

Bordering on a *War Zone*

Andy Ramirez, the chairman of a non-profit organization supporting the U.S. Border Patrol, describes the perilous situation along the U.S.-Mexico border.

*Interview of Andy Ramirez
by William F. Jasper*

Andy Ramirez serves as chairman of Friends of the Border Patrol (FBP), a non-profit organization that was created to support the U.S. Border Patrol and defend U.S. national security. Founded in 2004, FBP works with the Border Patrol and law enforcement officials across the United States and is using surveillance cameras on the U.S.-Mexico border to serve as a “neighborhood watch” and as “eyes and ears” for the Border Patrol in high-traffic areas where the Border Patrol does not have cameras operating. With his many contacts in the Border Patrol, Mr. Ramirez also breaks important stories that have been neglected or covered up by the politicians and the major media.

THE NEW AMERICAN: *You’ve just returned from the Canadian border and, of course, you live near the Mexican border. As you are well aware, our borders have been neglected, undermanned, and overrun for many years. So what’s your overall assessment right now, on our present situation? Is it getting better or worse?*

Andy Ramirez: Having observed both

borders and spoken with law enforcement officials, the Southern border is a war zone, while the Northern border has been completely neglected by both DHS and the administration. In terms of the numbers, it’s an invasion. In terms of politics, the current administration and the politicians in both major parties continue to *talk* about taking back control of our borders, but they haven’t *done* anything remotely close to what is necessary. The Border Patrol is still hopelessly undermanned; they can’t even hope to come close to fulfilling their mission of protecting our country if we don’t drastically increase their personnel and resources.

Agents know that their superiors in Washington — going all the way up to President Bush himself — not only are refusing to back them up but are also making life miserable for them by transferring them around in a continuous shell game.

Instead of providing the force levels needed, the president simply responds by robbing Peter to pay Paul. Arizonans are getting very upset about the increased alien and drug traffic through their area? Oh, okay, we’ll just steal several hundred Border Patrol agents from another sector, say, California’s San Diego sector,

and make a big media show of “cracking down” in the Tucson sector for a while. But meanwhile, the sectors you’ve raided are falling apart.

Additionally, the agents you’ve moved are unhappy because it’s disrupted their family lives, they’re not being properly reimbursed for moving and living expenses, and they know it’s all for show, so they get discouraged. There are many good, experienced Border Patrol agents who have retired or resigned out of anger and frustration, and we can’t afford to lose these guys. Unfortunately, that attrition rate will continue unless the American people *make* politicians get serious about border security and *real* immigration reform.

TNA: *You don’t sound convinced that this really is a new serious effort. Maybe the administration really has finally gotten the message.*

Ramirez: I’d like to think so, but I need to see *proof* of it, and so far we see exactly the *opposite*. If the White House *really* is serious about the border, it will drop all these amnesty and “guest worker” plans that will only add to the problem. It’s the president’s well-known support for these things that has given the McCain-Kennedy

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forces such a boost in Congress and encouraged the open borders lobby among both the Democrats and Republicans.

TNA: *Do you see the administration’s response — or rather, lack of response — to the recent Mexican military incursions into the U.S. as proof positive that the administration has abandoned our borders?*

Ramirez: Exactly. George Bush is the best ambassador Mexico ever had! He’s doing everything to please Mexico, and

civilians, Border Patrol agents, and other law enforcement came under fire from the uniformed Mexicans. What does the Bush administration do? It covers it up and takes Mexico’s side in these cases, accepting the Mexican government’s ludicrous claims that these are aberrations or innocent mistakes or that they are “rogue” operations — and that the Mexican government is “investigating” the incidents.

I can’t tell you how many times I’ve

I say that as a Republican who had hoped that after the eight-year disaster of the Clinton administration, we might see some desperately needed relief for our overwhelmed borders.

Over the past 10 years, the Border Patrol has reported more than 235 incursions by Mexican military and police units into the U.S., including incidents where U.S.

been on the phone with Border Patrol line agents and I can hear the gun shots — including automatic weapons fire — going on like a war zone, which is what the border has become. Of course, I’ve heard the same thing myself, in person, on my trips to the border.

In January, members of Congress were demanding to know what was being done about these continuing incursions. So [the Homeland Security secretary] tries to defuse the concerns by saying stories about these military and police incursions are “overblown” and nothing to worry about. Only days before Michael Chertoff made that remark, on January 23, another major incident occurred that was caught on video, and millions of Americans have seen it.

Hudspeth County [Texas] sheriff’s deputies and Texas state troopers ran into a convoy of Mexican vehicles transporting drugs on the U.S. side of the border. As you know, our law enforcement chased them back to the border where they were met by heavily armed Mexican military units in Humvees, with machine guns, who escorted the drug smugglers back into Mexico. Again, our government covers up for Mexico’s involvement and plays down the incident.

TNA: *You told me about a recent incident when you were down on the Texas-Mexico border with some of the sheriffs.*

Ramirez: Yes, On March 21st, Border Patrol Chief David Aguilar was interviewed on television, on KFOX out of El Paso, and he said that there were no Mexican military units involved in the January 23 incident in Hudspeth County. So he was openly contradicting what all the deputies and officers on the scene actually saw. Understandably, all of the sheriffs and local law enforcement were outraged over Aguilar’s televised statement.

Three days after Aguilar’s appearance on KFOX, I was at the Texas Border Sheriff’s Coalition meeting with a group of sheriffs when National Deputy Border Patrol Chief Luis Barker was queried by Sheriff Arvin West of Hudspeth County. Barker tried to deny that his boss — Aguilar — had said there were *not* Mexican military involved in the incident. He tried to tell us that Aguilar had been quoted out of context. Well, that wasn’t going to work because we all saw the “context.” He



Not much holding them back: If the United States does not limit immigration and expel illegal immigrants, huge amounts of manpower will be required to fortify our border against onslaughts of illegal immigrants.

couldn't tell us that Aguilar didn't say it because we *saw* and *heard* him say it.

It was also a gross insult to the law enforcement officers who were involved and who were there on the line looking down the barrels of the Mexican military, because *there were no Border Patrol agents there guarding the border!* Aguilar and the White House are responsible for leaving that border vulnerable. Then when the sheriffs do the job that the Border Patrol is supposed to be doing, the administration tried to discredit them and made it sound like they're exaggerating the danger.

So, when Barker came up and tried to cover up his boss's statement, the sheriffs were really steamed. They've *had it* with the steady stream of lies coming out of Washington. They want to cooperate with the federal agencies, and they sympathize with the Border Patrol agents who are on the line, but they've had it with the political toadies like Aguilar and Barker who are betraying their agents on the line and the local law enforcement agencies that are trying to keep our borders from sliding into total chaos.

People may sometimes think it sounds odd for me, as head of an organization called Friends of the Border Patrol, to be speaking so harshly about the Border Patrol. But my criticism is for the top Border Patrol brass, the political appointees, who are selling out the incredibly heroic and dedicated Border Patrol agents.

TNA: Tell us about the "Military Incursion Cards."

Ramirez: After the incident with Deputy Chief Barker, Sheriff West was telling the other Texas sheriffs about my reaction during the Barker discussion, which was about as outraged as his own. It's one thing to lie to the public, which we know is taking place, but I witnessed Barker telling them that the incursion and another recent incident, involving a Mexican customs agent in uniform marking smuggling trails with a GPS tracker, didn't happen though Hudspeth sheriffs made the collar themselves. How do you lie or attempt to distort



Mexican incursions: Though many administration-aligned officials insisted at a February hearing on Capitol Hill that there isn't a problem with violent Mexican gangs and the Mexican military firing on U.S. law enforcement personnel and citizens, pictures and first-hand accounts have proven otherwise.

facts to Congress and fellow law enforcement officers? Someone is ordering them to do so, and that is impeachable.

Just the day before, March 23rd, I had provided a sheriff with a copy of the Military Incursion Card, which tells Border Patrol agents how to react to incursions by the Mexican military. The sheriffs were floored by the incursion card since it countered Aguilar's previous statements about incursions. For the sheriffs, this was the first acknowledgement of military incursions of any kind by the Border Patrol.

Now, this is quite an amazing document and it puts the lie to all the administration's talk about wonderful cooperation with Mexico's government, which is contradicted by every line agent I have spoken with.

The violations of our border by Mexican military units have become so common that the Department of Homeland Security produced a set of guidelines, the "Military Incursions Card," for Border Patrol agents to carry. The card explains that "Mexican military are trained to escape, evade, and counter-ambush if it will effect their escape." The card, as I understand it, was first issued in 1997 by Tucson BP Sector.

But get this, the card actually tells agents to hide from Mexican military that may be

operating and to "avoid" all confrontation with them. It's incredible! The very purpose of the Border Patrol is to officially confront those who come across our borders, to protect U.S. citizens from being confronted by these law-breakers. This is a bald admission by the administration that it is abandoning the borders and the people who live in the border areas. Of course, they have kept this all hushed up.

One thing repeatedly said to me by the sheriffs, some of whom walked out of the meeting with Border Patrol command, was how they just couldn't sit there and be lied to anymore. Members of Congress indicate disgusted listeners often walk out of their meetings and hearings too.

And when I said the sheriffs are completely fed up with the feds, I mean there are some who have actually told me they think its going to come down to open confrontation, where they will feel compelled to arrest Border Patrol and Customs officials who are interfering with their duties to protect their citizens. They don't want to do this — and it certainly would not be pretty — but that's where this will lead, if we, the American people, do not come to the aid of the Border Patrol, and local law enforcement and force the politicians to give them the resources they need to protect our country. ■