

A Morning with the Border Patrol

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“I know them,” the Border Patrol agent exclaimed as he detained the two young women from Torreon, Mexico. It was just after daybreak and we were west of El Paso and near the border wall that separates Sunland Park, New Mexico from Anapra, Mexico. I was with Border Patrol agents Orlando Marrero-Rubio, Claudio Herrera-Baeza and Landon Hutchens. I’ve been with them before in this high traffic area for illegal border crossings and continue to believe that they do a superb job controlling this area. However, it is obvious that there is a clear need for funding for more agents, a solution to a practical problem that, sadly, has been overwhelmed by election year politics.

What this young enthusiastic Agent Covarubias realized was that he had detained these two women the day before. They had been allowed to go back to Mexico but had immediately made another crossing, a disastrous decision which would subject them to prosecution under what is known as Title 8. This is just another example of the misinformation that migrants are being given by the ruthless cartels who convince them to pay thousands of dollars for often-disastrous trips from their home countries to our border.

Back in April 2019 my wife, Sherry and I drove along the US side of this huge wall separating Sunland Park from Anapra, wondering how so many migrants were crossing. We were stunned to see that the wall simply ends where the steep shoulder of Monte Cristo Rey begins. At that time, there was a militia group that camped in the bushes on the US side but they were then disbanded.

A month later, I drove to this gap again and watched a dozen migrants come running across. For several years Mexican soldiers were stationed on the Mexican side as a deterrent to crossing but now they are gone. So, control of this area is exclusively up to the Border Patrol.

The three agents and I then drove beyond this gap and up a steep newly constructed dirt road that goes partway up the mountain and functions as a lookout point from which

migrants can be spotted. This is another example of the Border Patrol's constant improvements to border security.

When we came down from the mountain we met with Agent Covarubias again. He had detained six migrants from Ecuador - a boy, a girl, a man and three women, one of whom was pregnant and would be taken to medical care.

We then went to an area of Sunland Park called Dogpatch because almost every yard is full of loud, nasty looking dogs. Three migrants were detained there – a man and woman from El Salvador and a young Mexican man. As they were being searched, a car stopped briefly a block away and then sped off.

“That was probably the driver who was supposed to pick them up,” Orlando said. He indicated his belief that the young Mexican was the “pollero” or “coyote” who had led the other two across the border.

Our last encounter involved four men – two from Oaxaca, Mexico, a young man from Juárez who the agents believed was the “pollero,” plus a cheerful older man named Alberto who said he was a mariachi musician from San Luis Potosí and insisted on showing us his false teeth.

This was my third Border Patrol tour going back to September 2022. I continue to be impressed with the skill and training of these agents and the humane way they treat these migrants who are crossing illegally. I believe in their work; we have to control our border.

At the same time, it's important to recognize that most of these migrants are fleeing intolerable conditions in their home countries and have been duped by ruthless, multi-national cartels who convince them that for an average payment of \$9,000 each to the cartel, they will be led to a happy, prosperous life in the US. These cartels are making billions of dollars from smuggling humans, more than they had made smuggling drugs.

I felt great sadness for the people who were detained that morning. Yes, they were crossing illegally but in reality they were the victims.

As for the agents I was with, their work is essential; it's time to set aside politics and give them the support they need. This was part of the Senate legislation that President Biden supported and that was killed without even a hearing in the US House of Representatives. It's tragic when election year politics becomes more important than enacting simple solutions to major problems.

Morgan Smith travels to the border at least once a month, has been writing about border issues for the last decade and can be reached at Morgan-smith@comcast.net.

