



Yuma County Sheriff's Office

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PRESS RELEASE

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National Guard Assisting with Border Crisis

Location of Incident: Yuma County, AZ

On Tuesday, April 20, 2021, Arizona Governor Doug Ducey announced the deployment of the National Guard to assist local law enforcement agencies with the continuous drastic surge of migrants entering the United States illegally in border communities. The Yuma County Sheriff's Office submitted a request earlier this month for additional personnel to assist with the border crisis situation. Sheriff Wilmot has met with the Governor to speak more on how we can continue to collaborate on border security and humanitarian issues that our local agencies are confronted with every day.

In the Yuma area alone, we respond to an average of 5-10 desert deaths in a year. Last year, 2020, we saw an increase of 16 deaths. We've already responded to 4 deaths this year, and expect that number to increase as the summer months are quickly approaching. The Yuma County Sheriff's Office works closely with Border Patrol daily to address human trafficking and narcotic smuggling. With this crisis being exploited by the criminal element we locally have seen an increase in overdose deaths in Yuma County; 31 in 2018, 47 in 2019, and 61 in 2020. Our office has responded to 16 overdose deaths already this year. With overdoses on the rise over the last few years, we need to get our Deputies back into their public safety roles to keep illegal drugs out of our community.

Yuma Border Patrol Station's area of responsibility is to safeguard 115 linear miles of international boundary with Mexico, including: land and river border. Yuma Border Patrol reports over 19,000 undocumented immigrant apprehensions in these past 4 months of 2021, compared to a total of 10,979 in 2020, and a total of 59,397 in 2019. Those numbers go to show that our partner agency has been overwhelmingly busy and we must be there to assist them in their time of need. From March 2021 to today's date, Yuma County Sheriff's Office Deputies have encountered 150 illegal immigrants; 131 being adults and 19 juveniles. Our deputies since then have also responded to 5 emergency 911 calls from illegal immigrants in the desert area. This means our Deputies are being pulled out to remote areas hours at a time to respond to this border crisis and taking them away from their primary responsibility to our Yuma citizens and community.

Thank you to the National Guard who is willing to assist our local agencies who have undertaken overbearing tasks and responsibilities far beyond their assigned duties. The Yuma County Sheriff's Office plans to utilize the extra personnel in support roles in order to relieve our Deputies from these hindering tasks. Once we have boots on the ground, we can analyze what assets they bring to our agency and we can place them in specialized positions. This will free up our first responders who can get back to focusing on their primary duties, which is to prevent crime, keep our community safe, and respond to emergency situations.

Information Released By: Tania Pavlak, Public Affairs Specialist