




MEMORANDUM

Date: August 30, 2018

To: The Honorable Chairman and Members
Pima County Board of Supervisors

From: C.H. Huckelberry
County Administrator 

Re: **Operation Stonegarden Narratives**

On August 13, 2018, I requested the Sheriff provide additional information and narratives of criminal arrests related to State law violations associated with Operation Stonegarden (OPSG). I also asked for humanitarian actions that were taken in OPSG activities.

The Sheriff has provided the attached August 28, 2018 memorandum in response.

CHH/anc

Attachment

c: The Honorable Mark Napier, Pima County Sheriff



PIMA COUNTY SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT

Mark D. Napier, Sheriff

M E M O R A N D U M

Date: August 28, 2018
To: C.H. Huckelberry, County Administrator
From: Mark Napier, Pima County Sheriff
Subject: Requested Operation Stonegarden Narratives

This memorandum is intended to address your August 13, 2018 request for additional information and narratives associated with criminal arrests and humanitarian efforts of Pima County Sheriff's Department personnel while participating in Operation Stonegarden (OPSG).

As you are aware, deputies working OPSG deployments are actively engaged in a border security mission providing a public safety presence on highways and roadways in the rural communities and the remote desert areas of Pima County. As the debate regarding OPSG funding continues, it is important to highlight some of the successes associated with these efforts, especially those having the greatest impact on the safety of Pima County residents.

The attached report provides accounts of many significant investigations, arrests, and rescues occurring during the last two years. Although these synopses are important, they do not include all of the interactions of deputies during OPSG deployments. Traffic enforcement, DUI investigations, warrant arrests, and increased patrols have provided additional safety and security not possible without OPSG funding. This increased law enforcement presence is focused on rural and remote portions of Pima County that do not frequently have a deputy sheriff present. These areas are most impacted by transnational criminals and the areas that benefit the most from OPSG deployments.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if I can be of further assistance.

Pima County Sheriff's Department Summary of Operation Stonegarden Efforts

Pima County, with 125 miles of shared border with Mexico and nearly 9,200 square miles of diverse and remote terrain, has been at the center of controversy regarding immigration issues, narcotics and human smuggling and most recently the Sheriff's Department's participation in Operation Stonegarden (OPSG) a federal grant designed to support local law enforcement's role in border security missions. Federal law enforcement, specifically Customs and Border Protection (CBP), is responsible for enforcement of federal immigration law.

Members of the Sheriff's Department are not trained, certified, or directed to enforce federal immigration law. This distinct separation of authority and responsibility does not, however, limit the Sheriff's Department's role in the enforcement of state statutes regarding narcotics trafficking and other transnational crime. OPSG funding allows deputies to continue to enforce state statutes to interdict traffickers and other cross-border criminals, especially in those remote areas that are difficult to patrol regularly. Increased law enforcement presence also results detection and deterrence of other criminal offenders including Driving Under the Influence (DUI) violations, criminal traffic and moving violations, and the capture of those with arrest warrants. While not the primary goal of OPSG, these contacts lead to safer neighborhoods and roadways.

Aside from law enforcement functions, deputies have participated in rescue functions or provided aid to those who might otherwise fall victim to the harsh environment of Pima County deserts. Most of these humanitarian efforts have been to save Mexican citizens who have illegally entered the United States, primarily traveling for days on foot without adequate food, water, or shelter. The following incidents are just some of the more impactful investigations, arrests, and efforts that would not have been possible without OPSG grant funding.

COUNTER-NARCOTICS INVESTIGATIONS

Proximity to the Mexican border makes Pima County a significant corridor for narco-traffickers. Counter-narcotics investigations are those efforts designed to detect, interdict and arrest transnational criminals, intent on bringing illegal drugs into the United States.

- In mid-February 2017, a PCSD K9 unit was requested to respond to Oracle Road (SR77) to assist Pinal County deputies with a K9 search of a truck during a traffic stop. 25 bundles of marijuana were located in the bed and cab of the truck, weighing approximately 633 lbs.



- In mid-March 2017, a PCSD deputy entered a restroom of a McDonalds in Tucson. He noticed a damaged fan cover in the ceiling. Further inspection revealed 6 packages of cocaine, weighing 15.15 lbs. were found in the vent.
- In mid-May 2017, a PCSD deputy conducted a traffic stop on a vehicle in Tucson for a civil traffic violation. Packages of cocaine, weighing 46 lbs., were located in the trunk of the vehicle.
- In mid-June 2017, a PCSD deputy conducted a traffic stop on a vehicle in Tucson for a civil traffic violation. 16 bundles of marijuana were located in the trunk of the vehicle, weighing 41.7 lbs.
- In mid-July, a deputy requested assistance with a traffic investigation. During a consensual search, narcotics were located in the rear cargo compartment of the vehicle. Multiple plastic bags similar in size and shape, and wrapping material consistent with narcotics packaged for sale were found. The traffic investigation resulted in the seizure of approximately 42 lbs. of methamphetamine packaged for sale.



- In early August 2017, PCSD deputies in Ajo received information that there was a house in town with several bundles of marijuana in it. A search warrant was served and revealed 6 bundles of marijuana, weighing 144.6 lbs. inside the residence.



- In early September 2017, a PCSD deputy conducted a traffic stop at the I-19/I-10 interchange for a civil traffic violation. During the stop, 20.5 lbs. of methamphetamine was located in luggage in the rear of the truck.
- In mid-September 2017, a PCSD deputy conducted a traffic stop on a vehicle in Tucson for a civil traffic violation. During the traffic stop, approximately 8.1 lbs. of methamphetamine were located in a box inside the vehicle. A handgun was also located in the vehicle.



- In mid-September 2017, a PCSD deputy conducted a traffic stop on I-19 in Tucson for a civil traffic violation. During the traffic stop, a search revealed 20 packages of methamphetamine hidden in the radiator, weighing 22.7 lbs.
- In mid-June 2018, deputies working a two-person utility vehicle were patrolling in the Lukeville area. A sensor activation in the Organ Pipe National Monument, south of Ajo, was transmitted to the deputies. Two backpacks loaded with approximately 98 lbs. of marijuana, concealed with camouflage wrapping and Styrofoam were discovered.
- In mid-January 2017, PCSD deputies responded to a residence in Tucson in reference a report for a check welfare. While on scene, a deputy observed a strong odor of marijuana coming from a structure on the property. A search warrant revealed a marijuana grow with approximately 70 plants, up to 7 feet tall. Weapons to include a rifle were also located.
- In early May 2018, deputies conducted a traffic stop on a suspected drug smuggler. Subsequent search of the vehicle resulted in the discovery of 24.5 lbs. of cocaine.



- In early June 2018, deputies conducted a traffic stop and discovered marijuana and cocaine during a search of the vehicle. Two handguns were also seized and two arrests were made for felony drug and weapons charges.



- In late July 2018, Ajo deputies initiated a traffic stop of a vehicle for failing to stop at a stop sign. The vehicle continued North on Arizona SR 85 from Ajo township. The vehicle was occupied with two females in their early to mid-twenties. Pursuant to investigative inquiry it was confirmed that the vehicle had crossed the Lukeville Port of Entry from Mexico. HSI intelligence information linked the vehicle to a vehicle matching this description was loaded in Mexico with illegal narcotics. A search warrant was executed with this added intelligence, resulting in the seizure of 194 lbs. of methamphetamine and 5 lbs. of heroin professionally packaged within the floor board of the vehicle. The methamphetamine and heroin were estimated to have a combined market street value of \$550,000.



PUBLIC SAFETY EFFORTS

Transnational criminal organizations (TCOs) traffic drugs and weapons in and out of Pima County. Weapons in the hands of traffickers is more dangerous for the public and law enforcement. Other material support for TCOs (food, communications and vehicles) also flows through Pima County and participation in OPSG allows deputies to detect and interdict this material support as well.

- In mid-February 2017, PCSD deputies responded to a gas station pursuant to a report of reckless driving. During the contact, marijuana and cocaine were located in the vehicle. The driver was also in possession of a firearm, which was later believed to be altered to make it fully automatic.
- In the beginning of March 2017, PCSD deputies/detectives responded to an address in Tucson to assist Pima County Probation that had located in excess of 100 firearms and 30 canisters of various ammunition in the possession of a man that was a prohibited possessor. Approximately 3 pounds of marijuana were also located.



- In mid-April 2018, PCSD in Ajo responded to the desert area south of Ajo to assist USBP in attempting to locate subjects armed with AK-47 rifles and a handgun, who were believed to be part of a “rip crew”. One subject was apprehended. Five AK-47 rifles and one handgun were also located.
- In late June 2018, deputies initiated a traffic stop of a vehicle for a window tint violation. Three males were within the vehicle with camouflage attire and sweating profusely. In the back seat were two juveniles with camouflage backpacks on the floor. A consensual search of the juveniles resulted in the discovery of several radios, antennas, and batteries tucked in the waistband and pocket areas consistent with coyote and scout activities. Investigation determined that the subjects had been funded to transport subjects to the border region.
- In late June 2018, deputies working OPSG in Tucson Mountain area apprehended an outstanding suspect with a probable cause alert for Aggravated Assault near Picture Rocks and Sandario road. The suspect exhibited road rage behaviors and pointed two separate firearms at the victims. Deputies working OPSG in the vicinity were able to initiate a traffic stop and arrest the aggressive suspect prior to any serious consequences. The firearms used in criminal act were recovered.



- In August 2018, HSI along with Ajo Border Patrol Station and Pima County Sheriff's Department initiated an investigation into a Trans-National Criminal Organization (TCO) involved with alien, drugs, and weapons smuggling. On August 3, 2018, PCSD deputies discovered a deceased illegal alien who was dumped on the side of the road in Ajo, Arizona. Ajo Border Patrol Agents later arrested the two suspects that had dumped the body as part of a smuggling load interdicted at the SR 85 checkpoint, north of Ajo. As an extension of this investigation, approximately 2560 rounds of 7.62 ammunition destined for Mexico were seized.

HUMANITARIAN EFFORTS

Despite the harsh terrain and potentially deadly environmental conditions, immigrants continue to cross into Pima County from Mexico, throughout the year. Deputies deployed on OPSG missions are regularly in a position to assist those at risk and prevent needless deaths.

- In mid-July 2016, PCSD deputies were working a remote desert area during an OPSG operation. They noticed a signal fire on the side of a mountain and investigated. They located four immigrants who climbed the mountain in dangerous terrain because they were told there was water at the top. They were in medical distress. Deputies were able to care for them and provided water until they were airlifted from the area for treatment by US military personnel from Yuma.
- In late June 2017, deputies assisted Border Search, Trauma and Rescue (BORSTAR) agents in locating four immigrants who were lost and extremely dehydrated. Once located, the deputies provided food and water and assisted with transport out of the remote desert near Ajo.
- In late February 2018, deputies responded to a report of an immigrant who had fallen off a 40 foot cliff and was badly injured. A Search and Rescue deputy responded in Sheriff 1 (helicopter asset), rescuing him, and providing medical assistance.
- In early March 2018, a deputy encountered two males walking on Arizona SR85 who admitted to being in the U.S. illegally. The deputy stopped and determined that they had been walking for a week without any food or water. The deputy provided water and transferred custody to USBP for continued support.
- In late March 2018, a deputy discovered an unresponsive male on the side of the road on Arizona SR85. The deputy provided him water and calls for medical assistance. The man regained consciousness and was treated.
- In early April 2018, a deputy encountered a male along Arizona SR85 who told the deputy he was hungry and needed water. Two other migrants came out of the brush and received water from the deputy as well. The men stated they had been walking for five days and had been two days without food or water.
- In early April 2018, a deputy encountered U.S. citizens traveling on remote roadways near the Lukeville Port of Entry. They flagged him down and told the deputy they were lost. The deputy provided directions to the highway and ensured they made it out of the desert.
- In late April 2018, a deputy encountered an Ajo resident who frequently walks to Mexico and provided him water since he had none.
- In mid-July 2018, a deputy was flagged down by a man who was requesting assistance with another unconscious man. The man stated both had been walking for several days and had not had any food or water for two days. The deputy provided water and requested emergency medical assistance.
- In early August 2018, a deputy working OPSG encountered two men walking along Arizona SR85. Both indicated they had been walking from Mexico for two days and needed water, which the deputy provided.

- In early August 2018, a deputy saw a man run across Arizona SR85. The deputy investigated and located a total of three men, walking from Mexico and in great need of water, which the deputy provided.