



OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL
STATE OF ARIZONA

TERRY GODDARD
ATTORNEY GENERAL

July 8, 2010

SENT VIA ELECTRONIC COPY

Hon. Barack Obama
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

As Arizona's chief law enforcement officer, I write to respond to your recent statements about the security of our border with Mexico and to urge that you take immediate action to substantially strengthen our nation's fight against the most significant and immediate threat to border security: the powerful and violent Mexican drug cartels.

I remain appreciative of the new resources your Administration has begun to bring to our broken border, and I strongly support your call for major federal immigration reform.

Yet, having considered your recent remarks on these topics and your Administration's actions on border security, I am concerned that you may have misperceived the nature of the border threat, and in so doing, may have jeopardized the success of your well-intended initiatives. Your statement that our border has never been more secure, in part because we have more boots on the ground, misses a fundamental truth: ***Our border cannot be secure as long as the cartels are so deeply entrenched, so well-funded, and operate so brazenly.*** Until the cartels are dismantled, rampant trafficking of drugs, humans, guns and money across our border will persist.

The growth in size, strength and sophistication of the Mexican drug cartels is the most immediate actual threat to the security of Arizonans and other Americans from our broken border. The cartels are responsible for the murders of more than 22,700 people south of our border since 2007. These are war zone-like death tallies. They exceed the combined number of all deaths of American troops, coalition troops, and civilians in the war in Afghanistan since it began in 2001. In fact, the number of violent civilian deaths in Mexico last year also exceeded the number of violent civilian deaths in Iraq. As Attorney General Holder correctly noted last year, "International drug trafficking organizations pose a sustained, serious threat to international safety and security. They are a national security threat."

Yet, despite the proximity of the American public to this threat (many, if not most, of the killings are occurring in Mexican border towns like Juarez, Chihuahua, and Nogales, Sonora),

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the federal response to the situation there has paled in comparison with the \$12 billion per month we are now spending to fight in far-away Iraq and Afghanistan. Indeed, even with your new, enhanced financial commitment to the Southwest border, federal spending in this area constitutes less than one percent of our nation's annual expenditures in Iraq and Afghanistan.

For those of us actually living on the border, this imbalance is intolerable. And it is worsened by the fact that Arizonans pay a disproportionate share of the costs associated with our broken border. As I and others have repeatedly pointed out, Arizona houses a substantially higher percentage of criminal aliens than other states; yet we get paid only about 10 percent of our costs for incarcerating them—despite the clear mandate of the SCAAP law that the federal government either pay our full cost or take our criminal alien population into federal custody.

These realities must change, because the problem is getting worse. The cartels are now diversifying their business operations by attacking major sources of domestic and international commerce. Recent reports of truck hijackings and thefts from petroleum pipelines by the cartels confirm that they are finding new ways to make money, overrun civil authority, and expand their power.

Perhaps more troubling, the cartels have launched an assault on Mexican democracy itself. The recent assassination of leading gubernatorial candidate Rodolfo Torre and his staff, on the heels of an attempted assassination of the Chief of Police of Puerto Penasco, sends a clear message that the cartels believe they—and not the Mexican people, the Mexican government, or even the United States—control the border region.

The time has come for you to identify and more forcefully respond to the real threat on our border. The cartel leaders are nothing short of well-armed warlords whose continued operations near and across our border pose a significant, serious, and immediate threat to Arizona's and the nation's security.

I call on you to launch a major, multi-national, law enforcement initiative aimed first and foremost at identifying cartel warlords by name and bringing them to justice by all means available. Breaking up these cartels and restoring the rule of law within Mexico not only would bring better security to the border region, but also would greatly assist Mexican efforts to stabilize their economy and improve the conditions that compel so many Mexican citizens to seek work illegally in the United States. It would also restore safety and confidence to the many legitimate businesses (including tourism) that seek peaceful trade between the United States and Mexico.

I can think of few international policy areas of more immediate interest to the people of Arizona than restoring the rule of law in the border region and developing Mexico into a safe, stable and prosperous trading partner. For this reason, I have made the fight against the cartels my top priority as Arizona's Attorney General. The prosecutors and investigators in my Office have helped take down a number of drug- and human-smuggling rings. Using federal Merida Initiative funds, we have trained over 400 Mexican prosecutors to help improve that country's low criminal conviction rates. I also secured an important \$94 million recovery from Western Union that includes \$50 million for the four states that make up the Southwest Border Alliance to further Arizona's work in disrupting the flow of money to the cartels.

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If my Office can achieve these results on our limited state budget, imagine the impact the federal government could make if it devoted even five percent of the money it is spending on the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. At a minimum, as I have discussed on several occasions with Secretary Napolitano and Customs and Border Patrol Commissioner Alan Bersin, I implore you to find funding to provide dollar-for-dollar federal matches to the law enforcement initiatives being funded by our Southwest Border Alliance.

Which brings me to my final point: In the absence of a new and comprehensive federal immigration law, it is just wrong for this Administration to fight state efforts to address the effects of our broken border. While I did not agree with the specific approach taken by my state when it passed SB 1070, I fully support Arizona's right to take strong action to protect our taxpayers from the substantial costs of residing along a broken border.

Your Administration's decision to challenge Arizona's law before it even takes effect — without any effort to address Arizona's costs or to effectively deal with the cartel threat — has created substantial and justifiable anger here. That anger should not be underestimated, and threatens to undermine the effectiveness of your efforts to secure needed federal immigration reform.

I strongly urge you to take two steps to address that anger: 1) focus federal law enforcement efforts on a stronger and higher profile multi-national effort to find and incarcerate the leaders of the cartels; and 2) propose real financial relief to Arizona taxpayers who have paid far more than most others of the financial consequences of a failed federal border policy. Fully funding the SCAAP law and better compensating border state hospitals for emergency treatment of immigrants would go a long way toward addressing the frustrations of Arizonans and other border state taxpayers.

I would be pleased to meet with you at any time to discuss these important issues further.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Terry Goddard". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style. The first name "Terry" is written in a larger, more prominent script, and "Goddard" follows in a similar but slightly smaller script. The signature is positioned above the printed name.

Terry Goddard