



Move I-19 checkpoint, Giffords letter asks **Lawmaker also wants more agents**

CLAUDINE LoMONACO

Tucson Citizen

May 16, 2007

In a letter to Border Patrol Chief David Aguilar, U.S. Rep. Gabrielle Giffords of Arizona asks that the agency move a temporary checkpoint from Interstate 19 north of Tubac and station more agents in the area to reduce the impact of human and drug smuggling on residents and businesses.

Giffords' letter, dated May 14, comes amid reports of increased violence in the communities around the checkpoint and the Border Patrol's push to build a seven-lane, permanent checkpoint along the I-19 corridor.

The letter detailed residents' concerns that smugglers were circumventing the semipermanent checkpoint, which has been there since November, and invading neighboring communities. Residents experienced threats to their homes and have been affected by violence associated with what appears to be a war among drug smugglers, Giffords wrote.

"This is completely unacceptable," she said, "and local law enforcement cannot be expected to manage the problem alone."

Giffords also asked the Border Patrol to deploy "more sensors, radar, cameras and other technology" to alert authorities to smugglers going around the checkpoint so they can be apprehended.

Border Patrol spokesman Xavier Rios said that Aguilar had likely not received the letter yet but would respond to Gifford as soon as he does.