

## **Deputy Chief Chad Kasmar (Tucson, AZ)**

Tucson sits just over an hour north of the Nogales, Sonora, border and we serve a diverse population of more than 535,000. On Sept. 18 and 19, 2018, I was invited to attend a Law Enforcement Immigration Task Force (LEITF) trip, in conjunction with Bibles, Badges, and Business for Immigration Reform ([BBB](#)), to the Nogales border community.

To be candid, as a native of Tucson I have visited this area both in a professional capacity and on my own time on several occasions, and the thought of being out for the better part of two days made me contemplate the potential value I might find in committing a large amount of time to the trip. Well, my concerns were quickly replaced with gratitude for the opportunity to be a part of the delegation. The trip left me with a renewed sense of the responsibility of law enforcement leadership across the country to be engaged in the current immigration discussion.

Let me start by giving credit to the intended objectives of the BBB program, which advocates for “broad immigration solutions that keep us secure, respect the rule of law, help grow our economy and are compassionate.” The goals were the primary topic of discussion with the LEITF event organizers Sarah Braithwaite, Jacinta Ma and Adam Estle. Fresno, California, Deputy Chief Mike Reid and former Indiana Attorney General Greg Zoeller also participated in the trip.

The journey provided a 360-degree perspective that started with Father Sean Carroll, Director of the [Kino Border Initiative](#). Father Carroll eloquently described the challenges on both sides of the Nogales border: those of deported immigrants on the Sonora side and immigrants seeking asylum in the U.S. and waiting extended periods of time for their requests to be processed. A topic of almost daily national news was quickly humanized and there was a sense of urgency to help a vulnerable population who are assembled just feet away from U.S. soil.

The delegation shared a dinner to reflect and discuss BBB and the work of the Kino Border Initiative. We all shared our perspectives on similar challenges we face in our respective parts of the country. The following day we met with local law enforcement leaders, Santa Cruz County Sheriff Tony Estrada and Nogales Chief of Police Roy Bermudez. The conversation touched on how the respective communities they serve are currently being impacted by immigration policy, border security issues and agency funding impacted by tourism in the area. The conversations made me realize more work can be done at a local level with my Arizona chiefs organization, and I look forward to upcoming meetings to increase dialogue and action on the aforementioned BBB objectives.

The next stop was the U.S. Customs and Border Protection Nogales-Mariposa Port of Entry.

We received a presentation and facility tour from Customs and Border Protection Officer Hugo Nuñez. The Mariposa Land Port of Entry is one of the busiest land ports in the United States. We learned that most of the fresh produce entering the United States from Mexico travels through this facility. We also learned that both the Nogales Port of Entry and the Mariposa Land Port of Entry have hiring, recruiting and retention staffing challenges similar to those faced by law enforcement agencies across the country. The low staffing has a direct impact on processing vehicular and pedestrian border traffic and the timely processing of immigrants seeking asylum.

Our final stop and delegation discussion occurred at the Green Valley Pecan farm, one of the largest pecan farms in the world. The farm is located between Tucson and Nogales, in the Santa Cruz Valley, and is run by the Walden family. The business has operations in three states and employs more than 250 people.

Our group had a working lunch meeting with the Walden family, COO & Executive Vice President of Green Valley Pecan Bruce Caris, immigration attorney Mo Goldman, President of ZZ Cattle Corporation Daniel Bell and Brasher Real Estate President Gary Brasher. The meeting provided a wide variety of viewpoints and experiences related to life within a border community.

After receiving a brief presentation on the history of the farm, we got right to it and discussed immigration matters, border security and the impact on the local economy. We heard how the farm had been negatively impacted by the inability of its immigrant employees, or the employees families, to obtain temporary and permanent residency for employment in the United States. Goldman echoed this, discussing the many challenges he faces in the judicial process with respect to immigrant paperwork and processing. He noted the current political climate has all but gridlocked the immigrant judicial system.

We heard how the regional economy has been negatively impacted by the permanent placement of the Customs and Border Protection checkpoint on I-19, north of Tubac. Brasher noted that when his clients (of all demographics) are looking at purchasing real estate, they place a high importance on location because they do not want to travel through the checkpoint on a daily basis. He also stated that many of the local businesses and hotels saw a significant decline in business when the checkpoint became permanent.

To close the meeting, we heard from Bell, a lifelong cattle rancher. He spoke about the increased cost he sustains per head of cattle due to illegal border crossing on and near his

ranch. He has to employ extra hands to make daily repairs on fencing and water infrastructure. Mr. Bell told the group it was not uncommon for his employees to come across armed individuals smuggling property and humans on his ranch. He also noted that areas where permanent border fencing had been erected did see a perceived decrease in illegal crossing and damages related to those activities.

I found the trip to the Nogales, Sonora, border to be extremely valuable. The BBB team proved to be fantastic “connectors” for a diverse variety of individuals impacted by immigration and border security issues that I plan to keep in contact with in the future. I was inspired by the BBB mission and the team of individuals I spent time with over the course of the two-day journey. I plan on being more involved in immigration and border security conversations in my community and I highly recommend that all law enforcement leadership participate with the program.

### **Deputy Chief Michael Reid (Fresno, CA)**

The Law Enforcement Immigration Task Force (LEITF) trip to the Nogales, Arizona, border offered information and provided perspective to law enforcement leaders on immigration issues that impact the communities they serve.

The individuals who traveled with LEITF were able to meet with Father Sean Carroll, Director of the [Kino Border Initiative](#), and see firsthand the incredible work being done for migrants including people seeking asylum in the United States. To hear information on border security, members of the delegation met with Hugo Nuñez, a Supervisory Customs and Border Protection (CBP) Officer from the Department of Homeland Security. Various CBP officials provided a tour of the Nogales-Mariposa border crossing facility and an overview of the processes and technology utilized there. This gave the members of the delegation information on the measures currently in place, as well as the application of developing technologies to ensure the safe entry and exit of people and commerce into the United States and Mexico.

We were also able to meet with Chief Roy Bermudez of the Nogales Police Department as well as Sheriff Tony Estrada of the Santa Cruz County Sheriff’s Office to discuss issues related to immigration that impact local law enforcement. One of the interesting facts these law enforcement leaders presented was the level of cooperation they have with the CBP agents in the area. Although neither Chief Bermudez nor Sheriff Estrada is directly involved in the enforcement of federal immigration law, their officers and deputies enjoy an

incredible level of cooperation from the federal authorities, which dramatically improves officer safety for both of these organizations.

On the final leg of this trip we discussed the impact immigration has on local business in Nogales, Arizona. Bruce Caris from the Green Valley Pecan Company and Daniel Bell from ZZ Cattle Corporation did an excellent job discussing the impacts that both legal and illegal immigration have on their businesses. Both were concerned about perceived inefficiencies in the “pathway to citizenship” and both advocated for a robust guest worker program, as part of comprehensive immigration reform, that includes sufficient checks and balances. Bell discussed how illegal immigration and a deficiency in existing border security are currently negatively impacting his operation. He also recounted for the delegation occasions when he or his employees had felt threatened by people crossing, he believed illegally, into the United States and discussed the “narco-terrorism” of illegal drugs coming across the border and the inherent dangers of this activity.

Participating in this trip provided me with a variety of perspectives on a very complex issue. The takeaway for me was a better understanding of these complexities and a deep-seated appreciation for the incredible work that the Kino Border Initiative is doing. I also came away with a greater appreciation of the efforts occurring at the federal level as well as with local law enforcement to promote border security. Finally, I came to realize that border security and effective migration policies and processes are not mutually exclusive. I saw firsthand how cooperative efforts can help fulfill both of these objectives.

