



Sheriffs to New York Times: Border Warnings Ignored as Migrant Deaths, Fentanyl Trafficking, and Cartel Violence Surged

(Alexandria, VA) -- As sheriffs, we live every day with the consequences of decisions made in Washington. We appreciate the depth of The New York Times' [recent nearly 4000-word report](#) on how the Biden Administration mishandled immigration and border policy. But this reporting arrives years late. The National Sheriffs' Association — Democrats, Republicans, and independents alike — was sounding the alarm in real time, imploring policymakers and the national press to confront the chaos consuming our southern border. Had the Times reported these failures with urgency when they were unfolding, more Americans — and more migrants — would be alive today.

During the Biden Administration, we hosted New York Times reporters on a border tour so they could see conditions through our eyes — not partisan talking points, but ranch roads, stash houses, and makeshift graveyards. What they saw is echoed in our own report: [at least 856 migrants died at the southern border in FY 2022](#), the deadliest year ever recorded. Those are not statistics to sheriffs. They are fathers, daughters, toddlers in diapers — human beings given false hope by cartels and by a failed federal policy.

But the tragedy did not end at the border. Countless tons of illegal drugs — especially deadly fentanyl — poured into our country, killing hundreds of thousands of Americans. Every sheriff in America has stood with grieving families who lost children to a pill they never knew was lethal. Human trafficking surged, with migrants forced into labor, young people prostituted by cartel networks, and criminal groups becoming wealthy beyond imagination.

Val Verde (Texas) County Sheriff Joe Frank Martinez wrote bluntly in [USA Today](#) in 2021 that he is “a Texas sheriff with four deputies patrolling 110 miles” and that “we need help.” His plea spoke for sheriffs nationwide. Our deputies are exhausted — rescuing migrants, recovering remains, chasing smugglers, and still answering every 911 call at home.

The Times now acknowledges that the Administration underestimated the crisis and reacted far too slowly. But sheriffs warned — repeatedly and publicly — that rapid policy reversals, inconsistent enforcement, and a refusal to confront cartels would lead to chaos and death.

Sadly, we were right.

This cannot be about scoring political points against yesterday's president or today's. It must be about securing the border, dismantling cartels, fixing our broken asylum system, and giving front-line law enforcement the tools and clarity we have pleaded for, for years.

The American people — and the thousands who have died in the desert and in our hometowns — deserve nothing less.

Sheriff Mark Dannels, Chairman, National Sheriffs' Association Border Security Committee
Sheriff Benny Martinez, Vice Chairman, National Sheriffs' Association Border Security Committee
Jonathan Thompson, Executive Director & CEO, National Sheriffs' Association

About the National Sheriffs' Association

The National Sheriffs' Association is one of the largest associations of law enforcement professionals in the U.S., representing more than 3,000 elected Sheriffs across the nation, and with a total membership of near 10,000. NSA is a non-profit organization dedicated to raising the level of professionalism among sheriffs, their deputies, and others in the field of law enforcement, public safety, and criminal justice. Throughout its eighty-four-year history, NSA has also served as an information resource for all law enforcement, as well as state governments and the federal government.

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