

TOHONO O'ODHAM NATION OFFICE OF THE CHAIRMAN AND VICE CHAIRWOMAN

Verlon M. Jose
CHAIRMAN



Carla L. Johnson
VICE CHAIRWOMAN

Tuesday, June 3, 2025

Statement of the Tohono O'odham Nation

It is our understanding that the Pima County Board of Supervisors is considering action today on the proposed additional wall building and militarization of the U.S./Mexico border. The Tohono O'odham Nation greatly appreciates the County's efforts on this issue and supports your proposed Resolution.

"RESOLUTION OF THE PIMA COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS OPPOSING THE ONGOING MILITARIZATION OF THE U.S. - MEXICO BORDER"

Without any notification or discussion with the Tohono O'odham Nation, (formally known as the Papagos) the Gadsden Purchase in 1854 redrew the U.S.-Mexico border and split our people and aboriginal lands in half. Today, we have 17 communities and more than 2,000 enrolled members of the Tohono O'odham Nation living in Mexico. The Nation, Pima County and other agencies have been at the forefront of border security for decades. We have implemented multiple policies and programs to assist in deterring cross border activity that continue today. Some examples:

- The Nation is the only tribe in the country that leads a **High Intensity Drug Trafficking (HIDTA) Task Force**. This anti-drug smuggling task force includes partners from local, state and federal law enforcement agencies working together. and has been a massive success in deterring drug trafficking into the U.S.
- **The Shadow Wolves is an ICE tactical patrol unit** that was created more than 50 years ago. It is the only Native American tracking unit in the country and uses traditional tracking methods to apprehend smugglers.
- **Two CBP Forward Operating Bases** are located on the Nation to assist with 24-7 operations along the border.
- **Vehicle barriers** span the entire tribal border that includes a patrol road parallel to it.
- **The Nation authorized CBP checkpoints** on the major highways that run through the Nation.
- **Integrated Fixed Towers:** The Nation approved a lease of its lands to allow CBP to build an Integrated Fixed Tower (IFT) system that includes surveillance and sensor towers with associated access roads on the Nation's southern and eastern boundaries to detect and help interdict illegal entries.

We are all doing our part, and these and other deterrents have been working, as crossings are now at an all-time low. The notion that additional border walls or militarization is needed or warranted, makes no sense. Spending billions of dollars that would further desecrate sacred areas and further split our people, makes no sense. Wasting billions of dollars on a problem that does not exist is wrong, particularly when the federal government is actively attempting to make massive cuts to critical programs for our children, elders and many others.

Together We Are Stronger

The Tohono O'odham Nation is focused on building bridges... not walls. Thank you to the Pima County Board of Supervisors for considering this important Resolution. Your support and opposition to this matter is greatly appreciated. Together we are stronger.

Verlon Jose, Chairman

Tohono O'odham Nation