agent had to decide in a millisecond is ridiculous. Unfortunately, it did work.

I saw the impact daily in San Diego. Agents hesitated to use force and were hurt; other agents were hurt, and aliens and civilians were hurt. A specific example of the former commissioner trying to make examples of agents to discourage use of force involved an individual case I was responsible for in San Diego. As chief of the San Diego sector, I was the deciding official for all termination cases involving San Diego-sector employees. I was scheduled to hear a termination case which involved

a deadly shooting by an agent. As was my normal practice, I reviewed the entire file for the case and was to hear the oral reply. Two days before hearing the case I received a call from then-Chief Ortiz telling me that the commissioner was pulling this case back to CBP for a decision. The following Monday I started asking questions. I relayed questions to OPR, Office of Inspector General, Counsel, and LER. I asked first if this was allowed. The answer was yes. I then pressed hard for a why. I was told by multiple people that the commissioner wanted to pull high-profile media cases back to CBP and have them decided by a non-law enforcement decision maker so examples could be made. I pushed as hard as I could from my position to no avail. I can say that in retirement I testified on behalf of this agent in a lawsuit brought against the Government and am happy to say the agent has been reinstated.

Another significant impact of the former commissioner's attempt to change law enforcement was that I, as chief, spent a substantial percentage of my time protecting my agents from our Government. The desire to look good in the media and otherwise chill the actions of agents was the priority of the commissioner and Border Patrol leadership followed suit. This meant that I dealt with constant questions from Border Patrol leadership on why agents had done certain things. Border Patrol leadership was more concerned with looking good to the commissioner and the media than supporting the agents.

The San Diego sector is also unique among Southern Border sectors because it lies in California. As I stated earlier, when I repeatedly asked for help from my headquarters, I received none. Unlike other sectors, those in Texas for example, because of State Bill 54, State and local law enforcement are prevented from helping or dealing with us in any way. Because of this the BP, OFO, and ICE were left without any additional support from State entities.

The current numbers of people crossing our border are low in comparison to recent months and years. There is a reason for this. After 4 years this administration finally started to ask Mexico for help in slowing down traffic through their country. This administration finally started to use foreign resources in the Darién Gap, Panama, Brazil, and Ecuador to slow and stop migrant traffic there. An Executive Order was given limiting some asylum claims. Each of these does make a difference but why has it taken so long to accomplish? All these tactics were being used before this administration took office, but each was stopped or limited once this administration came in. I am also concerned that these changes will not be maintained. I along with many other leaders within the Border Patrol asked for help for years, made suggestions on changes that would help but nothing was done. I personally briefed every representative, senator and staffer that came to San Diego on these issues. I continually passed on these requests to my HQ, CBP, and DHS. I know that information was here in Washington, but no help came. No changes came.

During my time in the Border Patrol and San Diego sector specifically I met with leaders from around the world. They came to see how we were handling the border and what they could learn to better help them handle their own border. These leaders came from Poland, France, Great Britain, Spain, Germany, Hungary, and Israel just to name a few. In my discussions with them they all said the same thing. We are inundated with migrants, and we have no more space or resources to deal with them. The United States is quickly reaching the same level. At some point very soon world leaders are going to have to make tough decisions on how many people their countries can support and stick to them. The United States is no different. The world has more people than it can support. It is not nice or easy to do but at some point, each country will have to send people back to where they came from regardless of the consequences to them in order to protect their own people. The flow of people looking for a better life or fleeing political turmoil will never stop and will only get worse as the years pass.

The problems we are facing at the border have solutions. These solutions can be quite simple and cost far less than the mess currently occupying so much time and money. Agreements must be made with the sending countries and returns must be accomplished quickly.

