



OPERATION STONEGARDEN DECISION

from Sheriff Mark D. Napier

On September 4, the Board of Supervisors voted to end the Pima County Sheriff's Department involvement in Operation Stonegarden. This vote was despite clear evidence of the public safety value of the program and letters of support from every law enforcement agency head in the county. This was a politically motivated vote that will adversely impact public safety in our county.

Nothing about this decision by the Board changes my mandate as the elected Sheriff of Pima County to maintain public safety and address transnational crime threats coming up from the border. Nothing about this decision changes our current policies/practices with respect to interaction with our federal law enforcement partners. The Board has the luxury of making political, partisan, and ideologically driven decisions. We do not. Public safety is not a partisan or ideological issue; it is a quality of life and community issue.

In February, the Stonegarden Grant was approved by the Board and signed by the Chair with five (5) conditions. When we were confident we met those conditions we began expending available funds. This expenditure of funds must now stop.

In the coming weeks we will work to find a way to continue to provide public safety to the rural and remote areas of our county. We must continue to address drug and human trafficking. We have an affirmative responsibility to address transnational crime, and while staying within our respective lanes, cooperate with our federal partners. Unfortunately, we now will not have the benefit of federal funding to pursue those activities. Over the past 12 years, we have received about \$16 million in Stonegarden funding without opposition.

At the Board meeting there were many disparaging comments made about our deputies and Department. These are baseless and should have been rejected by the Board. The brave men and women of the Pima County Sheriff's Department serve us with honor and distinction. Our county is better served, the plight of the undocumented is better served, and the mission of public safety is better served when our local law enforcement professionals are out there serving all of us.