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## **Badlands: From Ground Zero of the Immigration Crisis Along the Mexican Border**

By Paul Rubin

On April 27, Janet Napolitano pronounced that the border separating the United States from the Republic of Mexico is more secure than ever.

"I say this again as someone who has walked that border," the former Arizona governor told a U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee hearing on the oversight of the Department of Homeland Security, which she now heads.

"I've ridden that border. I've flown it. I've driven it. I know that border, I think, as well as anyone, and I will tell you it is as secure now as it has ever been."

Napolitano sounded convinced, even though she also has spoken of Mexico's 6,000 drug-related murders in 2009 alone, more than twice the total in 2008.

In the United States, she claimed, "limited increases" in immigrant-related crime "have come mainly in the form of cartel operatives hurting or killing each other, the kidnappings of those involved in the drug trade or their family members, and assaults on Border Patrol agents by those attempting to bring illegal drugs into the country."

But Napolitano's words rang hollow to those who live at or near the border in Cochise County, a beautiful, sparsely populated expanse in southeast Arizona.

They live at ground zero in the United States for the smuggling from Mexico of marijuana, cocaine, methamphetamine, heroin — and human beings.

(The U.S. Border Patrol's Tucson sector was responsible for almost half of all illegal aliens arrested and marijuana seized along the nation's borders during fiscal 2009, which ended September 30. Try to imagine 1.2 million pounds of pot, an all-time record for any sector. The zone includes Cochise County and covers 262 miles of border).

Most people in this fabled county — home to Tombstone (the shootout at the OK Corral), Fort Huachuaca (a major U.S. Army base), funky border towns (Douglas and Naco), and almost unimaginably open spaces — agree on this:

The executive and legislative branches of the federal government have set up Cochise County for disaster by not coming up with a border policy to effectively handle what's known as "illegal immigration."

In the early 1990s, the feds tightened the leaky border around San Diego and El Paso with mega-operations called Operation Gatekeeper and Operation Hold the Line, respectively.

The result was a monumental funneling of hundreds of thousands of undocumented aliens from the steep mountains and unforgiving deserts of northern Mexico into southern Arizona.

Before then, Cochise County was not a prime point of entry for illegal aliens (the Tucson sector accounted for only 9 percent of the U.S. Border Patrol's arrests in 1993).

Then, as now, drug smugglers pretty much had free rein, with law enforcement seemingly always a step behind most of the criminals.

With the redirection of the migrants came dire ramifications, including death for untold hapless migrants ill-equipped to negotiate the desert and mountain trails in brutal summers and cold winters.

The influx also has upended the lives of many on this side of the border, especially American citizens who live anywhere in the southern portion of Cochise County.

The vast majority of the incoming illegal aliens have no criminal designs, and they aren't drug smugglers. To the contrary, their collective goal is to remain as invisible as possible and to hightail it out of Cochise County on their way to America's urban centers, including Phoenix.

Some of them simply are hungry and desperate. But others are of a more malevolent bent, committing robberies, burglaries, and other crimes against Americans in remote spots like Portal, Apache, and Palominas.

Until recently, those at the border, especially cattle ranchers whose properties often abut the Mexico line, sensed they were shouting futilely into the wind about their troubles — the degradation of their land, the incessant rip-offs of their property, the growing fear for their personal safety.

But the landscape changed exactly one month before Napolitano lectured the senators about border security.

On March 27, a well-liked 58-year-old cattle rancher named Rob Krentz was murdered on his family's ranch about 25 miles east of Douglas and several miles north of the border.

Though authorities still haven't officially linked the homicide to an illegal alien, they've done everything but.

"Rob was working, literally out in the middle of nowhere, with his dog," veteran Cochise County Sheriff Larry Dever told *New Times* soon after the murder.

"He might have been around some cattle, a snake or two, some birds. That's it. But his ranch is right smack in dope-smuggling country. It wouldn't have been unheard of for him to have just bumped into a bad guy out there, one who happened to be carrying a gun."

The unsolved case soon became a tipping point for many in Arizona and nationwide, intensifying the debate on illegal immigration.

"You know that phrase we all learned in school, 'Remember the Alamo'?" a rancher tells *New Times*. "For a lot of us, it's going to be 'Remember Rob Krentz' from now on."

The Krentz murder happened just as the debate over the wildly divisive Arizona Senate Bill 1070 was reaching fever pitch.

The controversial legislation, which became law with Governor Jan Brewer's signature on April 24, makes the failure to carry proof of legal U.S. residency a crime and gives local law enforcement wider latitude to detain those "reasonably suspected" of being here illegally. The law is scheduled to go into effect July 29 but has been challenged in lawsuits that may affect implementation.

Even before Krentz's murder, the Arizona political season already was becoming contentious,

with immigration the top hot-button issue.

It's much uglier now.

Arizona politicians are trying to outdo each other with snarling anti-immigration sound bites — "Seal the border!" "Complete the danged fence!" "Ship 'em all home!" — everything short of endorsing the killing of would-be illegal aliens on sight.

To hear politicians and their kindred spirits on local and national radio talk shows, the U.S. government ought to be able to root out all the undocumented like rats on an ocean liner.

As if the 1,969-mile southern border really ever could be "sealed" from every last illegal alien and drug smuggler.

And that doesn't count the illegal aliens (the Pew Hispanic Center estimates about 5 million — about half of the estimated undocumented population) who entered the United States *legally* and simply overstayed their visas.

Ignacio "Nacho" Ibarra, a veteran journalist who has lived much of his life in Cochise County, says, "You have two versions of the American Dream butting right up against each other down here. One is, 'I'm gonna find my fortune and do whatever it takes.' The other is, 'My family and I built this ranch, and this is ours to do what we want with.'"

Ibarra's allusion to the natural clash between Mexican immigrants, in the first instance, and American citizens along the border, in the second, is keen.

But don't look to most Arizona pols for thoughtful dialogue on why so many Mexicans and others hunger to get to the United States, or how businesses will be able to find enough cheap labor to do menial (but essential) jobs, if and when the economy gets back on track.

All they want to talk about is that the tide of illegal immigration must be stemmed — now! — and that it is the federal government's duty to do it.

And, in a sense, they're right — because the feds have hung those living on Arizona's southern border out to dry with decades of ineffectual policies.

"I understand fully why illegal aliens break the rules," says T.J. Bonner, president of the San Diego-based National Border Patrol Council, a union that represents more than 12,000 agents. "As long as there's an opportunity for them to come across the border illegally, and it's not too high a price to pay in terms of money or danger, they're going to do it. And even if it is highly dangerous — look at the hundreds of people who die every year — they try. People continue to cross, literally, by the millions. It speaks to their level of desperation, and that's something the U.S. government and a lot of the talking heads have never comprehended."

The growing schism over illegal immigration probably would come as no surprise to the Reverend Theodore Hesburgh, 93-year-old president emeritus of the University of Notre Dame.

A liberal who earned praise for his work during the civil rights movement of the 1960s, Hesburgh headed an immigration-reform commission convened by President Jimmy Carter in the late 1970s.

The panel recommended that the federal government take serious action to secure the border before embracing reforms that would allow more alien workers to enter the States legally and become citizens.

To Hesburgh, it wasn't just that it was wrong to open our borders willy-nilly to whoever happened along.

"What's going to happen if we don't act [to secure the border]," he warned in 1981, "is that a psychology will develop that says, 'Don't let anyone in.' Or, have the military round up those here illegally and push them across the border . . . The nation needn't wait until we are faced with a choice between immigration chaos and closing the borders."

This is where Arizona is now.

One side uses broad strokes to depict illegal aliens as raping, pillaging, job-stealing, disease-carrying bogeymen responsible for our nation's immigration woes. Anyone opposed to any part of this view is usually dubbed a "leftist" member of the "open-borders crowd."

The other side, in the minority in Arizona, seeks "amnesty" and citizenship for the bulk undocumented migrants now in this country. Those opposed to this view are generally tarred as "racists" or "nativists."

But most people on the border in Cochise County grow weary of the debate.

They agree and disagree with both sides.

To them, the immigration problem is a nagging part of everyday life — and they are profoundly frustrated with the U.S. government's continued inability to improve their situation.

For some residents, it's about an unrelenting fear of who may be tucked away in the *arroyos* on their land or who may be breaking into their homes.

The fear didn't start with Rob Krentz's murder — though the tragedy exacerbated the sense of doom that many ranchers and other border residents were feeling, discussing, and praying about for years.

"I'm always looking, and I always carry a rifle," says Rich Winkler, a cattle rancher who lives with his wife, Mary, at the base of the forbidding Peloncillo Mountains on the Arizona/New Mexico line, about 20 miles north of the Mexico border.

"There could be someone in the barn or behind a rock. You can't get sloppy with it. That's when they'll get you."

Winkler, a former Cochise County Superior Court judge and (a long time ago) a star running back at Yale University, isn't overstating the case.

Well-worn drug- and people-smuggling paths zigzag like worker-ant trails across their spread, which sits between major Border Patrol stations in Douglas and Lordsburg, New Mexico.

Seldom does a week pass without the Winklers coming upon illegal aliens on their ranch, occasionally carrying loads of marijuana in backpacks.

Rich compares their situation to a scene in the movie *No Country for Old Men*, in which dire consequences await the poor souls who cross paths with drug smugglers.

"When a rancher happens onto a load of dope on his property, he'll usually just leave it alone," Winkler says.

"There are [drug] scouts watching us, seeing where we are and what we're doing, and we don't want them to think we're an issue. The brazenness is what gets me. The illegals trample our land,

leave their garbage behind, smuggle their poison in, and change the way we live our lives."

The Winklers' home has been broken into twice (in one day, actually), and their cabin in another part of their expansive ranch has been burglarized so many times they've lost count. They now leave the remote cabin unlocked and empty to keep property losses at a minimum.

"They broke out a bedroom window and burgled our house around noon — we weren't there," Winkler recalls of the two late-2008 break-ins of his main residence.

"They took a lot, including 20 pounds of shrimp from the freezer. At night, after I got back home I was in my jammies in my bedroom and noticed a light on that shouldn't have been. I grabbed a pistol and slowly stepped out. There were people inside my house! Maybe they were coming back for the cocktail sauce; I don't know. I was very scared. Luckily, they ran out. This is my home, goddamn it! I shouldn't have to put up with this."

Mary Winkler seems somewhat less cautious than her husband of 47 years. Raised in the border town of Douglas, she says she's dealing with the "invasion," as she calls it, the same way as she did with a recent, very difficult bout with cancer.

"I was not going to let [the disease] interrupt my lifestyle, if at all possible," she says, "and I'm not going to let the illegals do it either."

If Mary bumps into a group of illegal aliens on her property while on horseback — a not-uncommon occurrence — she smiles, turns around, and heads the other way.

Rich Winkler says, to his knowledge, authorities have never arrested anyone for any of the crimes committed on his property.

Cochise County Sheriff Larry Dever has just learned of Janet Napolitano's take on the state of border safety.

"More secure than ever, huh?" the sheriff mocks, leaning against his pickup truck at the heralded fence along the border east of Naco and surveying the open expanse.

"Why doesn't she try to tell that to the ranchers and other citizens near the border who live in a state of constant alert, or fear?"

"Why doesn't she let the bad guys know how safe it is while she's at it? They'll appreciate the info. You know, those guys who smuggle in vast amounts of dope and people through our county and might just terrorize or hurt people who get in their way? They'll like hearing that things are 'secure.'"

The sheriff ends his riff with, "Why doesn't Janet just tell Rob Krentz's family how safe it is while she's at it?"

Dever, a native of St. David, near Interstate 10 and Benson, is a savvy guy who quotes poet e.e. cummings off the top of his head, despite occasional attempts to cast himself as a dumb country boy to out-of-towners.

One week before Janet Napolitano spoke to the senators on Capitol Hill, Sheriff Dever made his own nearly annual 2,000-mile trek to Washington, D.C.

Since shortly after first winning election in 1996, the sheriff has been saying the same thing to whomever will allow him a forum.

"Violence associated with drug and people smuggling is increasing," he told a Senate committee

on the morning of April 20.

"It comes in many forms. People attempting to enter this country illegally are regularly subjected to robbery, assault, rape, kidnapping, and all other kinds of atrocities. Much of this occurs before they ever cross the border. Competing organizations rob, steal, and murder, also on both sides of the border.

"Sheriffs on the border have no interest in becoming immigration-enforcement agents. But we cannot sit by while our citizens are terrorized, robbed, and murdered by ruthless and desperate people who enter our country illegally. Herein lies the real daily threat to the security of our homeland."

Dever ended his remarks by using an old trick of his, quoting a chief of the Border Patrol's Tucson sector: "Within the last year, we've been mandated by Congress to gain control of the border. And we're going to do that along the southern border, whether it's narcotics, illegal aliens, terrorists, criminals, or whatever."

The sheriff's kicker: The former Border Patrol chief said that in 1987.

Though the sheriff, like the majority of his constituency, is a staunch conservative, he's not a knee-jerk politician in the mold of his publicity-seeking peers from Maricopa and Pinal Counties, sheriffs Joe Arpaio and Paul Babeu, respectively.

The father of six grown sons (three of whom are in law enforcement), Dever's life experience affords him a more nuanced perspective than the stereotype of a rural Arizona sheriff might suggest.

The sheriff's two-year mission for his church led him as a young man to Central America, where he saw firsthand what poverty does to a person — to a family — and he understands the impulse that would push someone to make a death-defying journey into his county's big backyard.

Though he's a cop through and through, and hates what illegal immigration has meant to his financially strapped county, Dever also expresses a quiet compassion for aliens who seemingly don't pose a threat to anyone but themselves.

"I had been down in Naco," he relates, "and I was driving home [to St. David]. I passed the junction of Highways 80 and 90 and saw this girl, pregnant — like 10 months — off on the side of the road.

"Border Patrol had a checkpoint going this side of Tombstone. I got in an argument with myself as I drove on, and then decided to turn around and see what was up. She was an illegal, obviously, and she couldn't keep up with her group, so [the coyote] dumped her off.

"I seriously thought about taking her home, but that would have created some issues. She was actually going into labor. She was very thirsty. She probably would have crawled off into the bush, given birth to her child, and died right there. I dropped her off at the checkpoint. That's the last I know."

This is just one illustration of what people will do to get to the United States, the nation of choice for millions — not just Mexicans. People who will risk their lives, and even the lives of their children, trying to get here.

Many of these immigrants (a perfect example are "Nacho" Ibarra's Mexican-born parents, who illegally walked across the nearly dry Rio Grande in Texas in 1948 and became productive

members of American society) appreciate this country's liberties more than average Americans, because they don't take them for granted.

Hereford cattle rancher Bud Strom answers immediately when asked whether he would try to cross into the United States if he were a poor Latino from south of the border.

"In a heartbeat!" he bellows, adding that this doesn't mean the borders shouldn't be more secure.

The cowboy poet and retired Army brigadier general has had to contend over the past decade with thousands of illegal aliens tromping through his Single Star Ranch, cutting his water lines and fences and leaving waste (human and otherwise) behind.

Sitting on a front porch at his ranch, one of his many rescue dogs resting at his feet, the grizzled 78-year-old recites a poem of his called *Doing Business Just the Same*:

"Border Patrol came through  
Broke my gate down, too  
As they cut my water lines  
They said they'd fix it soon  
By tomorrow noon  
These delays take, too, much time.  
My response? No thanks  
Can't have empty tanks  
But it sets me down to think  
How I'll fix it now  
For my thirsty cows  
My critters need to drink  
But we're doing business just the same.  
Illegals cut my fence  
Makes no sense  
Cuz there's gates they could go through  
Of course my cows are hopin'  
That they find them open  
To parade Route 92."

State Route 92 is the thoroughfare that connects Sierra Vista and Bisbee at the southern tip of Cochise County.

Strom's neighbor, 55-year-old John Ladd, runs his family's homesteaded San Jose Ranch on a 10-mile stretch of border in Palominas, east of the San Pedro River.

A garrulous guy with a droll sense of humor, Ladd takes *New Times* to the border in his rickety old pickup.

"To be honest," he says on the short bumpy ride, "I'm beat down right now by the day-after-day

stuff — the garbage all over the place, worrying about my cows, constantly repairing fences that the sons of bitches keep cutting. Stupid. "

Ladd says he knows of 11 illegal aliens who have died on his land over the past 10 years, including one man whose body was just a few hundred yards from his home.

Like almost everyone in Cochise County, whatever their political persuasion, Ladd blames the feds — more than undocumented aliens — for the immigration crisis in his midst.

"I've counted 468 wetbacks — sorry, politically incorrect — undocumented aliens on our ranch in the last three weeks, two or three groups a day," he says.

"We used to have hundreds every day. Some would call ahead for taxis that would drive down our dirt road off Highway 92 there and wait. No BS.

"[Our ranch goes] right to the border. The feds have got their cameras set up out there, those big powerful nightlights, and the fence [that] is 13 feet high in parts. Plus Border Patrol agents supposedly driving back and forth on the frontage road.

"But if they're still getting over onto my property with all of that 'security,' then what about where it's a lot easier to get in, like over where [Rich] Winkler and the Krentzes live?"

The fence, also known as the "Great Wall of Mexico," is an almost surreal-looking structure of corrugated steel that runs on and off for almost 650 miles on the southwest border (nearly half of which is in Arizona).

At Ladd's ranch, the fence is up to 13 feet high, while over in the more-mountainous eastern part of the county, it simply consists of low-slung barriers designed to stop vehicles from crossing easily.

The feds have spent \$2.5 billion since 2005 to build the fence, and they estimate it will cost taxpayers another \$6.5 billion to maintain it.

Politicians, especially since the Krentz murder, have delighted in using the fence as a photo-op backdrop for their campaign commercials. In one, U.S. Senator John McCain growls for the feds to "complete the dangd fence," as he and Pinal County Sheriff Babeu — whose jurisdiction is close to 100 miles from the border — stride alongside each other.

The fence has become the illegal-immigration solution *du jour* for any number of people, especially those who don't live near it. But many who live at or near the border aren't so enamored of it.

"If you put up a wall, you need to have someone watching it," says Bill Odle, who lives with his wife, Ellen, on 50 border acres. "And if someone is watching it, you don't need a wall."

Odle has come down to the San Pedro River to say hello to his friend John Ladd and to share some thoughts with *New Times*. He is a retired U.S. Marine, a Vietnam War veteran who loves his country and hates the federal government and the influx of illegal immigrants, probably in that order.

"If there's a guy wanting to work up here, and he's hungry, a damned wall isn't going to stop him," Odle says. "And that definitely goes for the people who want to do us harm, people transporting that shit that we do not need. The hell of it is, a lot of [undocumented aliens] do want to do honest work. I get that."

Odle's comment about the fence's inability to stop people from coming over sounds like what Janet Napolitano, then Arizona's governor, said in December 2005: "You show me a 50-foot wall, and I'll show you a 51-foot ladder at the border."

Despite that comment, Napolitano and her boss, President Barack Obama, are none too popular these days with many in Cochise County.

"I am not one of those who says we ought to shoot every son of a bitch who comes over here. That's not what we stand for as a country," Odle says. "But, God Almighty, we have to do something! I'm not so sure that Janet and Barack really agree with me on that."

"Welcome to the free state of Cochise, drug-smuggling capital of Arizona. Welcome to southeast Arizona's wild outlands.

"Everyone in this border county knows the war on drugs is a dismal failure. And no one quite knows what to do about it."

*New Times* published this in the story "Smuggler's Paradise" on June 28, 1989.

Larry Dever, then a major serving under Sheriff Jimmy Judd, said at the time, "They're always going to bring it across. We are a major-league transfer zone. Lots of money and dope exchange hands on a wholesale basis."

Things are a quantum leap worse now, four U.S. presidents and six Arizona governors later.

Despite a steady surge in law enforcement presence in Cochise County — there are agencies on the scene with more acronyms than in a military handbook — these desert badlands continue to be a hotbed of dope- and people-smuggling.

Recent Border Patrol numbers *and* anecdotal accounts suggest strongly that Cochise County now is seeing more dope-smuggling (pot, cocaine, meth, and heroin) than human-smuggling.

Even with the addition since 2007 of about 10,000 Border Patrol agents in the sector and miles of new fence, fewer than half of incoming illegal aliens are apprehended.

To many who live on the front lines of Arizona's badlands, the only sure thing is the staggering amount of money available to almost everyone — not just the bad guys — involved in the illegal-immigration industry.

The list of moneymakers includes a modern-day version of what U.S. President Dwight Eisenhower long ago dubbed the "military-industrial complex."

A glaring case in point is the \$880 million boondoggle known as the "virtual fence," a creation of the Boeing Company that President George W. Bush said in May 2007 would be "the most technologically advanced border-security initiative in American history."

The feds pulled the plug on the project in March, with Janet Napolitano noting that the vaunted system of sensors and cameras has been "plagued with cost overruns and missed deadlines."

The Border Patrol has doubled in size since fiscal year 2005 to more than 20,000 agents in the Tucson sector alone, and politicians are demanding ever more agents on the southwest border.

The fiscal 2010 federal budget for Immigration and Customs Enforcement is \$5.74 billion, a marked increase from just five years ago, when it was \$3.55 billion.

That pays for a lot of new jobs, a lot of decent salaries and benefits.

Billions of dollars annually are netted by sophisticated and ruthless Mexican cartels that, according to numerous sources, are currently running almost all the illegal drugs and people into the States.

"This is the grand paradox of drug enforcement," Marcelo Bergman, a professor at Mexico City's Center for Economic Research and Education, wrote last month in the periodical *Foreign Policy*.

"Unless enforcement agencies can intercept virtually all of the drugs crossing the border — something that approaches impossibility — their efforts are likely to simply produce more formidable opponents."

Those who generally benefit the least financially are the huge majority of illegal immigrants, especially in Arizona's (and the nation's) current down economy.

Remarkably, the Mexican government recently issued a "travel advisory" about the dangers awaiting its migrating citizens in Arizona under the dark cloud of SB 1070.

But that government would have served its citizens better by looking within.

The human rights organization Amnesty International concluded in a late-April position paper: "Thousands of undocumented migrants in transit through Mexico, including women and children, fall victim to beatings, abduction, rape, and even murder."

The journey for migrants through Mexico, according to a researcher for the agency, "is one of the most dangerous in the world."

Those who do get across the border to try to start anew may become part of a grim statistic: American authorities recovered the bodies of 211 incoming illegal aliens in the Border Patrol's Tucson sector in 2009, according to human rights groups and other sourcing.

The causes of death run the gamut — hypothermia, dehydration, and gunshot wounds. A majority of the dead remain unidentified.

Mere hours before Napolitano tried to reassure the senators about our "secure" border, Elvira Brambila-Valejo died in the desert about 25 miles from Tucson.

She had just crossed into Arizona with her 15-year-old son and other illegal migrants, led by well-compensated human smugglers.

Border Patrol search-and-rescue agents responded to a 911 call from the boy, who told them coyotes had ordered him and his mother out of their vehicle because she was desperately ill. The agents used a GPS tracking system to locate the pair.

Brambila-Valejo, 44, was pronounced dead at the scene. The cause, according to the Office of the Pima County Medical Examiner, was peritonitis, an infection of the membrane that lines the inner abdominal wall.

Symptoms include severe, steady abdominal pain, abdominal distension, fever, chills associated with abundant perspiration, weakness, vomiting, and nausea.

Elvira Brambila-Valejo was one of five newly arrived illegal immigrants known to have died in southern Arizona that week in April. Two others died of heart attacks; the causes of death of the other two remain undetermined.

Law enforcement types at all levels keep insisting that 17 percent of the illegal aliens arrested last

year in the Tucson sector had prior "serious" criminal offenses in the States.

But a scan of federal court records shows that the bulk of those arrested in the sector from March 1 to 15 of this year had no known criminal records in this country, other than previous busts for being here illegally.

That's apparently where the ubiquitous 17 percent is coming from.

The study by *New Times* reveals that only 19 of 400 defendants whose case files were checked had prior convictions for crimes other than having been here before illegally.

Of those 19 with prior "serious" felony convictions, one served time for manslaughter before he was deported, two were convicted of sexual assault, and the others have criminal records for burglary and narcotics.

But all those stats mean nothing to Howard and Rosemary Hunt, an elderly couple who live in the beautiful bird-watching town of Portal, in eastern Cochise County.

The Hunts were home during the late afternoon of January 20 and getting ready for dinner when someone knocked on their door.

Standing there with another man was Eriberto Marquez, a 21-year-old illegal alien born in the Mexican state of Chihuahua.

Marquez spent his formative years near El Paso and has an 11th-grade U.S. education to show for it.

He speaks impeccable English.

Marquez's father was deported to Mexico after a domestic-violence conviction when the boy was 10. Marquez had worked in construction, landscaping, and as a cook in the States. Records show he, too, had been deported to Mexico after a burglary conviction.

But Marquez tells *New Times* in a letter that he returned to Mexico voluntarily to be with his father before sneaking back to the States with 17-year-old Martin Chavira-Morquecho, from nearby Agua Prieta.

Marquez earlier had politely asked the Hunts for a ride a few miles away, but the couple said no. The two young men then immediately forced their way in, and Chavira-Morquecho brandished a small machete at Howard to show they meant business.

The weapon nicked Howard Hunt on a thumb during the short scuffle that ensued.

The intruders demanded money and credit cards, which the Hunts said they didn't have.

The men then bound the elderly couple with duct tape in a back bedroom, and looked around the house for valuables. They left after a time, stealing the Hunts' Chevy Avalanche, about \$100 in cash, some jewelry, and a debit card.

According to the Hunts, Marquez remained courteous to the end, apologizing for the "inconvenience" and asking them to jot down their address so he could reimburse them later.

The couple freed themselves after a while and contacted the Cochise County Sheriff's Office. Deputies responded and issued an all-points bulletin.

An officer with the New Mexico Motor Transportation Division spotted the stolen vehicle within an hour after it had crossed into his state, and the men were soon arrested in Lordsburg.

Eriberto Marquez's perspective comes from the Arizona State Prison in Yuma, where he is serving 12 years for kidnapping and car theft (the same term as his co-conspirator, Chavira-Morquecho):

"We had walked for five days, and we ran out of food and hadn't eaten for a couple of days. We decided to break into a home. We planned to grab food and a car and leave. I wasn't planning to hurt anyone. They were nice people. I know they won't feel safe anymore. I hope they forgive me."

It is dusk on a gorgeous spring day in Cochise County, and sheriff's Deputy Joe Gilbert is on patrol in the Bisbee area.

Gilbert is 26 and has been with the agency since June 2006. He is a strapping guy with an earnest and unthreatening manner that usually wins him points with the public, even those unhappy at getting stopped.

The deputy is one of just two currently on duty in the Bisbee district. The pair is responsible for patrolling an area about the size of Rhode Island, about 1,000 square miles.

Gilbert lives in nearby Tombstone, the town where he was raised. He says he considers police work something he was born to do and something he loves.

He drives into Naco, a border town dominated by ramshackle mobile homes and a Port of Entry on the border. Gilbert passes by a government yard protected by barbed wire. Several confiscated vehicles sit there, their seats, engines, undercarriages ripped out by agents.

"Dope cars," he explains.

Gilbert sticks some smokeless tobacco in his lower gum and gestures to the Naco Elementary School, a stone's throw from Mexico.

"That's where they dumped dope for a long time, there in the yard," he says. "The thinking was that Border Patrol couldn't enter school grounds chasing after UDAs [undocumented aliens]. The bad guys would wait awhile, and then someone would pick up the stuff and split."

The deputy drives onto the dirt road that runs parallel to the border fence for miles and miles on either side of the town. Green-and-white Border Patrol vehicles come into view every few minutes, parked on the road or patrolling in both directions.

As a brilliant Cochise County sunset fades into darkness, Gilbert spots some Border Patrol vehicles parked in the brush just off the road. They are no more than 200 feet from the fence and less than a mile from the Border Patrol station in Naco.

Several agents have surrounded a group of about 20 people standing side by side. Each, including a little boy clinging to a diminutive, dark-skinned woman, looks as blue as the darkening sky above.

Here they stand, illegal as can be, after an undoubtedly dangerous and rigorous trek from, in this instance, southern Mexico; one that has ended abruptly, just steps inside the United States.

Some grip the plastic garbage bags that hold their worldly belongings and stare blankly into space. One by one, they are directed into the rear of a packed van, from which they'll be taken to a holding tank.

Eventually, they will be deported.

The scene, repeated daily in various forms all over the Tucson Sector, triggers a series of thoughts from Deputy Gilbert.

"It takes courage tromping through this desert for days knowing you can die at any point in the heat or cold or at the hands of a coyote," he says. "It's against the law, but that doesn't stop them. Sometimes, they get deported really fast, but then I might see them again a few days later — like they never left."

In other words, they turn around and come right back over, desperate to take another run at a new life.

Gilbert shares a story as he continues to patrol: A small group of undocumented aliens were huddling in the mountains a few miles from the Bisbee sheriff's substation (where the county jail is located) when one of them desperately contacted the Sheriff's Office.

"One of their family members who was coming across was really sick with diabetes, and they were very upset," the deputy says.

"I called Border Patrol, which has a team that helps people in need — and I went out there, too. Picture someone's uncle or grandfather. He had on a suit jacket or something. He looked decent — not a criminal — trying to make a better life. It came down to this. He was dead. I still feel sorry for him."

Sheriff Dever is back in Arizona, one day after his April 20 testimony before the U.S. Senate.

He drives over to the Turquoise Valley Golf Course in Naco, where the Sierra Vista Chamber of Commerce is holding a breakfast meeting.

Standing before about 30 people, service pistol strapped to his blue jeans, Dever speaks with quiet passion about (what else?) immigration, before inviting questions.

Senate Bill 1070, then a few days from getting signed by Governor Brewer, and Rob Krentz's murder are what the businesspeople most want to know about.

Susan Tegmeyer, the chamber's president, frets that SB 1070 will make the rest of the country believe that Arizona is filled with racists: "I'm thinking that 1070 is just another nail in our economic coffin."

Dever responds, "The alternative is to do nothing, and that's not acceptable. I expect that our deputies will exercise restraint on 1070. I simply won't allow random wholesale questioning of who you are and where you come from."

The sheriff tells another story about Janet Napolitano:

"As governor of Arizona, she would send bills to the feds trying to get counties repaid for handling stuff that the feds should have been doing. I thought, cool.

"She also wrote to W. asking for National Guard troops down here. I thought, cool.

"Then she goes to D.C. A year ago, I was in her office there, and I asked her directly if deploying the National Guard on the border was still on her plate. She said it was. I said, do you have a timeframe?

"She said they were just trying to determine the specific mission. I said, 'You have a timeframe?' She said, 'Three weeks.' That was a year ago."

On May 25, President Obama announced plans to order up to 1,200 National Guard troops to the border, including an unspecified number to Cochise County.

It is reminiscent of June 2006, when President Bush sent 6,000 troops to the border for two years in a support role that did not include arresting or even tracking down illegal migrants.

Larry Dever long has endorsed moving troops to the border, as do the ranchers interviewed by *New Times* for this story.

But each of them in his and her own fashion warn against thinking that the Guard will be a magic cure to the multi-layered issue of illegal immigration.

"I'd like to know what the plan is when someone finally figures it out," Dever tells *New Times* drolly. "I'm sure someone in D.C. knows what they're doing, right?"

Bud Strom, the old rancher and Army general, is skeptical that larger National Guard presence on the border is a positive move.

"Unless they are really savvy to the sophistication of the drug cartels, I don't think they'll be of immediate use," Strom says of the guardsmen. "They'd have to be trained to the methodology that drug smugglers are using down here, and it's not an overnight thing."

The Border Patrol's T.J. Bonner agrees: "This shouldn't be a case of, 'Okay, sleep tight, America, we've got a few thousand troops down there to save the day.'

"I can see the Guard helping us with surveillance, with helping us maintain roads, but they don't have the training that we have.'

"Yes, we have seen a tremendous escalation of violence in the last year, especially on the Mexican side. But to just put them out there and say, 'Arrest these people,' is inviting disaster because they have very different training than us — very proactive, not reactive. They are going to have to be seriously retrained."

On the other hand, retired Judge Rich Winkler wants the U.S. military to deploy as many troops as necessary to the border, with permission to do whatever it takes to stem the flow of drugs and illegal aliens.

Hold on, aren't most ranchers deeply opposed to the federal government's butting into their lives, for instance telling them how to run their cattle?

Isn't it a bit much to count on the feds — the personification to many ranchers of all that is wrong with this country — to solve something that politicians and their apparatchiks have made worse over generations?

Standing beneath a windmill on his magnificent ranch on an April day so perfect that, for at least a moment or two, nothing seems to be wrong in the world, Rich Winkler chuckles.

"Well, I guess it all depends on whose ox is being gored," he says. "And, believe me, our ox out here is *really* being gored."